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God Restores Man

In God's great plan of salvation to rescue and restore humanity, it is ironic that the first of God's "earth-shaking" new creations is a poor little baby born in a humble stable in the village of Bethlehem. With this seemingly insignificant event, God begins the restoration of all things and the restoration of mankind. Although many have heard the story of Jesus' birth, it seems that few understand how significant this manifestation of God's love is for everyone, both individually and for all of humanity.

This child of Mary and Joseph, who would be named "Jesus," was born as human as any other baby. As the "son of Abraham" and the "son of David," Jesus was an heir of the blessings and royal rights of His ancestors (Mt 1:1). This child would grow into a boy and then into the man who would be the Messiah, the Savior of the world. However, the moment when God created the body of this little baby, He changed the course of humanity by restoring man.

How did the birth of a baby change the course of humanity? In this way: when God supernaturally implanted a new creation into Mary's womb, the result was a regeneration of humanity. God created a "new man" so that the first man, Adam, and the

rest of his descendants could be restored. By regenerating humanity, God provides the way that the sinful human beings of this corrupt creation can be restored to enjoy all of God's intended blessings.

This new man, Jesus Christ, would manifest the truth of God's gospel, enabling everyone who believes in Him to likewise become a new man, a new creation. Thus, whenever someone believes in Christ, besides being rescued from sin and reconciled to God, he joins Christ, becoming part of restored humanity which is predestined to live on the New Earth and to inherit the rewards which God has promised.

The “Old Man”

In Scripture, the description “old man”¹ refers to sinful humanity which has descended from Adam, its progenitor. Originally, nothing was wrong with “old man” humanity. When Adam was created in the image and likeness of God, he was created “good,” that is, he functioned properly, just as God had designed him to function. In the beginning, Adam was righteous before God, and he maintained this righteousness as long as he obeyed God's commands. God made Adam His viceroy, granting him dominion over all of Earth. In his position as King of Earth, Adam was the representative of all mankind.

Adam, the first man of “old man” humanity, was created good in every respect. The “fall of man” brought about the corruption of “old man” humanity. The “fall of man” refers to Adam's sin of disobedience and its consequences, specifically, that man lost his righteous standing before God and his place in God's Kingdom. As a result of the fall of man, all of “old” humanity became alienated from God and condemned to death. Man's sin also alienates him from everything else in creation, which likewise has become corrupted by his sin. Furthermore, fallen man can no longer be God's viceroy, having righteous

¹ Direct references to the “old man” (*palaios anthrōpos*): Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22; Col 3:9; and to the works of the old man: Eph 4:25-31; Col 3:5-8.

dominion over Earth. In a fallen state, the “old man” can no longer function flawlessly, as God had originally designed him. All of fallen, old humanity are slaves to sin, Satan, and death.

Throughout history, Adam’s sin has been imputed from father to son to all men.² Every son conceived from the seed of a human father inherits Adam’s sin with its consequences: “in Adam all die” (1Cor 15:22). Yet Adam, the progenitor of old humanity, is also “the figure of [Christ] who was to come” (Rom 5:14).

The “Seed of the Woman”

The virgin conception and birth³ of Jesus Christ fulfill God’s promise to Adam and Eve (Gen 3:15). Being “born of a woman” (Gal 4:4), Jesus Christ is the first new creation in God’s plan for the restoration of all things. The virgin birth of Christ initiates the regeneration of humanity.

God sends an angel to tell Mary that He has chosen her to give birth to the Messiah:

Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end (Lk 1:31-33).

Mary’s reply to the angel points out her quite obvious objection to this news: “How can this be, since I do not [intimately] know

² There is a biblical principle of paternal headship where the action (sin) of the father is imputed to his descendants (Ex 20:5; 34:6-7; Lev 26:39; Dt 5:9; Prv 19:23; Isa 65:6-7; Jer 16:10-12; Eze 18:2-4; cf. Heb 7:7-10). Paul explains this principle in relation to Adam’s sin, that it is imputed to his descendants: “through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom 5:12).

³ The doctrine of “virgin birth” logically includes the virgin conception of Christ. The virgin conception was the miraculous act of God whereby a “new” man was created. The virgin birth made it evident to others that this miracle had occurred.

a man?" (Lk 1:34). The angel explains to her how she will conceive a child even though she is still a virgin:

The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God (Lk 1:35).

When the Holy Spirit “comes upon” Mary and the power of the Highest “overshadows” her, the result is a creative act of God in Mary’s womb. Mary’s supernatural conception is an event as momentous as Adam’s creation. Mary’s seed, the unfertilized egg which a woman’s body naturally produces, is the human component involved in Jesus’ miraculous conception. God fashions⁴ something new which fertilizes Mary’s egg, and she conceives the body of the promised Messiah. God, who gives life to all living things, uses His creative power to generate a new life inside Mary’s womb.

The virgin conception and birth of Jesus Christ fulfilled God’s gospel promise that the Messiah would be the “Seed of the woman” (Gen 3:15). This prophecy concerning the woman’s seed implies that a virgin birth will occur.⁵ Furthermore, another Old Testament prophecy more explicitly indicates that the Messiah would be born of a virgin.⁶ When Isaiah brings God’s message to King Ahaz, God offers to give him a sign:

⁴ Just as in Adam’s creation, God “formed” him from the dust (Gen 2:7).

⁵ Some might argue that the phrase “the seed of the woman” by itself does not require a virgin birth: if so, then would an equal expectation of a male virgin birth arise from such phrases as “the seed of Abraham” and “the seed of David”? However, the fact that “the seed of woman” is not a natural occurrence implies that a miracle should be expected. Nonetheless, Eve was excited when she gave birth to a man-child, hoping that her first-born son might fulfill God’s prophecy by becoming the savior of the world (Gen 4:1, see note 9, p. 33).

⁶ Jeremiah 31:22 might also be interpreted as pointing to the virgin birth of the Messiah: “For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth—a woman shall encompass a man.” Taken together, the prophecy’s ideas—(1) God’s creation of (2) something new (3) a woman (4) enclosing (5) a mighty man [the Messiah]—point to the miracle of the virgin birth.

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name “Immanuel” (Isa 7:14).

In this verse, the Hebrew word translated “virgin” describes a young woman of marriageable age which, in Isaiah’s day, everyone would assume to be a virgin. However, any doubt concerning this miraculous event is removed by Matthew’s account. Matthew confirms the assumption which Isaiah’s prophecy had previously communicated: the expectation that a virgin would conceive and bear the Messiah.

According to Matthew’s record, Mary is betrothed to Joseph. Being “betrothed” means that the marriage of a couple has already been arranged and formalized, but they are still living separately and have not yet “come together” to consummate their marriage. Although Mary is still a virgin, her pregnancy soon becomes evident to those around her; eventually, Joseph becomes aware of her pregnancy. Joseph considers what he should do, initially deciding that he should end his relationship with Mary by divorcing her (Mt 1:22-23). While he is deliberating how to proceed, an angel appears to him in a dream and says:

Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins (Mt 1:20-21).

Matthew then reports that Jesus’ birth fulfilled the prophecy, recorded in Isaiah 7:14, that a “virgin” would conceive and bear the Messiah:

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us” (Mt 1:22-23).

In Matthew 1:23, the Greek word translated “virgin” is not ambiguous; it clearly communicates the idea that someone is a

virgin.⁷ Thus, male sperm from a human father was not involved in Mary's miraculous conception of Jesus' body. Instead, God created a new life in the "seed of the woman," and this new life was a regeneration of humanity, just the beginning of God's new creations.

The "New Man"

The "new man" is the result of God's new creation in Mary's womb. God's proto-gospel promise concerning the "Seed of the woman" implies a miraculous birth. Why was the miracle of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ necessary? Conception by a virgin was necessary to create a "new man," a regeneration of humanity. Without the virgin conception, Adam's sin and its consequent condemnation of death would be passed from a human father down to Christ. The virgin conception and birth of Christ provided the means by which He could be a "new man," a regeneration of humanity which does not inherit the sin of Adam.

Down through the ages, Adam's sin has been imputed from father, to son, to all men.⁸ Every "son of Adam" has inherited Adam's sin along with its consequences (1Cor 15:22). If a human father had contributed to the conception of Jesus' body, like the rest of mankind He would have inherited the sin of Adam. Accordingly, He also would have been born under sin's condemnation and deemed unrighteous before God. Thus, Christ would have been born a sinner and, like any other man, He would not have been able to become the Savior of the world. In order to restore humanity, Jesus had to be a new "Adam," the second man supernaturally created, having God as His father.

⁷ The Septuagint, a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, completed around 200 years before Jesus Christ's birth, translated the Hebrew word in Isaiah 7:14 with the Greek word *parthenos*, meaning "virgin."

⁸ See note 2, p. 195.

Thus, the virgin conception is more than the creation of a new human life. This creation of a new human life is also the regeneration of humanity, renewing the order of “man,”⁹ and initiating the fulfillment of God’s promise to restore mankind. As the son of Mary,¹⁰ Jesus is fully human and subject to human passions and natural infirmities just like the rest of humanity (Heb 4:15). Unlike the rest of sinful humanity, Jesus is not naturally unrighteous like His fathers. Instead, He possesses a righteous standing before God, a righteousness similar to Adam’s righteousness before it was ruined by his sin (Mt 3:15-17; 17:5; Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22).

So why did Jesus, the Son of God, become a human being? Only someone human, like the original Adam, could become the new “Adam,” the new man through whom the rest of humanity could be restored. Jesus Christ, the Son of man, renewed the human race, becoming a “new man” who was able to learn from God how to be godly and fulfill His purpose (Jer 31:33-34). Through the new humanity initiated by Jesus Christ, members of the old humanity have the opportunity to be restored and, by regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, become part of the new humanity (Titus 3:5).

⁹ The Greek word *anthrōpos* refers to man as a human being. It is a mistake to minimize this word to mean “nature” or “self” (Eph 4:24).

¹⁰ Normally, a male child receives an X chromosome from his biological mother and a Y chromosome from his biological father, whereas a daughter receives one X chromosome from her mother, and the other X chromosome which comes through her father is passed down from her father’s mother (the daughter’s paternal grandmother). Through natural processes, Jesus received one X chromosome from His mother, Mary, but He did not receive a Y chromosome from a human father. Apparently, His Y chromosome was a new creation from God. In any case, it is not necessary to prove that sin is passed down biologically from father to son, only that a human father did not contribute to the conception of Jesus’ body, so that Jesus did not naturally inherit anything from him.

The concepts of the “new man,”¹¹ the “last Adam,” and the “second man” are closely related. All of these concepts refer to a new, restored, regenerated humanity which is uncorrupted by sin and distinct from the old, fallen humanity which has existed since the first man (Adam).

The designation of “last Adam” compares and contrasts Christ with the “first” human being created and named “Adam”: “So it is written, ‘The first man became a living being;’ the last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (1Cor 15:45). Jesus, the “last Adam,” is like the first Adam because He is human and was made in the likeness and image of God (Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-3; 2Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). Another way in which Jesus is like the first Adam is that He also is the progenitor of a humanity (regenerated humanity).

Jesus, the “last Adam,” is also different from the first Adam. The first Adam led humanity into sin, resulting in destruction and alienation from God. In contrast, the last Adam is without sin,¹² leading humanity to reconciliation with God and restoration. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1Cor 15:22). When the first Adam disobeyed, all of old humanity fell under the condemnation of death (Rom 5:12-21). In contrast, the last Adam, Jesus, maintained His righteousness through His obedience; thus He provided regenerated humanity with His righteousness, the gift of justification which brings a renewed life of blessing (Jn 1:4; 3:16; 14:6; Acts 3:15; Rom 5:17-18; 2Cor 5:21).

As the last Adam, Jesus Christ is also called the “second man.” “The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second man is the Lord from heaven” (1Cor 15:47). Just as, before he sins, the first man begins his life with a righteous standing, Jesus Christ, the “second man,” also begins His life

¹¹ 1Cor 15:45, 47; Eph 2:15; 4:24; Col 3:10. To compare aspects of the old man of sinful humanity with those of the new man of restored humanity, see these passages: Rom 5:14-21; 6:6; 1Cor 15:21, 45, 47-49; 2Cor 4:16; Eph 2:15; 3:16; 4:13, 22-24; Col 3:9-10.

¹² “For [God] made [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2Cor 5:21).

with a righteous standing before God. Just as Adam, while he is living in the Garden of Eden, is not alienated from God, Jesus is not alienated from God. Jesus is as human as the first man; however, He maintains His righteousness because He does not disobey God's will. Since Jesus did not sin and was not alienated from God, He does not need to be rescued from sin's destruction or from Satan's dominion; neither does He need to be restored. Jesus Christ, the "second man," is the first generation of "restored" humanity.

Being a human without sin and without the need for rescue and restoration, Jesus Christ is able to become the Savior of the world. Truly, all those who believe in Jesus Christ the Savior will not perish in their sins: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1Cor 15:22). In fact, all of those who believe in Jesus Christ are re-born as children of God and given everlasting life (Jn 1:12; 3:16). Everyone who believes in Christ is made into a new creation and begins everlasting life as a new man and part of restored humanity.

Of course, being an "old man" is a huge problem for unbelievers, and having been an "old man" will remain a problem for believers as long as they are living in mortal bodies. The problem for unbelievers is that, whenever they hear God's truth, the corruption of the "old man" makes it difficult for them to willingly receive and understand the truth (1Cor 2:14). What makes this problem worse is the fact that Satan is fighting against God's truth, working through lies to deceive the unbeliever so that he is blinded to the truth:

If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are perishing, in whom the minds of those who believe not are blinded by [Satan] the god of this world, so that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, will not shine unto them (2Cor 4:4).

Satan does not want to lose any subjects from his dark kingdom, which is full of sin, sorrow, and death. Just as Satan enslaved Adam in the bonds of sin, he will do anything he can to keep people enslaved to sin.

The good news is that Jesus Christ is the first “new man” of a regenerated humanity and that He can free old humanity from its bondage to sin and Satan. This regenerated humanity is not enslaved by sin but is free, belonging to God’s Kingdom (Rom 6:6). Moreover, regenerated humanity is restored and now able, like Adam was at the beginning, to learn truth directly from God (Jer 31:33-34; Eph 4:23-24; Col 3:10).

The “old man” remains a problem for believers even though they have become new creations and part of “new man” humanity. During this lifetime, a believer is still trapped inside a mortal body which as part of old humanity has been corrupted by the fall of man and thus is prone to serve sin. Consequently, a believer cannot escape his fleshly body and its sinfulness until death (or the rapture). As a result, Paul admits that sometimes, even though he might not understand why he is sinning, what he is doing is sin, and he hates it:

For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. . . . For if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me (Rom 7:15-20).

How does Paul face this problem? He does two things. First, he does not allow sin to reign in his mortal body but, instead, presents himself as a servant of righteousness (Rom 6:12-23). Second, when he finds that sin is dwelling in his mortal body, he “delights in the Law of God according to the inward man” (Rom 7:21). Even though his “outward” (old) man is still tainted by sin, the believer’s “inward” (new) man can be free from sin. When Jesus Christ comes again, He will completely deliver believers from the “wretched [old] man” (Rom 7:24-25).

The “Firstborn”

When Mary conceived and then gave birth to Jesus, He was the first “new” creation, the first of restored humanity to be born. In Scripture, being the “firstborn” is a technical term, describing the specific rights, privileges, and inheritance allotted to an eldest son. Being the “firstborn” of restored

humanity gives Jesus Christ certain rights and responsibilities as the leader of restored humanity.

Created in God's image, Adam was the firstborn of old humanity. After Adam lost the rights and responsibilities granted to him as firstborn, God promised to send the Messiah, who would be "His firstborn" and "the highest of the Kings of the earth" (Ps 89:27). The author of Hebrews teaches that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, "the expressed image of God" (Heb 1:3). As the firstborn of God, Christ has become the elder Brother to God's children (Heb 2:11, 12, 17). By means of His death and the ransom purchased by His blood, Christ rescues believers from the domain of darkness and transfers them into His Kingdom.

Paul explains further that Christ is not only the firstborn of the new humanity, He is the "firstborn over all creation." God has granted Christ the leadership and preeminence over all things:

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. . . . And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence (Col 1:15-18).

By means of His resurrection, Christ has gained supremacy over both the old creation and the new creation. Becoming "the firstborn from the dead and the ruler over the kings of the earth" (Rev 1:5), Jesus Christ can claim the right of dominion over the Earth which was lost by the first Adam of original creation. Furthermore, as the "second Adam," who has obeyed God's will, Christ will inherit all things in the new creation.

Why is the fact that Christ is the firstborn of new humanity important? In biblical culture, the firstborn (the oldest son) would eventually become responsible for the care of the rest of his family. Since Jesus Christ is described as "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom 8:29; cf. Ps 89:27), He has the responsibility of caring for His siblings in His new family.

Christ leads His family, consisting of believers from every age since the foundation of the world, whose names have been registered in Heaven (Lk 10:20; cf. Heb 12:23).

Jesus Christ, the firstborn of restored humanity, is our captain,¹³ the pioneer leading the way for the rest of God's family. Jesus willingly becomes the "pioneer of salvation" so that, through His suffering, believers can become children of God (Heb 2:10).

Jesus is the [pioneer] and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb 12:2).

Jesus, whom God raised from the dead, is the "pioneer" of life. When He heals the sick and restores the lame, He does so to demonstrate that mankind can be fully restored when God restores all things (Acts 3:15-21).

Being "the firstborn from the dead," Christ has preeminence in all things. Thus, He is the "head of the body, the church" and the Leader of believers, "delivered . . . from the power of darkness and conveyed into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col 1:13-14).

Today, the church body consists of regenerated humanity and includes all those who have been both united to Christ by faith and raised to new life:

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin (Rom 6:5-6).

Under the New Covenant, believers, having been united with Christ, are obligated to live a Christlike life.

¹³ The Greek word *archēgos* means one who takes the lead, as an example or pioneer in a matter. Thus this word is translated "prince" (Acts 3:15 and 5:31), "captain" (Heb 2:10), and "author" (Heb 12:2).

Christ, the firstborn of restored humanity, will share His inheritance with His brethren, who are “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17; cf. 2Cor 1:7; Eph 3:6; Col 1:12; Heb 3:14; 1Pet 4:13). After the old creation has been dissolved and God has restored everything by new creation, restored believers will enjoy the gift of everlasting life on the New Earth and some will enjoy the privilege of entering the Kingdom of God.

A “New Creation”

Paul describes the new creation of those who are regenerated into Christ’s new humanity. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2Cor 5:17; cf. Gal 6:15). Believers have already become new creations.

Having become “new creations,” believers now have the responsibility and privilege of living their lives according to a new order, Christ’s regenerated humanity (see Table 12.1 for a Comparison of the Old Order to the New Order.)

Table 12.1 Comparison of the Old Order with the New Order

Old Creation	New Creation
First Adam	Last Adam
Old man	New man
Sinful	Forgiven
Destruction	Restoration
Fleshly	Spiritual
Separation from God	Fellowship with God
Unrighteous	Righteous
Death	Life

Believers are to live as new creations according to the principles of the new man: “even though our outward man is perishing, yet the [new] inward man is being renewed day by day” (2Cor 4:16). While the old, outward man is sinful, the new, inner man is to “delight in the law of God” (Rom 7:22). God’s help is available, and He is ready to strengthen believers

“through His Spirit in the [new] inner man” (Eph 3:16). Living as new creations, believers are instructed to “put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:24).

A “Child of God”

John writes his gospel account so that “you might believe that Jesus is the Christ and that believing you might have life through His name” (Jn 20:31). At the beginning of his account, John explains a benefit of believing that Jesus is the Christ: “as many as received [Christ], to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (Jn 1:12). The concept of “becoming a child of God” involves two events. One event is necessarily first and describes a believer’s rescue from sin when he is reborn as a child of God; this is his regeneration as a new creation. The second event is a process of restoration, describing a believer’s maturation as a son of God, as he becomes a true disciple of Christ.

Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is justified by faith and immediately becomes a child of God and is given the gift of everlasting life (Jn 1:12; 3:3, 5, 15-17). However, God’s expectation for His children is that they become mature.¹⁴ Jesus explained this process in terms of discipleship: “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’” (Jn 8:31-32). These Jews were already believers; they had already been justified by faith and born again. Jesus was explaining that there was a process requiring obedience to His commands for them to become “real,” “true” disciples. If they become true disciples, then they will know the truth (of the New Covenant) and the truth will set them free.

¹⁴ 1Cor 2:6; 3:1-2; 14:20; Eph 4:11-14; Col 1:9-10; Heb 5:12-6:1; 1Pet 2:2; 2Pet 3:16-18.

In Galatians, Paul explains the difference between being a “free son” and being a “slave.” Paul calls those believers who follow the commands of the Old Covenant “foolish”:

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? (Gal 3:1-3)

Paul indicates that, instead of being free, matured (“perfected”) sons by obeying the Law of Christ, these believers have fallen from the grace of God (Gal 1:6; 5:4).

Paul explains that believers who follow the Old Covenant are no better than slaves, like Ishmael, who was born in bondage like his mother Hagar (Gal 4:22-25). However, God intends that His children under the New Covenant should be free sons¹⁵ like Isaac, the heir who was born of Sarah, the free woman (Gal 4:26-5:1). “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. . . . And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:26-29).

In his first epistle, John details four stages of spiritual maturity in a chiastic poem (1Jn 2:12-14). The initial stage is when someone believes Christ and, becoming a “little child” (*teknion*, offspring, baby) of God, is justified by faith and has his sins forgiven (1Jn 2:12). The second stage of spiritual maturity is when a believer becomes a “young child” (*paidion*, little boy or girl; servant) and knows God as his Father (1Jn 2:13). The third stage is when a believer matures to be a

¹⁵ The author of Hebrews also explains this principle, making a distinction between the *nothos* (natural sons born of a concubine, Heb 12:8) and free sons (lawful sons born of the lawful wife). On the one hand, the *nothos* do not receive the father’s discipline but neither do they receive an inheritance. On the other hand, the lawful sons are corrected and mature under the father’s discipline and, thereby being profited, receive his inheritance.

“young adult” (*neaniskos*, young man): he becomes strong, the Word of God abides in him, and he overcomes the evil (one) of this world (1Jn 2:13, 14). The fourth stage is when a believer becomes “a mature adult” (*patēr*, father) who intimately knows Christ, the One from the beginning (1Jn 2:13, 14; cf. Phil 3:8-11). Of course, John’s purpose in writing is to help believers to remain in fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ, so that our joy might be filled full when Christ comes again (1Jn 1:3-4).

Paul often uses the word “son” (*huios*, mature son) to describe God’s expectation that His children become free, mature sons (Rom 8:14, 19; 9:26, 27; 2Cor 6:18; Gal 3:26; 4:7). However, John uses the word *huios* only one time to describe mature children of God. On the day when God grants His inheritance on the New Earth, those mature believers who have overcome the evil of this present world will be declared “sons of God”: “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (Rev 21:7). These “sons” of God who have pleased Him by doing His will are restored to what He intended for mankind; they will be restored to the privileges originally enjoyed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.