



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Joy

Presenting every man mature in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 45
Issue 1101

Firstborn: Exposing the Myth of Pre-existence

(A Synoptical Examination)

by – Steve Martin, Compilation Editor

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Chapter 6 (of 10): Philippians and the Humility of the Exalted Man

Few passages get quoted more in support of Jesus' supposed pre-existence than Philippians 2:5-11. The traditional spin goes something like this: Jesus was a Divine Being in Heaven Who humbled Himself by leaving His glory there, taking on flesh, and then returning to His exalted state.



around Heaven.

- **Representation, Not Physicality:** Jesus, as a man, perfectly represented God. He bore God's authority, reflected His character, and embodied His will. Moses and the prophets did this in part; Jesus did it fully.

But if you read the text carefully, Paul is not describing a Heavenly Being stepping down. He's showing us the profound humility of a Man – Jesus of Nazareth – Who obeyed God to the very end, and was then exalted as the reward for His obedience.

- **No Pagan Shape-shifting:** This is not Zeus taking on human disguise. The Bible doesn't deal in myths of gods morphing into creatures. It's about a Man Who lived in complete alignment with the Father.

THE CONTEXT: A CALL TO HUMILITY

The whole section in Philippians is an exhortation. Paul is urging believers, *"Have this mindset in you which was also in Christ Jesus."* The point is about attitude, not metaphysics. He's holding up Jesus as the pattern of human humility and obedience. That works only if Jesus is relatable – if He's truly human. If He's a pre-existent Deity pretending to be human, the example collapses.

"In the Form of God" (Philippians 2:6)

When Paul says that Jesus was *"in the form of God,"* he's not describing some pre-incarnate being floating

"DID NOT COUNT EQUALITY WITH GOD A THING TO BE GRASPED"

Jesus never claimed equality with God. Though

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Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Volume 45, No. 1101 – January 1, 2026

Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3-4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice,

misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);

- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6);
 - adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of saints intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

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uniquely God's Son, He didn't use that relationship to His own advantage. He refused to seize status or privilege. Instead, He chose obedience, service and trust. That's true humility.

and His emptying was a human act that cost Him everything.

"Obedient to Death – Even Death on a Cross"

"He Emptied Himself"

The famous phrase – "He emptied Himself" – has been loaded with centuries of theology. But what did it really mean?

- **Emptying Rights, Not Divinity:** Jesus didn't give up divine attributes, because He never had them to begin with. He laid down His rights as a man. He emptied Himself of self-interest, pouring Himself out in service.
- **A Descent into Shame:** His emptying wasn't from heavenly glory to human flesh. It was from the relative honor of His ministry to the ultimate shame of the cross. From public acceptance to public humiliation.
- **Isaiah's Witness:** Isaiah 53:12 says He "poured out His soul unto death." That's very human language. Spirits don't pour out their souls. Jesus was a man,

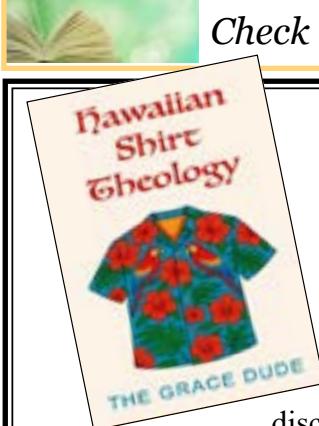
This is where the humility of Christ comes into full view.

- **Real Obedience:** He didn't want the cross. Gethsemane makes that clear. But He trusted His Father and obeyed, even when it meant pain, fear, shame and death.
- **The Faith of Christ:** This is why His obedience was so profound – it required faith. Real faith. If He already knew everything because of a pre-existent memory, faith would be totally meaningless. Hebrews says that He endured the cross "for the joy set before Him" – a joy He didn't yet have. That's real trust in a future that God promised, not a return to some old glory.

"Therefore God Highly Exalted Him"

This is the turning point. Because Jesus humbled Himself, God exalted Him.

(see [FIRSTBORN](#), page 9235)

 Check out a **NEW BOOK!**

Hawaiian Shirt Theology

by — Steve Martin

Steve Martin – the Grace Dude – wears a Hawaiian shirt every day, not because he lives on the beach (he doesn't), but because it reminds him of what life is really about: love, joy, grace and freedom.

This isn't a book about rules, guilt or trying harder. It's a book about discovering that grace is louder than shame, brighter than fear, and way more fun than religion ever told you it could be. Inside, you'll find bold reminders that:

- Grace isn't "undeserved favor" – it's joy, delight and freedom.
- God doesn't tolerate you – He celebrates you.
- Love doesn't come with fine print.
- You can live in full color, even in hard times.

With a mix of story, humor and unapologetic truth, Steve invites you to trade in the stiff suit of religion for the bright, relaxed, joy-filled shirt of grace. No guilt trips. No fear tactics. Just freedom, love, and maybe a few parrots and hibiscus flowers along the way.

If you've ever felt weighed down by religion, pressured to perform, or afraid you don't measure up – this book is your invitation to breathe again.

Grace isn't something you earn. It's something you wear. Boldly. Every day.



The Bloody Truth

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

Chapter 18 – The Champion’s Team

by – Stephen Hill

When the Chicago Bulls won their championships in the 1990s, every player on the roster got the ring – not just Michael Jordan. The star’s victory was the team’s victory. No matter how small the role, every name was etched in the record.

That’s how it is with Christ, *our* Star Player. His triumph is ours – not because we matched His performance, but because we are on His team.

CREDITED WITH THE WIN

Romans 5:19 says,

For even as, through the disobedience of the one man, the many were constituted sinners, thus also, through the obedience of the One, the many shall be constituted just.

We inherited Adam’s loss without playing a minute in

his game. Now we inherit Christ’s win without having to add to His score. This isn’t substitution – it’s *inclusion*. We aren’t replaced on the field; we are carried to victory with Him.

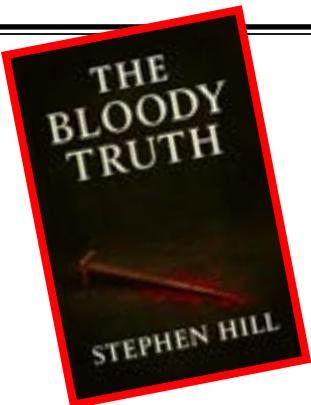


NO BENCHWARMERS IN GLORY

In human sports, the credit feels lopsided – one or two stars make the headlines. In God’s Kingdom, there are no forgotten teammates. The least visible believer shares fully in the Champion’s rewards. The antidote’s reach is efficacious for *all*.

OUR IDENTITY IN HIM

Being on the Champion’s team means your identity is wrapped up in His. When the Father looks at you, He sees you in the uniform of His Son – covered, cleansed, alive. The stains of sin and death no longer define you. You are defined by the life, the obedience, and the achievement of Christ Himself.



The Bloody Truth

(Pre-publication notice)

by — Stephen Hill

Blood runs like a crimson thread through the pages of Scripture – from the first sacrifice in Eden to the death of Christ. But what if its purpose has been misunderstood for centuries? What if blood was never about appeasing a wrathful God, but about healing, cleansing and reversing the curse of sin and death?

The Bloody Truth uncovers one of the Bible’s most profound and shocking reversals: that God Himself supplied the antidote to humanity’s greatest disease.

Through vivid storytelling and careful attention to Scripture, this book reveals how the sacrifices of old pointed, not to divine anger, but to a divine cure.

It shows why Christ’s blood was poured out, not to satisfy vengeance, but to restore life, reconcile creation, and draw us near to God.

This is not another book of theological jargon. It is a bold journey into the heart of God’s plan—a plan that overturns human assumptions about punishment, atonement, and the very nature of salvation. If you’ve ever wrestled with questions about why blood is so central in the Bible, or if you’ve longed for a picture of God that is consistent with love, justice, and grace, this book will open your eyes to a truth both ancient and revolutionary.



This is not wishful thinking – it's reality declared by God. Colossians 3:3 says, *"For you died, and your life is hid together with Christ in God."* Your old self is not in view; your true life is the one joined to His.

THE DESTINY WE SHARE

Christ's headship isn't just about rulership – it's about representation. When He was glorified, His team was glorified. When He took His seat at the right hand of God, we were seated there with Him (Ephesians 2:6).

This is why Paul can speak with such certainty about our future – because our destiny is tied to His, and His future is unchangeable.

PLAYING IN THE LIGHT OF THE SCOREBOARD

The victory is already written. That frees us to

"play" without the crushing fear of losing. We can live boldly, give generously, serve willingly – knowing that the outcome is sealed. We're not trying to earn a place on the team; we're living as full members of it.

The Champion's victory is your victory. His reward is your reward. His seat in glory is your seat. And nothing – no rival, no failure, no power in Heaven or on Earth – can take that away.

Chapter 18 Key Takeaways

- *Adam's defeat included us; Christ's victory also includes us.*
- *No believer is a "benchwarmer" – His triumph is ours.*
- *Our identity is hidden with Christ in God.*

BSN

TOPICS:

Major: Champion; Identity; Victory

Minor: Antidote; Headship; Substitution

FIRSTBORN (continued from page 9233)

- **Reward, Not Restoration:** God didn't give something back to Him that He used to have. He gave Him something new – *"the name above every name."* Jesus became the first mortal to be crowned with immortal glory (Hebrews 2:9).
- **Granted Authority:** All authority in Heaven and Earth was given to Him after His resurrection (Matthew 28:18). He received it. He didn't reclaim it.

A Man We Can Follow

This reading of Philippians doesn't make Christ smaller. It makes Him greater – and more relatable.

- **A Real Example:** We can't imitate a hybrid being. We can't follow a God Who pretended to be human. But we can follow the Man Who chose humility, endured shame, and obeyed in faith.
- **Our Pattern:** Paul's whole point is that we adopt this same mindset. We don't cling to privilege. We lay ourselves down in service. And just as God exalted Jesus, we can trust Him with our future.

The Memory-Loss Theory

Some try to preserve pre-existence by suggesting that Jesus "forgot" His heavenly life and then remembered it later (often tying this to John 17:5). But Scripture never says this. It's speculation piled on speculation. If we need that kind of patchwork to protect a doctrine, maybe the doctrine itself is flawed.

The Glory of the Obedient Man

Philippians 2 doesn't show us a God leaving Heaven and returning. It shows us a Man Who humbled Himself and was exalted by God.

This isn't a demotion followed by restoration. It's the glorification of humanity. Jesus is the Prototype of where all humanity is headed. His exaltation is God's declaration that humility, faith and obedience win in the end. **BSN**

TOPICS:

Major: Christ, Pre-existence of; Christ's Faith; Exaltation; Humility; Jesus Christ; Obedience; Pre-existence; Prototype

Minor: Humiliation; Philippians

Religion's Trap

Bible Student's Courses

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

Course 2: Creation / Unit 2: Creation Repudiates Satanic Philosophies / Lesson 1: Religion's Trap
by — Mark D. Vogt

*... The world through wisdom knew not God ... (I Corinthians 1:21).
Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools (Romans 1:22).*

One of Satan's – the Adversary's – most "successful" strategies is religion.

And not just false religions, but especially the distorted version of God presented by mainstream Christianity.

This kind of religion tells people:

- There is one true God ...
- BUT – you must perform, obey and earn His favor ...
- OR – you'll be punished – forever.

This performance-based system keeps people in bondage, not freedom. Billions around the world are trapped in this fear-based system, believing that they must do something to earn peace with God.

This version of religion does not reflect the God of Scripture – it reflects the lie of Satan, disguised as spiritual truth.



The Result: Thinking People Turn Away

When people are told that God is loving and merciful – but He also tortures people in hell forever if they mess up – they start to question the entire system. And rightfully so.

To many rational, thinking people, the god presented by religion looks like a tyrant – not a loving Father. So, they reject the idea of God altogether. But rather than finding truth, they fall into other philosophies that Satan has crafted as alternatives.

In this unit we will consider these Satanic philosophies.

BSN

TOPICS:

Major: Religion; Philosophy
Minor: Adversary; Satan

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Biblical Resources is a dedicated space for the co-laborers of Bible Student's Press to share our current collective journey. It is intended to be a place of education and edification in an atmosphere of freedom, love, joy and peace.

Interviews with Steve Martin

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXXxM1xuIaqsr1jWoSm4Scvd8csJIB7ZZ>



Seven Basic Human Philosophies

Bible Student's Courses

Course 2: Creation / Unit 2: Creation Repudiates Satanic Philosophies / Lesson 2: Seven Basic Human Philosophies

by — Mark D. Vogt

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

... *The world through wisdom knew not God ...* (I Corinthians 1:21).

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools (Romans 1:22).

Paul firmly warned believers against the seduction of philosophy.

Beware that no one shall be despoiling you through philosophy and empty seduction, in accord with human tradition, in accord with the elements of the world, and not in accord with Christ (Colossians 2:8, CV).

For, of course, the one behind it all is **the Adversary**, also known as **Satan**.

SATAN WAS CREATED TO BE THE ADVERSARY

Scripture shows us that Satan was **created by God** to play **the role of the Adversary** – a necessary contrast that God uses to reveal His love, grace and wisdom. Satan, of course, doesn't realize this now. He believes he's working against God's plan, not fulfilling it. But in reality:

God is using him to provide the dark backdrop against which the brilliance of grace will shine.

That's contrast – and contrast is one of God's favorite tools.

SEVEN SATANICALLY INSPIRED PHILOSOPHIES

To ensnare men to reject the true God of Scripture, Satan has provided **other options** – belief systems that appeal to the intellect and pride of man.

Here are **seven philosophies** that Satan uses to distract humanity from the truth:

1. Atheism – There is no God.

- Agnosticism** – We can't know if there is a God.
- Polytheism** – There are many gods.
- Fatalism** – Life is controlled by impersonal fate or chance.
- Evolution** – Life formed and evolved by itself.
- Pantheism** – Everything is God.
- Materialism** – The physical world is all that exists.

EVERYONE BELIEVES SOMETHING

Every person believes in something – either:

- The **true God** (even if their understanding is warped); or,
- One of Satan's **counterfeit philosophies**.

This is because **God placed a consciousness of Himself in every human being**.

- Romans 2 speaks of a law written on the heart.
- Romans 8 speaks of a deep groaning for something greater.
- Psalm 19:1 declares that "*The Heavens are telling the glory of God.*"

We are all born with an inner awareness of God – until the world, through education and culture, **teaches it out of us**.

... The world through [human] wisdom knew not God ... (I Corinthians 1:22).

Why is it this Way?

It can feel discouraging, with billions deceived and confused by religion and philosophy.

But here's the comforting truth:

This is a grand part of God's plan.

God designed it this way. The contrast – the darkness, the confusion, the philosophies of men – is the backdrop for something **beautiful**: the revelation of His limitless love and absolute grace.

Without the contrast, we would never see the difference. Without the lies, we wouldn't recognize the truth. Without the Adversary, we wouldn't know the Savior.

CONTRAST IS THE CURRICULUM

God is teaching the Universe through **contrast**.

- Light vs. darkness
- Truth vs. deception
- Freedom vs. bondage
- Love vs. fear
- Grace vs. religion

This is how we learn.

THE PROFOUND CORRECTIVE

Yet, amazingly, it is the very first verse of Scripture that is the profound corrective to all these philosophies.

In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth (Genesis 1:1).

No words could be more specific, nor less open to misunderstanding. This plain, simple, straightforward statement is how the Scriptures begin – standing as the divine citadel of truth.

THE TRIUMPHANT END

And in the glorious end, **all will know the truth**.

In the name of Jesus every knee will bow ... and every tongue will confess ... (Philippians 2:10-11).

That means, **every philosophy is destined to fall**, and the truth of God will stand. **BSN**

TOPICS:

Major: Contrast; Philosophy; Satan; Truth

Minor: Adversary

BE NOT
AFRAID OF SAYING
TOO MUCH IN THE
PRAISES OF GOD; ALL
OF THE DANGER IS OF
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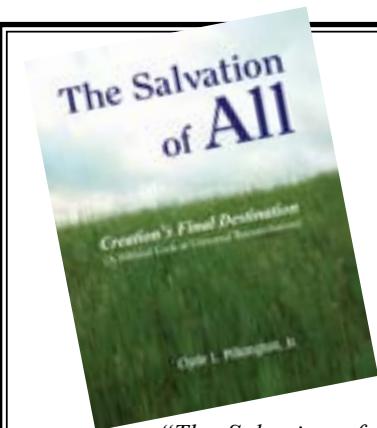
– MATTHEW HENRY (1662-1714)

The Salvation of ALL: Creation's Final Destination

(A Biblical Look at Universal Reconciliation)

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

The Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus is truly better “Good News” than we could ever have imagined. It is far more glorious than religion would ever have us believe. *The Salvation of All* is a book about a “Good News” that will reach its final goal in the *salvation of all* mankind.



“The Salvation of All” –

to be discussed among believers. – **IL**

mending it to many people! – **FL**

The Salvation of All, what an amazing book. I feel the veil has been lifted and finally I see clearly the glory of our Lord and Savior. What a joy to know the truth and understand just how amazing our God truly is to all. You are a sincere man of God whom I trust and respect. – **VA**

An excellent book. – **MI**

The Salvation of All is the most clearly written testimony to God's ultimate grace and mercy towards man that I've seen in print. – **VA**

I'm sure I'll be referring back to *The Salvation of All* for years to come. The issues you addressed in the book need

The Salvation of All is worthy reading for people on both sides of the doctrinal fence. Regardless of whether or not those who read it will agree with you, I believe they will respect you for not serving up the regurgitated fodder that fills the shelves of religious bookstores. Very thought provoking! I'll be recom-