

## INTRODUCTION

Here are two essays on very important Bible events that are largely neglected.

The first is about the “*telos*” of I Corinthians 15:28, and it is eight pages long. The second essay follows directly after the first and is seven pages. It concerns what can be called “**the Great Confession**” seen in Romans 14:11 and two other scriptures. After these two comes a one-page tract “Christmas 2009.”

Feel free to use any of these essays as you wish in promoting God’s good Word.

## **THE GREAT *TELOS***

### **I Corinthians 15:20-28**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Bible translators have given the Greek word *telos* several English meanings. *Telos* is found 40 times in the New Testament where it is taken to designate the end, outcome, result, or finish. In I Corinthians 15:20-28, it has these meanings in respect to the culmination of God's great plan for all, in one comprehensive event. But the *telos* of the Corinthian epistle designates more than just a grandiose finale; it is likewise the beginning of a new perpetual system of everlasting bliss for **all**.

Before we dwell on the *telos* itself, however, there are several preliminary steps that we ought to view first, steps that God will enact in advance of and leading up to the *telos*. As we proceed next to consider the *telos*, realize that all peoples' works will be examined by the Lord. Believers will face Divine correction at the *bema* seat of Christ. People who die outside of the faith of Christ will undergo strict but fair evaluation when the "books" are opened. While God's judgments are a different subject than the glorious *telos*, they are brought up here to remind us that every word about them in the Bible will be fulfilled. The Bible clearly shows that God's judgments will be stern but it also demonstrates that they will **not** last forever (see other essays on this site and on the linked sites.)

#### **ALL RULE, POWER, AUTHORITY, AND ALL DEATH WILL BE PUT DOWN**

The word *katargeō* is a verb occurring 27 times in its various forms throughout the Greek New Testament. The NIV translators have sometimes made it mean "destroy" or "destroyed." In I Corinthians chapter 15, however, Young's Literal Translation rendered it "made useless," which is in close alignment with the meaning of its two sections: *kata* (down) and *ergon* (power). *Katargeō* states that certain works, activities, actions, and deeds will be "lowered," put down, made powerless, down-powered, or deactivated. Verse 24 declares that: "All rule, all authority and power" will become idle. Colossians

1:16 reports that God had previously “created” all these “thrones, lordships, sovereignties, and authorities.” But it is His decision to deactivate them before the *telos*, during the rule of God the Son (I Corinthians 15:24). Colossians 2:15 recounts that Christ in his crucifixion triumphed over “powers” and “authorities” and that “He [Christ] made a public spectacle of them.”

God is going to render death idle too: “This last enemy is made powerless—death” (I Corinthians chapter 15, verse 26). In addition to being rendered idle, death is one of the “enemies” that will be put under the feet of Christ during His reign. The subject of what will be put “under Christ’s feet” will be discussed in the next section.

The verb *katargeō* is used in II Timothy 1:10 to tell us that: “our Savior Christ Jesus will be **putting death down...**” The term “**death**” (*thanatou*) used in these verses designates **all** death with no distinction made between the “first death” and the “second death.” The second death will quite obviously end in the lake of fire, as proclaimed in Revelation 20:14: “...death and hades were cast into the lake of fire; the lake of fire is the second death.” The commonly used phrase “eternal death” [meaning “everlasting” death for unbelievers] is found no place in scripture.

In one of its forms, *katargeō* is also used in Hebrews 2:14 to state that “...through His death, He [Christ] might render powerless the one having the power of death, this is the devil...” Hebrews 2:14-15. When God deactivates death, He will likewise cause Satan to become powerless and He will “...free those who through fear of death lived all their lifetime in bondage”. This promise is all-inclusive because all humans have lived in fear of death. We are told in I John 3:8 that Christ’s very purpose in coming as a man was “...in order that He might undo [unloosen--*lusē*] the works of the devil.” These verses prove that even the deeds of the devil will be abolished. Hebrews 9:26b shows that sin will undergo annulment by Christ’s sacrifice of Himself. Satan, Satan’s works, sin, and death will all be dealt with prior to the great *telos*. No group of people will be left outside of Christ in an everlastingly sinful state because sin will be entirely gone.

II Thessalonians 2:8 says that it is the lawless one who will be dispatched or “set aside” by the Spirit of Christ’s mouth and will be brought to nothing “...in the advent of His appearing [coming]...” This verse refers to a satanic agent rather than to Satan himself, but the passage shows that every aspect of Satan’s control will end, leaving no sinful vestige.

### **ALL GOD’S ENEMIES WILL BECOME HIS FOOTSTOOL**

In I Corinthians chapter 15 it is obvious that Christ’s reign will last until He puts all enemies under His feet (verse 25), and verse 26 says that He will **subject** all (panta) under his feet. The word *hypotassō* in verse 26 comes from *hypo* (beneath) and *tasso* (arrange) giving a reference to Christ’s final **benevolent control** in which all is to be arranged under His domain. These verses designate the same event in which all is to be made into [changed into] a footstool for Christ. This transformation could be called the “footstooling of His enemies and of all else too.

The Hebrew word for footstool occurs seven times in the Old Testament. Some of these Old Testament footstool references deal with a glorious act of **worship**. One of them, Isaiah 66:1, says that the earth is God’s footstool. Only one of the Old Testament footstool passages is linked to God’s indignation (Lamentations 2:1)—while one more simply states that God’s enemies will become His footstool—Psalm 110:1, which was later quoted in Acts 2:34-35. .

In none of the six New Testament occurrences of the Greek word for footstool (*hypopodion*) is it presented as a figure of adverse judgment or of a punitive sentence. Two of them quote Isaiah 66:1 saying that the earth is God’s footstool—Matthew 5:35 and Acts 7:49. Four of the New Testament *hypopodion* scriptures state that Christ’s enemies are going to be converted into a footstool for Christ’s feet—Luke 20:43, Acts 2:35, Hebrews 1:13, and Hebrews 10:13. The footstool in the Bible is thus not a picture of the conquering God permanently crushing the head of His struggling adversaries under His foot. It is rather a portrayal of His enemies having undergone corrective judgment, which will change them into a very useful item in Christ’s kingdom rule, an object of

comfort and satisfaction—a stool to support His feet. In Acts 2:34-35 and in Hebrews 10:13 Christ the Lord is peacefully sitting down and using this footstool; He is **not standing** on the heads of vanquished opponents. The end result of footstooling is that all (*panta*) will be completely and peacefully subjected to (hypotassō) the Son.

### **ALL WILL BECOME SUBJECTED TO THE SON**

Before the *telos* takes place, all rulers, all authorities, all powers, all enemies, and the last enemy (death) will be subjected to (hypotasso) Christ. I Corinthians 15:26-27 shows that all else (*panta*) except the Father will likewise be subjected to Christ by God the Father. In these important references, the word “things” has been put into English translations [“all **things**” or **everything**]. But the word “things” is nowhere present in the Greek text. Its routine insertion has been unfortunate because it has led many to believe that these texts deal only with the subjection of **things** (like rocks, rivers, mountains, stars, and deserts) to God. Throughout the passages, however, it has been **people** who are under discussion, **all** people, in fact!

The work by which the Father will head up (anakephalaioō) all people in Christ is also mentioned in Ephesians 1:10 where it says that He [God] heads up all in Christ. First, God the Father will bring all together under Christ. When that has been accomplished, God the Son will then deliver the coherent kingdom over to the Father. This will be a very interesting transfer of leadership, taking place at the onset of the *telos*, as we will see.

### **THE SONS OF GOD WILL BE REVEALED**

While not mentioned in I Corinthians 15, another divine act that will occur prior to the *telos* is the revealing (unveiling—*apokalypsin*, as in Romans 8:19) of the sons of God. The creation itself is watching anxiously and in “eager expectation” of this event (Romans 8:19). When it occurs, the creation will be freed from the slavery of corruption (decay) and will enter into “...the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:21). “The children of God” or “sons of God” in these verses are individuals whom Christ drew to Himself during this life (John 6:44). They will be raised from the dead: “I

will raise up him in the last day..." I Thessalonians 4:16-17 puts it this way: "...the dead in Christ will rise again firstly, then we the living...shall be seized in clouds to a meeting of the Lord in the air" (I Thessalonians 4:16-17). Philippians 3:20-21 shows that the believer's "body of humiliation will be changed" so that it will be like Christ's glorious resurrection body! Christ will be able to accomplish this because He "...is able to subject to Himself the all" (verse 21) and because nothing is impossible with God (Matthew 19:25, Jeremiah 32:27, etc.). Romans 8:23 likewise speaks of this great moment when the children of God will fully experience "sonship" (*huiiothesian*), thereby undergoing "...the redemption of the body (*apolutrōsin tou sōmatos*)." There is thus an underlying biblical connection between, the revealing of the Sons of God, the deliverance of their bodies, the completion of their "sonship," and the ultimate liberation of the entire creation from the bondage of corruption!

I Timothy 4:10 makes clear the difference between the salvation of all and the salvation of believers. It also emphasizes the connection between the salvation of the children of God and the ultimate salvation of all other people by saying that God is "...the savior of all men, **especially of believers.**" It is implied in I Timothy 4:11 that "the salvation of all people" is not a concept to be hidden on a reserve "shelf" somewhere—it is not a secret. It should not be pushed aside nowadays by "orthodox doctrine." Instead it is to be openly **commanded** in Christian teaching: "**Charge** [command] thou **these**, and **teach**" (I Timothy 4:11).

### **THE KINGDOM WILL BE DELIVERED OVER TO GOD THE FATHER**

Christ "... delivers the kingdom to God, even the Father" (I Corinthians 15:24). And again verse 28 states: "...when the all is subjected (*hypotassō*) to Him [the Son], then will the Son Himself be subjected to the One [the Father] Who subjected all unto Him..." This amazing transition of leadership has been called "the great abdication." But it does not sound as abrupt as abdications typically are but consists instead of a free and glorious final authority transfer from one person of the Godhead to the other: from the Son to the Father.

The giving up or delivering over (*paradidōmi*) of the kingdom from the Son to the Father is the consummation of an on-going process in which the Father had been previously putting all under the control of the Son, over a period of time: Matthew 11:27, John 3:35, and John 13:3. After all has been completely placed under Him, Christ will deliver the kingdom over to the Father (I Corinthians 15:24).

### **GOD WILL BE “ALL IN ALL” WHEN THE *TELOS* IS COMPLETED**

The *telos* is named and discussed in I Corinthians 15: 24 where it says that after the resurrection of Christ and after the resurrection of Christ’s own people at his appearing (coming) “...then, the *telos* when He delivers the Kingdom to God, even the Father...” This same event is described in verse 28 where it states that all the previous events, especially the delivering of the kingdom from the Son to the Father, occurred “...**in order that** (ina) God may be all in all (*panta en pasin*).” This act culminates when God permeates all.

A prelude to God’s becoming all in all is seen in the church. In Ephesians 1:23 we learn that right now the church is Christ’s body: “...the fullness (plerōma) of [the one] who fills (*plēroumenou*) the all in all (*panta en pasin*).” The church is His body nowadays and manifests His fullness. In the *telos*, **all** will be filled with Him.

Right now, each believer is filled with the Spirit of God, but after the *telos* **all** will be filled with God. Then, all will be reconciled to God too: “Through Him to reconcile the **all** into Him, making peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, whether on the earth or in the heavens” Colossians 1:20. “But now we see not yet all put under Him, but we see Jesus...” Hebrews 2:8. We can see Jesus nowadays and we can see His work in the church, even though all has not yet been subdued to Him. Philippians 2:10-11 puts it this way: “...that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow: heavenly, earthly, and under the earth; and every tongue proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.” We know this will be true Spirit-led worship by every individual. They will all be confessing Christ as Lord; and no one can do that unless they are filled with the Holy Spirit: “no one can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit” I Corinthians 12:3. This

confession is not a grudging admission by sinful souls who are being confined to hell forever. Since they will all worshipfully proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, we know that they will all have been reconciled, redeemed, and Spirit-filled.

All the events prior to the *telos* occurred “in order that” God might accomplish this last glorious event. It all happened so that God would pervade and permeate the entire universe. God has always been omnipresent but the *telos* appears to involve much more than the previous “omnipresence.” It is a new program in which God will embrace and pervade **all**. If the universe is finite, as many Christians think, then even what lies beyond our universe will likewise experience this fullness of God!

It does not mean that every individual will become a “god” as some cults wrongly teach. It shows instead that God will change and saturate everyone; He will incorporate every corner of every human being into Himself. No one will “become a god” but God will become all in everyone! A hymn like the one in Revelation 5:13 will then be sung in unison by the whole human race: “And every created being who is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth—and they that are in the sea—and all that are in them heard I saying ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him Who sits on the throne and to the Lamb for the aeons of the aeons.’”

It is excellent that believers eagerly look forward to “Heaven” as their future abode. We are told in John 14:2 that they will live in the Father’s house where there are many rooms—presumably dwelling places of all the elect individuals of all times. While it is worthy for believers to anticipate this “heaven”, they ought to express even greater expectancy for the eternal *telos* wherein God will finally become all in all, not only in them and in their redeemed companions, but in with every person from every civilization past, present, and future! Thus the “heaven” which Christians anticipate, will give way to the eternal and much greater *telos* in which every individual will become gloriously saturated with God.

Once the *telos* ensues, all present human trials will vanish; there will be no more death, ignorance, sin, pain, fear, anxiety, loneliness, worry, starvation, trouble, doubt, unbelief, illness, boredom, depression, or grief. In fact, no more annoyances of any sort will occur. The absence of all these negative factors will be even more exquisitely enjoyable because we will be able to remember our troubles of this life in stark contrast.

The scope of the *telos* is unimaginably broad. Until we can experience it, much must be left to joyful speculation. We speculate about what activities will exist in that “eternal *telos* environment.” We wonder if people will be able to finish everything God intended them to do, even accomplishments they failed to achieve while living here on earth. Will each individual be enabled to correct all mistakes made here below? Will children who died in infancy or who were aborted as babies complete God’s plan for them? We may even wonder what will happen to all the animals that have ever lived. The particulars of the *telos* are so monumentally grandiose that no essay of this sort can do them justice! May the recognition of the *telos* become widespread among all God’s people! When someone says “Won’t it be wonderful when we all get to Heaven?” let us reply by saying, “Yes indeed—but it will be even more glorious to exist WITHIN God after the *telos* occurs!”

WHAT IS **THE GREAT CONFESSION** OF ISAIAH 45:22-23, ROMANS 14:11,  
AND EPHESIANS 2:10-11,  
A CONFESSION IN WHICH  
**“...EVERY KNEE WILL BOW; EVERY TONGUE WILL CONFESS...?”**

INTRODUCTION

“Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am the Lord and there is none else. By myself I swear. A word has gone forth from my mouth in righteousness and shall not be turned back: that to Me: every knee will bow and every tongue will swear to God...” Isaiah 45:22-23.

“For it is written ‘Living am I’ says the Lord, ‘ that to Me every knee will bow and every tongue will confess to God...’” Romans 14:11.

“...in order that **in [not “at”]** the name of Jesus every knee will bow—heavenly, earthly, and under the earth—and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord—to the glory of God the Father” Philippians 2:10-11.

In reading these three Bible passages, it sounds like all people are going to bow before God and to confess His name (the Name of Jesus). Let’s look at each of the texts more carefully and consider the words involved to determine if our “first impressions” were correct. We will need to learn what the “bowing,” “swearing,” and “confessing” are all about in the original Hebrew or Greek and we should examine the term “every.” It would also be wise to see what light the surrounding Bible verses may shed on the three scriptures. We should then search for any additional lesson these accounts may teach us. Last but not least, it would be good to go forth and “live out” whatever bold truths exist in these three sections of God’s Word.

“EVERY” COMES FROM **KOL** IN HEBREW AND FROM **PAS** IN GREEK

“**every**” in Isaiah 45:23 is from the Hebrew word **kol**, which appears 5414 times in the Old Testament. In 3246 of these instances, the NIV translated **kol** as “all”, 311 times as “every,” 49 times as “everyone,” and the rest as several other inclusive words. Goodrick and Kohlenberger’s Hebrew dictionary defined **kol** as “the totality of a mass” p. 1423. Strong’s Hebrew dictionary said that **kol** means “...whole; hence all, any, and every” p. 55.

**“Every”** in Romans 14:11 and Philippians 2:10-11 is a translation of the Greek word *pas*. *Pas* occurs 1240 times in the New Testament where it has been given the following English meanings in the NIV: “all” 666 times, “every” 129 times, “everything” 108 times, “everyone” 92 times, and several similar encompassing words for the remaining 245 occurrences. Concerning *pas*, Goodrich and Kohlenberger said: “all, every (thing, one), whole” p. 1581, and Strong stated “all, any, every, the whole” p. 56. Since Christ is the God of the dead and of the living as indicated in Romans 14:9 (just two verses earlier), because *kol* and *pas* both mean “every” in a very comprehensive sense, and since these three verses do not single out the living in contrast to the dead, it is likely that the knees and tongues designated here are those of all living people and dead people too, there being no qualifications otherwise in the Biblical texts.

“BOW” COMES FROM *KARA* IN HEBREW AND FROM *KAMPTŌ* IN GREEK

The word *kara* in Isaiah 45:23 is rendered “bow” in “every knee will bow” (NIV). *Kara* is used 35 other times in the Old Testament where its most prevalent meaning is to bow in reverence—10 times. Its number two alternative designation is to bow under force—eight times. In additional situations, *kara* indicates bowing in death, bowing under a load while trying to carry a heavy idol, humans and goats bowing when birthing their young, a lion crouching down, a posture used when drinking water from a stream, and several others. Thus *kara* simply refers to a positioning of the knees so that any particular passage must itself tell the circumstances. A person taking a kneeling posture may be doing so in worship, as a result of conquest, at the moment of their death, or in childbirth. Based only on these Old Testament usages of *kara*, it would not be possible to show with certainty what *kara* means when all knees bow in Isaiah 45:23. Is it the worshipful bowing of all people in reconciliation to God or the bowing of lost people under coercion, perhaps already in an everlasting torment? The final decision will depend on other statements in Isaiah 45:23, on surrounding remarks near that passage, and on the words of Paul in the New Testament texts

But even with *kara*'s versatile Old Testament situations, there are still reasons to take the bowing in Isaiah 45:23 as a worshipful and compliant ultimate kneeling of all people. Remember, this was the main use of the word (10 occasions). Goodrich and Kohlenberger said that to bow the knee means to be reverent or submissive, p. 1238. In Psalm 22:29 David painted a post-resurrection picture in which shows that when the Lord comes to rule, “All the great [prosperous] ones of the earth shall eat and bow down. Before him shall kneel all that go down to the dust, even he who had not kept alive his own soul” (Rotherham's Emphasized Bible.) We see here that the prosperous [living?] ones bow down and so do those who were unable to keep themselves alive, and so this Isaiah chapter 45 bowing seems to be in a worshipful context involving all people.

The Hebrew lexicon on Mozilla Firefox indicated that the word “bow” in Isaiah 45:23 was used to describe a reverent behavior. Concerning *kara*, Goodrich and Kohlenberger wrote in reference to kneeling,

that it was used “...often with the associative meaning of respect and honor or of readiness for action” p. 1426.

Besides being present in the Romans 14:11 and Philippians 2:10-11 passages, the Greek verb for kneeling, *kamptō*, appears two other times in the New Testament. Once in Romans 11:4 Paul used it in reference to the 7000 Israelites of the Old Testament who had not “bowed” the knee to Baal. In Ephesians 3:14 he employed that word again when saying “ For this reason I **bend my knees** [bow] before my Father, out of Whom every family [fatherhood] in the heavens and earth is named.” In both of these scriptures the Greek word for bowing indicates a compliant act—in one case showing compliance to Baal, and in the other, to God. In neither instance is there the forced kneeling of a conquered foe. Even more light will be shed on the meaning of *kara* and also of *kamptō* when we examine the words for “confess” or “swear” in these same three passages.

#### “SWEAR” FROM HEBREW *SABA* [*SHABA*] AND “CONFESS” FROM GREEK *EXOMOLOGEŌ*

*Saba* [Goodrich and Kohlenberger #8678] and the word from which it was evidently derived [*shaba*—Strong’s # 7650] each signify a swearing or avowing. Strong related on p. 112 that *shaba* is a derivative of the cardinal number seven—*shiba*. *Shaba* literally means to “seven oneself” by repeating a declaration seven times, thereby demonstrating firm commitment. Goodrich and Kohlenberger indicated that the word *saba* is to “swear an oath” or “make a sworn promise p. 1469.

There are 186 instances where *saba* occurs in the Old Testament. Most of these carry the idea of affirming an oath in a faithful and willing fashion. The land was promised with an oath (*saba*) by the Lord to Abraham and then to Jacob. The Lord swore to David and David pledged on oath to God (*saba* in both cases).

In the Bible *saba* did not designate a cry from captured prisoners. It was the sealing of a promise or the assurance of commitment on some issue. Therefore in Isaiah 45:22-23 *saba* signifies a similar earnest swearing of all people to God; there is no reason in the Biblical texts to assume otherwise. Although *kara* had a somewhat more versatile spread of meanings than *saba*, *saba* shows that the sworn commitments and also the kneeling will be sincere and worshipful in character.

In Philippians 2:10-11 and while he was quoting Isaiah 45:22-23 in Romans 14:11, Paul used *exomologeō* as the Greek equivalent of *saba*. It is necessary to recognize that Paul’s Spirit-led quotations of Hebrew texts always help us understand the tenor of words involved—in this case, Paul’s use of *exomologeō* clarifies the sense of both *kara* and *saba*.

The translators for the most part used the English word “confess” for the Greek *exomologeō*. The *ex* means “from” and the *omologeō* in Greek means “to confess, acknowledge, or agree.” The chosen English word “confess” also has two parts wherein **con** means “with” and “**fess**,” which derives from a Latin word meaning “to speak.” Hence in English “confess” likewise means to speak in alignment with, an amazingly good match to the Greek word *exomologeō*.

The orthodox scenario often promoted for this “confession” is one in which vast numbers of dead lost people will be confessing in an anguished, sinful, captive, and perhaps angry frame of mind—a forced confession, at best. It is also thought to involve the frightful cries to God of those who died outside of Christ and now realize that there is no hope after death—they will be forever cut off from God, according to this interpretation. While some of the Old Testament references to kneeling (*kara*) might fit with such an overview, we have seen that the largest single group even of the *kara* scriptures speaks about reverent kneeling and those texts using the word *saba* (swearing) support a very different picture than the terrifying confession of lost people. Now let us examine the eight New Testament passages (eight others besides Romans 14:11 and Philippians 2:10-11) wherein *exomologeō* appears.

Three of the eight portray pure **praise** to God. Paul quoted David’s praise song, which is otherwise recorded twice in the Old Testament (II Samuel 22:50 and Psalm 18:49): “Therefore I will praise [confess] you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name” Romans 15:9 NIV. Our Lord Jesus Christ’s use of *exomologeō* in praising His Father was recorded twice, once in Matthew 11:25 and again in Luke 10:21: “I will **praise** you Father, Lord of heaven and earth...”

Four of the eight *exomologeō* verses deal with the sincere confession of sins. In Matthew 3:6 and Mark 1:5 it is used about seekers who first **confessed** their sins before being baptized by John the Baptist. Again in Acts 19:18 the believers at Ephesus openly **confessed** their sins and repented of evil deeds after receiving faith in Christ. In James 5:16 all believers were encouraged to **confess** their sins, one to another.

Luke 22:6 is the only *exomologeō* usage tainted with evil—the **consenting** of Judas to the dastardly plan of betraying Jesus to the religious leaders, who wanted to kill Him. Although this was a diabolical situation, the word “consent” is itself in its same very positive position of showing agreement. Once more *exomologeō* stands for a vow or confession of willful commitment, this time on the part of Judas Iscariot to an evil plot. There is thus no basis, even in this extreme Judas case, upon which to suggest that *exomologeō* stands for anything other than a voluntary confession to the Lord Jesus Christ by all people in Romans 14:11 and in Philippians 2:10-11.

WHAT ABOUT “**SHOULD**” (...SHOULD BOW...SHOULD CONFESS...) IN PHILIPPIANS 2:10-11?

In many of the English Bible translations, including the KJV and NIV, the word “should” has been used in Philippians 2:10-11 instead of “shall” or “will”: “...every knee **should** bow and every tongue **should** confess...” Since the Philippians passage is an exact parallel of the Romans and Isaiah texts, the word “should,” in its ordinary English sense, should **not** have been used by the translators. Usually “should” expresses an auxiliary function for an English verb, conveying obligation (“really ought to”), propriety (“it would be very nice if...”), or expediency (“it would be best if...”). The verbs “bow” and “confess” do not carry any of these conditional events in Philippians 2:10-11. The confession will not be a “may or may not bow” event in which “it would be nice if all people would confess...” These concepts are not implied or expressed in the passages, which speak in the straight-forward future sense of “shall” or “will.”

This problem probably arose because the Romans 14:11 text has *kampsei* and *exomologēsetai* for “shall bow” and “shall confess” (note bold faced letter epsilon in each word). But Philippians 2:10-11 has the *kampsei* and *exomologēsetai* forms (see bold faced eta’s here instead of the epsilon’s used in the Romans text). There is thus a slightly different form of each of the two Greek verbs in Philippians chapter 2. Evidently this is what prompted the translators to use “should” in Philippians 2:10-11. But the Philippians account is discussing the very same “great confession event” as is Paul in Romans, and therefore the multifaceted (and sometimes misleading) English word “should” ought not to have been put into the Philippians translation.

J. B. Phillips caught the sense of this problem and he translated Philippians 2:10-11 “...every knee **shall** bow...” and “...every tongue **shall** confess...” Even here, however, it may be well to change Phillips’ “shall” to “will” because the word “shall” has become somewhat antiquated in English, being used only to convey very special emphasis, as in General Douglas MacArthur’s determined words during World War II, “I **shall** return...”.

In the NIV Bible translation the word “should” has been utilized 371 times; but in 351 of those cases, “should” was not in the original manuscripts; it was inserted by translators. In covering each of these 351 scriptures, Goodrich and Kohlenberger used one of the following designations for “should” in their Hebrew and Greek dictionaries: AIT (added in translation), NIH (not in the Hebrew) or NIG (not in the Greek). “Should” was not “added by translators,” however, in the Philippians 2:10-11 passage. There were probably linguistic reasons for employing that clumsy English word “should.” But if so, “should” in Philippians does not convey any of the uncertainty or expediency ordinarily attached to “should.” The fact that every knee **is going to** bow and every tongue **will indeed** confess Christ as Lord is clearly evident in the text, just as it is in Romans.

I CORINTHIANS 12:3 SHOWS THAT ALL PEOPLE CONFESSING ARE SPIRIT-FILLED

“...no one can say ‘Lord Jesus’ except by the Holy Spirit” is the remark made in I Corinthians 12:3, a statement which bears directly on this great confession. The only way each person in this vast assembly can say that Jesus is Lord is by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. A look back at Philippians 2:10-11 shows that every last individual makes this confession, including all of the many people “in the heavenlies, on the earth, and under the earth” and so all of them are going to be speaking under the control of the Holy Spirit. I Corinthians 12:3 refutes the widespread belief that those doing the confessing are ungodly lost souls, condemned to everlasting punishment.

#### THE CONFESSION WAS PART OF A PRAISE HYMN IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

Whatever is seen as the meaning of Philippians 2:10-11, it must fit with the knowledge that the words were part of a hymn, quoted by Paul. Paul also quoted that hymn in Romans 14:11. There is no reason to believe that early Christians would have been singing about an event that signified the subjugation of billions of people to an eternal existence apart from God! Then too, Isaiah 45:22-23 is a direct quotation of God’s own words about the great confession, a quotation from which the hymn and the two New Testament scriptures arose. The admission of guilt on the part of people forever damned would have hardly been the topic of God’s Isaiah 45 statement which follows these words: “Turn unto me **all the ends of the earth and be saved....**”

#### THE GREAT CONFESSION COMES AS A POSTLUDE TO GOD’S GOOD JUDGMENTS

While God’s wise judgments are a very different topic than the one being covered here, it should nonetheless be said that every word in the Bible about Divine chastening will be fulfilled. At the *bema*, Christian believers will face correction and even fiery destruction of all the “wood, hay, and stubble” in their lives. At the great white throne, people who die outside of Christ’s faith will undergo a judgment that is fair and wise, but also stern. The Bible shows that all of these judgments are temporary, however. None of them deserve to be designated as “everlasting.” Since the great confession comes after all judgments, it is not a cry from people enduring or even looking forward to enduring everlasting retribution for their sins.

#### “ALL PEOPLE CONFESSING TO GOD” FITS WITH MANY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Many other Bible verses in the New and Old Testaments affirm that all people will ultimately be reconciled and end up praising God. One example is Psalm 86:9, which says “All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; and they will **glorify your name.**” The book of Psalms is replete with such outbursts referring to the great confession. Psalm 100 is another one: “Shout to the Lord, **all the earth.** Come to His presence with jubilant singing...” These statements appear to be describing exactly what will occur in the great confession.

## THE VERY **WORD OF GOD** AND THE **VOICE OF THE LORD** ARE INVOLVED

Isaiah 45 verses 22 and 23 show that every syllable of the confessional proclamation was God's own Word: **“from My [the Lord's] mouth the word has gone forth in all integrity and truth.”** And what was this “word” which came from the very mouth of God? **“...that to Me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear to God...”** “Who” does the swearing by that word, and “how” does He swear? God does so based upon His own character: **“By Myself I swear; there is no other!”** And what is the chance that this Word about reverent confession will be turned back or put aside? **“...My word cannot be rescinded [turned back]”**. The authority of all these statements rests upon the fact that they are sworn by God and are predicated upon Himself!

Isaiah recorded some other very powerful statements about the words of the Lord: **“And so is My word which comes forth from My mouth: it will not return to Me empty! But will accomplish what I desire and will achieve every purpose for which I sent it”** Isaiah 55:11. Remember Jeremiah 23:29: **“Is not my word like a fire, declares the Lord ‘and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?’”** Christians ought to receive God's words about future reconciliation because **“...the voice of the Lord speaks”** Isaiah 25:8. Let us include Paul's statements to Timothy that we ought not simply hear and believe God's words about this topic; these reconciliation statements ought to be **commanded** and **taught** (I Timothy 4:9-11).

## THE CONFESSION IS BASED ON GOD'S **“LIFE”** AND CHRIST'S **“NAME”**

The bowing of every knee and the confessing of every tongue are both founded on God's own “life”! To prove this, observe the manner in which Paul's Romans 14:11 quotation of God starts out: **“AS I LIVE”** saith the Lord....” Then too, the statements in Philippians 2:10-11 follow bold remarks about the unique **“name”** of Jesus, upon which all else hinges: **“Wherefore also God has highly exalted Him [Jesus] and gave to him THE NAME that is above every other name: that in THE NAME of Jesus every knee will bow...”**

Also realize that the bowing indicated in the passages is not a bowing **“AT”** the name of Jesus but the Greek word **“en”** shows it to be a bowing **“IN”** the Name. If the bowing were merely “at” the name of Jesus, as some translations have done, then it might be argued that lost individuals are going to bow and confess under force, perhaps “at” a given signal. Bowing “in” the Name, however, fits with the idea that all people are going to be totally in sympathy with Christ as they drop to their knees. It even suggests that the name of Christ will have already gotten “inside” all those lost people who, according to I Corinthians 12:3 are at this time Spirit-filled..

## WHAT WILL BE THE WORDS OF THE GREAT CONFESSION?

We do not know specifically what words will be used, but let's speculate that they might be the same words John recorded in Revelation 5:13—AND EVERY CREATION THAT IS IN HEAVEN AND ON THE EARTH AND UNDER THE EARTH AND THEY THAT ARE IN THE SEA AND ALL THAT ARE IN THEM HEARD I SAYING: **“BLESSING AND HONOR AND GLORY AND POWER BE UNTO HIM WHO SITS ON THE THRONE AND TO THE LAMB FOR THE AEONS OF THE AEONS!”**

## CONCLUSION

An overwhelming lesson can be learned from the great confession—a lesson involving our dependency and foresight. Every Christian has the right and the responsibility to anticipate and rejoice in this upcoming event—during good times and bad! Let us not minimize this confession or obscure it to the point where we never think or meditate about its sweeping implications. Let us live in its brightness and glory. It calls up an amazing “God-glorifying” vision in which billions of previously “lost” people, will bow to Jesus, confessing that He is Lord of all. This is a panorama that will exceed everything else we have otherwise seen or experienced! Meanwhile, until it occurs, it will inspire us by the Holy Spirit to live more righteous and productive lives.

We celebrate **Jesus** at Christmas for many good reasons.  
Here are a few of them, straight from the Bible.

**Jesus created everything**—“ALL CAME INTO BEING THROUGH HIM” John 1:3.  
It did not all get here by “evolution” but by Jesus’ “intelligent design.”  
[www.evolutionflunksbotany.org](http://www.evolutionflunksbotany.org).

**All people have sinned**—“ALL HAVE SINNED AND COME SHORT OF THE  
GLORY OF GOD” Romans 3:23

**Jesus came to save sinners**—“JESUS CHRIST CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE  
SINNERS, OF WHOM I AM CHIEF” said Paul in I Timothy 1:15. Jesus told us that we  
need to be “born again.” [http://www.modernchristian  
ministries.org/Born.htm](http://www.modernchristianministries.org/Born.htm).

**Right now Jesus saves those sinners who put their faith in Him**—“BELIEVE ON  
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND YOU WILL BE SAVED,” Paul told to the jailer at  
Philippi, Acts 16:31.

**Jesus did not come here to judge the world**—FOR GOD SENT NOT HIS SON INTO  
THE WORLD TO JUDGE THE WORLD BUT THAT THE WORLD THROUGH HIM  
MIGHT BE SAVED” Jesus said to Nicodemus (John 3:17). **But after death comes  
God’s judgment which will be stern but also wise, fair, and temporary**—“IT IS IN  
STORE FOR MAN ONCE TO DIE AND AFTER THIS, THE JUDGMENT” Hebrews  
9:27. “FOR MEN ARE NOT FOREVER CAST OFF BY THE LORD. THOUGH HE  
BRING GRIEF, HE WILL SHOW COMPASSION, SO GREAT IS HIS **UNFAILING  
LOVE**. HE DOES NOT WILLINGLY BRING AFFLICTION OR GRIEF TO THE  
CHILDREN OF MEN.” Lamentations 3:31-33.

**God will ultimately reconcile all people to Himself**—“THROUGH HIM [Jesus] TO  
RECONCILE ALL INTO HIM, MAKING PEACE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF HIS  
CROSS; THROUGH HIM [Jesus] WHETHER ON THE EARTH OR IN THE  
HEAVENS” Colossians 1:20. [www.reconciliationbiblesongs.org](http://www.reconciliationbiblesongs.org).

**Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection from the dead, God will finally become  
“all in all”**—“THEN WILL THE SON DELIVER THE KINGDOM OVER TO GOD  
THE FATHER, IN ORDER THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL.” I Corinthians 15:28.

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