

# Centrality of Grace

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“Grace as a gift is not a central term in the Gospels to describe the relationship between persons or between God and humans.”

*The Westminster Theological Wordbook of the Bible*

# Soul

Essence of Individuality

# “Soul”

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**Soul** ... “in religion and philosophy, the immaterial aspect or essence of a human being, that which confers individuality and humanity, often considered to be synonymous with the [mind or the self](#).”

In theology, the soul is further defined as that part of the individual which partakes of divinity and often is considered to survive the death of the body.”

Encyclopedia Britannica

- “The early Hebrews apparently had a concept of the soul but did not separate it from the body ...”
- “Christian concepts of a body-soul dichotomy originated with the ancient Greeks and were introduced into Christian theology at an early date ...”
- Some Greeks (Epicureans) considered the soul to be made up of material substance like the rest of the body. For the Platonists, the soul was an immaterial and incorporeal substance. Aristotle’s conception of the soul was obscure, though he did state that it was a form inseparable from the body.

Encyclopedia Britannica

# *nephesh*

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The Hebrew word נְפֹשׁ ... *nephesh* ... although translated as “soul” in some older English Bibles, actually has a meaning closer to “living being.” *Nephesh* refers to a living, breathing conscious body, rather than to an immortal soul. It is used in the Hebrew scriptures for both humans and animals.

*Nephesh* was translated into the Greek in the Septuagint as ψυχή ... *psyche* ... which has substantially the same meaning as the Hebrew ... a *self* ... without reference to the concept of an immortal soul.

The traditional concept of an immaterial and immortal soul distinct from the body was not found in Judaism before the Babylonian exile (6<sup>th</sup> cent BCE), but developed as a result of interaction with Persian and Hellenistic philosophies.

“There is no term in English corresponding to *nephesh*, and the (Christian) ‘soul’, which has quite different connotations is nonetheless customarily used to translate it.”

Robert Alter ... professor of Hebrew

# Human ... as a unity

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Human beings are a unity of body and *nephesh* (soul).

This conception ... “views man as a psychophysical unity ... founded on the biblical worldview, has little religious significance, it considers the soul subordinate to time and nature, existing within the confines of physical reality alone.”

“In latter stages of development, the Jewish conception of the soul was influenced by Greek philosophical views ... were clearly influenced by the medieval interpretations of Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, and Aristotelianism.”

“... medieval Jewish thought made a unique attempt to adapt these philosophical views to the Torah and to make them a means for interpreting concepts relating to ethics, religious piety, prophecy, and the knowledge of God.”

Rachel Elijor ... professor of Jewish philosophy, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

“... Scripture is inclined to see the soul as more intrinsically connected with the body than Western thinking does.”

# *nephesh* ... meaning

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The Hebrew word נְפֹשׁ ... *nephesh* ...

- derived from a root meaning ... “to breathe”
- translated as ... breath ... respiration ... life ... soul ... spirit ... mind ... a living being ... a creature ... person ... self ...
- *“For the life (nephesh) of the flesh is in the blood ...”* (Leviticus 17:11a)
  - “the vital principle which results in death when it leaves the body.”
- Appears over 700x in Hebrew scriptures
  - The KJV uses over 28 different English terms for this one Hebrew word.

*“And G-d said: ‘Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures (chayyah nephesh), and let fowl fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.’”*

(Genesis 1:20)

*“Then HaShem G-d formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (chayyah nephesh).”*

(Genesis 2:7)

# *Nephesh ... the “self”*

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In ancient Hebrew thought there is a distinction between the “inner self” (*nephesh*) and the “outer appearance” (*shem*) ... what one is to oneself (one’s essence) and how one appears to others (perception).

There is no indication that this *nephesh* is immortal or separable from man himself. The emphasis was on the person as a complete unit.

Human beings are “living souls” ... not containing souls.

The soul ... is life ... the life giving principle ... provided by God.

The textual evidence indicates a multiplicity of perspectives on these issues including probable changes in meaning during the centuries in which the biblical corpus developed ... and beyond. These developments oftentimes occurred because of syncretism with outside influences.

# Plato

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By the time of Plato (5<sup>th</sup> century BCE) concepts about the soul had developed.

- The soul is a divine creation (don't associate "divine" with a Theistic ... caring Being however) ... souls preexisted their occupied bodies ... the soul is immortal.
  - Knowledge (epistemology) is a matter of recollection of the state before one is born, and not of observation or study.
- The body and soul are separate entities. (mind/ body dualism)
- The soul is perfect but that perfection is contaminated by having to be encased in a body (early Gnosticism).
- The relationship between the soul and the body can be "strained."
- The soul "transmigrates" from body to body when death occurs ... until it is "rationally" perfected.



# Aristotle

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Aristotle (4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) referred to the soul as **the formative principle** of every living thing ... literally it was who we are ... who one is.

The soul of a rose makes it a rose. The soul of a lion makes that creature a lion (“essence”).

What makes human souls unique, what separates us from all other creatures, is the soul of a human contains a **rational element** that enables us to reason and think abstractly.

**Nous** is the term Aristotle gave to the highest part of the rational soul. Aristotle stressed that nous ... when it is set free, is **timeless, divine, and immortal**.

The exact definition of nous varies, depending on whether you're talking to a philosopher, historian, or religious thinker.

# “Soul”

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A Roman Catholic understanding ...

- “In Sacred Scripture the term ‘soul’ often refers to human *life* or the entire human *person*.” (para 363)
- “... it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living human body ...” (para 365)
- “Every man receives his eternal recompense in his immortal soul from the moment of his death in a particular judgment by Christ, the judge of the living and the dead.” (para 1051)
- “... every spiritual soul is created immediately by God ... is immortal ... does not perish when it separates from the body at death, and it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection.” (para 366)

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed

Is this scriptural?

# Development of Concept

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“Human beings seem always to have had some notion of a shadowy double that survives the death of the body. But the idea of the soul as a mental entity, with intellectual and moral qualities, interacting with a physical organism but capable of continuing after its dissolution, derives in Western thought from Plato and entered into Judaism during approximately the last century before the Common Era and thence into Christianity.

In Jewish and Christian thinking it has existed in tension with the idea of the resurrection of the person conceived as an indissoluble psychophysical unity. Christian thought gradually settled into a pattern that required both of these apparently divergent ideas.

At death the soul is separated from the body and exists in a conscious or unconscious disembodied state. But on the future Day of Judgment souls will be re-embodied (whether in their former but now transfigured earthly bodies or in new resurrection bodies) and will live eternally in the heavenly kingdom.”

Encyclopedia Britannica

The concept developed from Greek philosophy ... not scripture alone.

# “Psyche”

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From the Greek: ψυχή ... the vital force which animates the body ... a living being.

In the KJV of the bible ... translated as ...

soul (58x), life (40x), mind (3x), heart (1x), heartily (1x), *not translated* (2x)

Jesus ...

*“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your **life** (psyche), what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not **life** (psyche) more than food, and the body more than clothing?”* (Matthew 6:25)

*“Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the **soul** (psyche); rather fear him who can destroy both **soul** (psyche) and body ...”* (Matthew 10:28)

*“Those who find their **life** (psyche) will lose it, and those who lose their **life** (psyche) for my sake will find it.”* (Matthew 10:39)

- Those who lose their souls for my sake !!

# *Psyche* ≠ Soul

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Soul, as it is generally, theologically, understood today, is not compatible with biblical usage and understanding.

- In Paul's writings, the term *psyche* is used to indicate a person's life ... a personal "self" ... as opposed to that of an inanimate object.
- In the Epistle to the Hebrews, *psyche* is used to indicate a "whole person" or a "self."

In a theology textbook ... *Christian Theology – An introduction* (2001), the word "soul" does not even appear in the index or in the glossary of theological terms!

Psychology (from *psyche* and *logos*) ... a science ... the study of mind and behavior in humans. (certainly not the "science" of studying the human soul from a religious perspective.)

# Today

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“In the New Testament then, the *psuchē* [psyche], although fundamentally rooted in a Hebrew concept, encompasses so much of what is today understood as the ‘self’ that it confronts one with many of the very complex problems to be found in modern discussions of selfhood.”

Encyclopedia.com

In both Jewish and Christian scriptural understanding, “soul” really means “self”, “life” (to be distinguished from inanimate objects), or a complete “person.”

But ... these modern day concepts differ significantly from their ancient understanding. What it means to be a “person” ... a conscious “self” ... a human being is not universally agreed to.

“Soul” is a poor translation of ancient Hebrew and Greek words ... and does not fit the understanding of the human condition today.

# Eternal Life

Where do we go from here ?

# In Judaism ...

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“There is profound disagreement with regard to the interpretation and reception of the belief in life beyond death.”

“... the Jew’s dream of promise fulfilled and expectation gratified, the eschatological teaching is a muddle.”

“... the Jew should not do the will of his creator out of crass desire for reward, there can be little conviction that doing the will of God and observing the Torah with a clean heart and an obedient spirit will be rewarded.”

“God does not reward in the midst of life; indeed, it is surely questionable whether God rewards contingent service and its finite human performer at all.”

“However much the simple believer may wish to espouse a belief in meticulous reward and punishment, the evidence of this world is hardly conclusive.”

Arthur Cohen ... *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*



# A Life ... after death

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Martin Buber ... *The Prophetic Faith*

*“Thou wilt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me with glory.”*  
(Psalm 73:24)

“A developed belief in personal immortality is as little expressed here as in the related verse in Psalm 49 ...”

*“But G-d will redeem my soul from the power of the nether-world; for He shall receive me.”* (Psalm 49:16)

“... God ‘taking’ man at his death ... in the eyes of the speaker death is already turned into a mystery.”

# God ... present even in death

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Martin Buber ... *The Prophetic Faith*

“The Psalmist, who gives the idea a new shape, does not mean that he will be taken up into heaven, but he believes that God will care for him in death as in life, that he will be actively present to him in death. Beyond this certainty that God does not remove His presence from His saints even in death, the Psalmist obviously does not allow his imagination to play. It is indeed true, in my opinion, that belief in enduring bliss ‘did not take root in Judaism until a latter age and not without the influence of foreign religions’ ...”

# After Death ...

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**Sheol** שְׁאוֹל: Place of departed dead in ancient Hebrew thought, [without reference to punishments and rewards](#).

The place where those who had died were believed to be congregated.

- Word used within Hebrew Scriptures ~ 66 times.
- Etymology: pit, abyss. Greek ... *Hades*

Here the dead meet without distinction of rank or condition ... the rich and the poor, the pious and the wicked, the old and young, the master and slave.

- Existence as “mere shadow.”
- Existence without knowledge or feeling.
- Silence reigns supreme.
- Return is not expected.
- The “eternal house.”

# Sheol

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An example ...

In Genesis (chapter 37) , when Jacob sees Joseph's coat of many colors that had been dipped in blood after Joseph had been sold into slavery by his brothers ... Jacob responds ...

*“He recognized it, and said, ‘My son's tunic! A savage beast devoured him! Joseph was torn by a beast!’ Jacob rent his clothes, put sackcloth on his loins, and observed mourning for his son many days. All his sons and daughters sought to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, saying, ‘No, I will go down mourning to my son in **Sheol**.’ Thus his father bewailed him.” (Genesis 37:33-35 JPS 1985)*

KJV ... grave

NRSV ... Sheol

Douay-Rheims ... hell

NKJ ... Sheol

NIV ... grave

JPS 1917 ... grave

LXX ... Hades

JPS 1985 ... Sheol

Other translations: ... until I die ... world of the dead ... next world

# Developments

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“During the period of the Pharisees and Sadducees, Hellenism gave rise to speculation about life after death, and brought with it beliefs which came to be discussed and considered at length in Jewish circles. Speculation reached fever pitch during time of Maccabees and became increasingly apocalyptic during Roman period.”

- “How can God's callous disregard for the righteous be justified?”
- “... it solves the eternal problem of theodicy: God's justice.”

“While rabbinic Judaism subscribed to a notion of life after death and resurrection, it tolerated a great deal of speculation concerning the particulars ...”

Rabbi Amy Scheinerman

“The post-biblical texts of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha open a window onto Second Temple thinking about death and afterlife, which began to include influences from cultures in which Jews of the period lived. One such influence, imported from the Greeks, was the addition of a concept of the immortality of the soul to the already-established belief in bodily resurrection.”

Leila Leah Bronner (d 2019) ... *Journey to Heaven*

# *Aion* and Eternal Life

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“Eternal life” ... life after death ... reward and punishment after death ... take on a greater role in developed Christianity.

Eternal life ... αιώνια ζωή ... *aiónia zoí*

*aion* ... a word used in the scriptures ~ 200x

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have **eternal life.**”* (John 3:16)

*“Then someone came to him and said, ‘Teacher, what good deed must I do to have **eternal life?**’ And he said to him ... If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”* (Matthew 19:16-17)

The word translated as “eternal” is *aionios* ... originally the word was used to denote a “duration” (of time).

# *Aion*

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The Greek word *aion* originally meant “life”, “vital force” or “being”, “generation” or “a period of time”, though it tended to be translated as “age” in the sense of “ages”, “forever”, “timeless” or “for eternity”. In classical (secular) Greek it typically refers to life or lifespan.

**“... I am with you always, to the end of the age.”** (Matthew 28:20b)

... the word “age” being a translation of *aion*.

Rendering *aion* to indicate eternity in this verse would result in the illogical phrase ... “end of eternity.”

Point: *aion* does not always mean ... cannot always mean ... eternal.

# Fullness of Life

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Remember ... Jesus didn't teach in Greek ... he spoke Aramaic ...

When Jesus taught, he may have used the term *gamal* in Aramaic (later translated as *aionios* in the Greek texts), meaning completeness ... fullness ... or ripe ... when referring to what life could be.

Following the teachings of Jesus, therefore, offers a **fullness of life** ... a completeness to one's own self ... **a ripe life** ... here and now ... a very Jewish understanding ... not "eternal life."

This may sound odd to us but ripeness connotes fulfilling one's purpose ... being what one was supposed to be.



# Eternal Life ?

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*“Jesus said to her [the woman at the well], ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to **eternal life**.’” (John 4:13-14)*

*“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’” (John 6:35)*

*“Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has **eternal life**. I am the bread of life.” (John 6:47-48)*

The promise of “eternal life.” Heaven ??

Living water ... metaphor ...      Bread of life ... metaphor ...

Literalists are extremely selective in their understanding.

Is this a promise of a “fullness of life”?

# Life ... Now

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Within the Gospel of John, concepts of forgiveness ... justification ... and salvation are not used.

The promise of belief is life and the reception of the Spirit.

*“And this is eternal (aionios) life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3)*

- Here ... now ... not after death ... not “heaven.”

Eternal life = “knowing God”

# “Eternal Life” ?

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There is no agreement in the church today about what happens to people when they die.

The traditional picture of people going to either heaven or hell as a one-stage, postmortem journey represents a serious distortion and diminution of the Christian hope.

N.T. Wright, March 24, 2008

*Surprised By Hope ... 2008*

Salvation is about more than just human souls ... it is about all of creation. All of creation fell ... [all of creation needs salvation](#).

N.T. Wright ... “Jesus’s resurrection is the beginning of God’s new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about.” ...

*“thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.”*

# Heaven

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Time magazine ... January 27, 2020

Heaven on earth ...

“Many people think you go to heaven when you die, but according to N. T. Wright, professor of New Testament and early Christianity at the University of St. Andrews, that’s not what the early Christians believed.

‘The point was not for you to ‘go to heaven,’ but for the life of heaven to arrive on earth,’ he explains.”

The Kingdom (reign) of God upon the earth.

**Immortality**

# After Death

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“The biblical view of man demands the resurrection of the body as the goal of individual eschatology.

Therefore the life of the age to come requires the resurrection and redemption of the body.

Immortality in Scripture does not mean endless existence but freedom from death.”

“The Bible has little to say about the state of the dead.”

*The New Bible Dictionary*

“... humanity was not created *with* immortality, but they were made *for* immortality, to know God and to enjoy him forever ...”

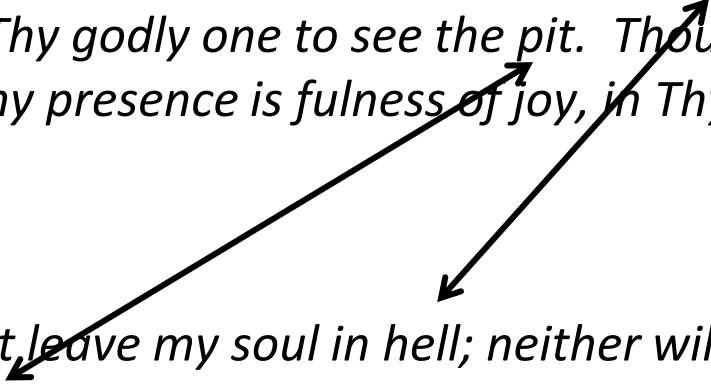
*The New Testament – In Its World*

# Life in/ with God

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In ancient Judaism ... a person does not cease to exist at death ... but descends to Sheol.

“Sheol is not so much a place as the state of the dead. It is not non-existence; but it is not life, for life can be enjoyed only in the presence of God.”

- *“For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to the nether-world (sheol); neither wilt Thou suffer Thy godly one to see the pit. Thou makest me to know the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy, in Thy right hand bliss for evermore.”* (Psalm 16:10-11)
    - a hope
  - *“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”* (Psalm 16:10 KJV)
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“Sheol is the Old Testament manner of asserting that death does not terminate existence.”

# After Death

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*The New Testament – In Its World*



# Life in/ with Jesus

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In Christianity ... “The revelation that death does not end human existence is enlarged in the New Testament.”

“... there are a few glimpses that the redeemed are with Christ after death ...”

One of those crucified with Jesus ...

*“Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ He [Jesus] replied, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.’”*

(Luke 23:42-43)

- Only use of the word paradise in the Gospels.

However ... “Sayings about the ‘salvation of your souls’ do not anticipate a salvation of the soul apart from the body ...”

*The New Bible Dictionary*

# No Consensus ...

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“At the end of time, the **Kingdom of God will come in its fullness**. After the universal judgment, the righteous will **reign for ever with Christ**, glorified in body and soul. **The universe itself will be renewed ...**”

“Those who die in God’s grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live forever with Christ. **They are like God for ever**, for they ‘see him as he is,’ face to face.”

**“This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity – this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed – is called ‘heaven.’”**

*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1997  
para 1042, 1023, 1024

Two concepts ... both from the current *Catechism of the Catholic Church* do not seem to have resolved the issue **of resurrection of the body in a “renewed universe” ... and the immortality of the soul in a transcendent “heaven.”**

**Satan**

Adversary

# Satan

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Satan: a term used in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

In the development of the concept over time ... the term becomes more and more personal ... from an internal evil inclination ... to an external source of “evil” ... to a personal being in opposition to God.

In Hebrew scriptures, the word satan meaning simply “adversary” is used frequently (~27x).

The word devil is not used ...

In Christian scriptures (Greek) the word (name) Satan appears 37x.

The word devil is used frequently (38x).

The use of the two words seems to be interchangeable.

# Satan/ devil

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Hebrew: שָׂטָן... satan (“adversary”)

The root ... *stn* ... from the Hebrew ... means “one who opposes, obstructs, or acts as adversary.”

The term “devil” is not used in the Hebrew scriptures ... although in some English translations ...

*“And they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices unto the satyrs (devils), after whom they go astray.”* (Leviticus 17:7a)

- “hairy-goat-idol”

Greek: Σατάν/ Σατανᾶς ... satan/ Satan (a proper name) Used 1x/ 36x in the Christian scriptures.

The Greek term διάβολος ... *diabolos*, translated “devil,” literally means “one who throws something across one’s path.”

The term is used frequently in Christian scriptures ... in the KJV 38x ... translated as devil (35x), false accuser (2x), slanderer (1x).

# Satan ... and God

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Judaism ...

- In the Hebrew scriptures ... satan ... is usually a “son of God” ... or “angel” (*malak*), a messenger ... who “works” for God.
- The first scriptural reference to satan appears in the Book of Numbers ... The king of Moab “hired” Balaam to curse the Israelites.  
*“And G-d's anger was kindled because he (Balaam) went; and the angel (messenger) of HaShem placed himself in the way for an adversary (satan) against him.”* (Numbers 22:22)

A messenger of God is acting as an adversary blocking a false prophet's way ... so he cannot place a curse on the Israelites.  
Satan (the messenger/ adversary) is doing God's bidding.

# The Book of Job

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In the book of Job ... Satan plays his role ...

*“Now it fell upon a day, that the sons of G-d came to present themselves before HaShem, and Satan came also among them. And HaShem said unto Satan: ‘Whence comest thou?’ Then Satan answered HaShem, and said: ‘From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.’*

*And HaShem said unto Satan: ‘Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a whole-hearted and an upright man, one that feareth G-d, and shunneth evil?’*

*Then Satan answered HaShem, and said: ‘Doth Job fear G-d for nought? Hast not Thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions are increased in the land.*

*But put forth Thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, surely he will blaspheme Thee to Thy face.’” (Job 1:6-11)*

- Satan as ... accuser ... indicter ... a “devil’s advocate” ... on God’s staff.
- Satan is challenging God ... take away all the blessings you have bestowed on Job ... and he will curse you.

# An Interpretation

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“As he first appears in the Hebrew Bible, Satan is not necessarily evil, much less opposed to God. On the contrary, he appears in the book of Numbers and in Job as one of God’s obedient servants – a messenger, or angel, a word that translates the Hebrew term for messenger (*mal’ak*) into Greek (*angelos*). In Hebrew, angels were often called “sons of God” (*bene’elohim*), and were envisioned as the hierarchical ranks of a great army, or the staff of a royal court”

Elaine Pagels ... *The Origin of Satan*



# Inclination to Evil

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Where does the tendency ... the inclination to evil ... originate? In the development of the concept of satan ... first as an adversary ... indicter ... accuser ... into ... Satan ... the personification of evil ... blame is passed from the inherent tendencies of humankind ... to an outside source.

But is this entirely scriptural?

- *“If thou doest well, shall it not be lifted up? and if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door; and unto thee is its desire, but thou mayest rule over it.”* (Genesis 4:7)
  - The inclination to sin (temptation) is internal ... and can be mastered.
- *“And HaShem 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. And it repented HaShem that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And HaShem said: 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the earth ...'”* (Genesis 6:5-7a)

Sinful ... evil desires ... are internal to humankind. Humankind needs no external source of temptation to be “evil.”

# Satan becomes Bad

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The concept of satan/ devil is utilized much differently in Christian scriptures ... then in earlier Hebrew scriptures.

In the Christian scripture, Satan takes on a more sinister role. Satan is supremely evil ... and is not just an adversary ... or accuser ... but a tempter ... in opposition to God ... and to who the people are to be. As an opponent of God ... Satan is also in conflict with Jesus and his mission.

- *“Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.”* (1 John 3:8)

When Jesus explains that he must go to Jerusalem to die ... and Peter protests ...

*“But he [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.’”* (Matthew 16:23)

# The Concept of Satan

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Jesus ... after healing a woman on the Sabbath ...

*“And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?”*

(Luke 13:16)

When Ananias lies to Peter about the proceeds of land he sold ...

*“‘Ananias,’ Peter asked, ‘why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land?’”*

(Acts of the Apostles 5:3)

Paul ... speaking about the revelations he has received ...

*“Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated.”* (2 Corinthians 12:7)

Satan ... brings disease ... causes one to lie ... torments one to keep him humble.

# Jesus Tempted

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Even before Jesus' ministry begins ... shortly after his baptism by John ...  
Jesus himself is tempted by Satan ...

*“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the **devil**.*

*...*

*The **tempter** came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’ But he answered, ‘It is written, One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’*

*Then the **devil** took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, He will command his angels concerning you, and On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone. Jesus said to him, ‘Again it is written, Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’*

*Again, the **devil** took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, ‘All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, **Satan!** for it is written, Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’ Then the **devil** left him ...” (Matthew 4: 1, 3-11a)*

# False gods become demons

**Baal** ... major god worshipped in many parts of the ancient Middle East, especially among the Canaanites, who considered him a fertility deity and one of the most important gods in the pantheon (king of the gods).

As a Semitic common noun *baal* (Hebrew *ba'al*) meant “owner” or “lord.”

The word/ title Ba'al appears about 90 times in the Hebrew scriptures in reference to various gods.

- The Israelites encounter Ba'al worship.
- But ... Ba'al is not a “real” god.
- Baalim becomes a term for false gods of Israel's neighbors.
- But ... these gods really don't exist ... except as ideas that lead people into idolatry.
- So ... baalim ... becomes “demons” ... leading people to false worship.

Ba'al —————> Baalim

Canaanite fertility god —> false gods —> demons

# Today

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From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

“The Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel, made by God: ‘The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing.’”

(para 391) (IV Lateran Council 1215)

“... evil is not an abstraction, but refers to a person, Satan, The Evil One, the angel who opposes God.” (para 2851)

“... Satan is the major influence on the ideals, opinions, goals, hopes and views of the majority of people. His influence also encompasses the world’s philosophies, education, and commerce. The thoughts, ideas, speculations and false religions of the world are under his control and have sprung from his lies and deceptions. “

gotquestions.org

# *Ecclesia*

**“assembly of believers”**

# *qahal ... ecclesia*

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Both the Hebrew scriptures and the Christian scriptures exist in early Greek versions.

- The Hebrew word *qahal* (קָהָל) is used in the Hebrew scriptures over 100x (123x ... Strong's Concordance). When this word is translated into the Greek in the Septuagint it is translated as *ecclesia* (ἐκκλησία) **in every case.**
- When the word *ecclesia* is used in the Christian scriptures ... it is translated as “church” in almost every case (112 out of 115x).
- The problem is that when the Septuagint is translated into English ... the word *ecclesia* **is never translated** as “church.”

So ... one word ... used in both the Hebrew scriptures in Greek ... and in the Greek Christian scriptures ... is translated into English differently ... depending completely upon in which book(s) the word appears.



# qahal

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The etymology of the word ... in Hebrew ... קָהָל ... comes from “a convoked group” ... i.e., a “called out” or “summoned” group ... translated as ... assembly, company, congregation, convocation.

In early Hebrew scriptures ... the word ‘edah ... עֵדָה ... is oftentimes used for the assembly of “all the people.”

- *Qahal* ... is used as a subset of the ‘edah ... those who are responding to God’s call ... or those to whom God is calling.

For example ... in Genesis 48:4 ...

God ... to Abraham ...

- “... Behold, I will make you fruitful, and you will multiply, and I will make you a **qahal**; and will give this land to your seed for an everlasting possession.”
  - *Qahal* here means “**a multitude of people.**” We wouldn’t be speaking of “church” in God’s covenant promise to Abraham.

# ecclesia ≠ church

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- Even though the word *qahal* is translated from Hebrew into Greek as *ecclesia* ...  
when this word is used in the “Old Testament” context it is **never translated as “church”** ...  
but when the word appears in the New Testament ... it is ***always* translated as church.**
- Modern scholars “blame” the first translators of the scriptures into English ... in England ... in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (even before the King James version of the scriptures) for this “mistranslation” ... misinterpretation.  
The translators wanted the “assembly of believers” that the scriptures speak of ... to be thought of as the established church. It was a self serving translation.
- It is elitist ... supersessionist ...  
Christians saw the “Church” as the only means of “salvation.”

# Church ???

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## “Old Testament”

Hebrew Scriptures

(in Hebrew)

*“qahal”*

Hebrew Scriptures

*Septuagint*

(in Greek)

*“ecclesia”*

“Old Testament”

(in English)

**congregation, assembly,  
multitude**

## “New Testament”

Christian Scriptures

(in Greek)

*“ecclesia”*

“New Testament”

(in English)

**church**

# *Ecclesia*

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The etymology of the word *ecclesia* from the Greek derives from ... *ekklētos* “called” ... and from ... *ekkalein* “to call out.”

***Ecclesia* means an “assembly” ... “to be called out” ... usually by a higher authority.**

- A secular council ...
- Soldiers in an army.
- In the Christian context, *ecclesia* should be seen as an assembly of believers ... called out ... by God.
- Called out of what ... the world.
- For what purpose ... to be God’s people (to establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth.)

# *Ecclesia*

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If we think of the word *ecclesia* meaning an assembly of believers ... called out ... by God ... for a specific purpose ...

it makes sense for the Covenant people of God of the Hebrew scriptures ...

and for the believers in Jesus in the context of the Christian scriptures.

Responders to God ...with similar beliefs and responses ... are *ecclesia* ...

# “Church”

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“Church” in the sense of a religious community distinct from Israel emerged after Jesus’ death and resurrection ... they were not founded by Jesus but came into being in reference to him.

- One belonged to this community when one publicly demonstrated one’s commitment through a distinctive rite of initiation ... baptism.
- The community gathered for prayers and celebrated a commemorative meal of thanksgiving in private houses to remember Jesus’ death and resurrection. (eucharist ... *eukharistia* ... “thanksgiving”)
- A community in freedom, and equality.

“... there are no words of Jesus addressed to the public which programmatically summon a community of the elect or call for the founding of a church.”

“... there is no evidence that in the historical ministry Jesus ever spoke of the Church.”

*The Critical Meaning of the Bible ... Raymond Brown*

# The Kingdom of God and the Church

	Synoptics	John		Acts	Epistles (21)
Kingdom of God	<b>117</b>	<b>5</b>		7	19
<i>ecclesia</i> church	4* (all Matthew)	0		<b>19</b>	<b>66</b>

\* church ... 4x ... NRSV

church ... 3x ... RSV/ KJV

# “church”

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The word “*ecclesia*” is only used four times in all four of the Gospels ... all within the Gospel of Matthew.

*“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”*

*“And I tell you, you are Petros (Peter), and on this petra (rock) I will build my ecclesia (**church**), and the gates of Hades (hell) will not prevail against it.”*  
(16:18)

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*“If another member of the **church** sins against you [If your brother sins], go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone.*

*If the member listens to you, you have regained that one [the brother].*

*But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.*

*If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the **church**; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the **church**, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector.”* (18:15-17)

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**church** ... 4x ... NRSV

**church** ... 3x ... RSV/ KJV



# “... on this rock ...”

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*“He [Jesus] said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’*

*Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.*

*And I tell you, you are Petros (Peter), and on this petra (rock) I will build my (ecclesia) church, and the gates of Hades\* will not prevail against it.*

*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”* (Matthew 16:15-19)

\* “powers of death” (RSV) ... “gates of hell” (KJV)

- “Binding” and “loosing” were idiomatic expressions in rabbinical Judaism to denote the promulgation of rulings either forbidding or authorizing various kinds of activity. Catholic Answers

That which is “bound” or “loosed” can (and does) change over time ... slavery, homosexuality, divorce, remarriage, reception of eucharist, individual rights, free thought ...

# “binding” and “loosing”

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What is the “rock” (*petra*) upon which the ecclesia is built?

*Petros* (Peter) ... the individual.

**Or**

Peter’s *kyrygma* (proclamation) that Jesus is ... “*the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*”

*Many views:*

- Authority given to Peter specifically ... and his successors ... forever ... (papal primacy)
- Authority given to all the “apostles” ... forever ... apostolic succession ...
- Authority to preach the gospel ... “the means of opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers and shutting it against unbelievers.” GotQuestions
- “... when you bind something here on earth, it will be bound in the spiritual realm as well. This gives us the ability to bind demons, because they dwell within the spiritual realm.” GreatBible Study

It’s not that the apostles were given the privilege of changing God’s mind ...

**End**

# Final Takeaways

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Words used in Scriptures ... both Hebrew and Greek ... have multiple meanings.

- In many cases many, many meanings, not always compatible.
- Translations ... are in fact interpretations of meaning and purpose/ intent.

Dogmatic/ doctrinal statements concerning the transcendent simply cannot be made that are absolute ... eternal ... coherent.

- Language (words) is not up to the task (adequate).
- Words themselves change meaning over time.

Oftentimes dogmatic/ doctrinal statements define/ describe concepts “truths” which are not/ cannot be known.

“Faith” cannot be confused with “knowledge” (epistemology).

Faith is not a series of “belief” statements.