THOUGHTS OF JUNE, 2O14

1. When I think of Jesus on the cross, my immediate response is that He was and is my friend who suffered and died there [a thought which is painful], not that He was the Christ who died for my sin and sins there [for which I am deeply thankful]. My best insight as to why I think and feel that way is that He has removed my sin and sinfulness from being a problem between us in all matters of fellowship and eternity. We still deal with them as essentials of righteousness, ministry, and church relationships. Selah.

Never-the-less, when I read the story of His crucifixion, or see it in a movie, I still find myself hoping that this time He will escape. If He had, I never would have been brought up out of the pit, had my feet established on the Rock, or been guided in my comings and goings.

2. I’m going to share with you this lengthy Thought on the church. Although each of you knows me, it is difficult for you to know my fullest mind [thoughts] and heart [feelings] on this matter or any other matter when you get it only in print. Paul had to tell his readers [2 Cor. 2:4] that he was in tears when he had written them his previous letter, so they would accurately and fully know his heart when they read his words.

The matter of the church is a tender one. She is Jesus’ bride – my best Friend’s and elder Brother’s select bride. He chose her every part, knowing all things past, present and future about her. I cannot tell Him anything that He does not already know, is not already involved in, and for which He has no plan for her eventual perfection. She will become a perfect bride for the perfect Groom. He will do that, so I must be careful with what I think, how I feel, what I say, what I do, and with how I may influence others. I have no gripe. I do have responsibility. My Thought:

Why are there so many divisions in the worldwide church? If Jesus is the head of the church, why so many factions? Straightforward answer: Unfortunately, that which we believe [doctrines, religious opinions, traditions] are more important to us than keeping the Lord’s commandment of loving our brothers and neighbors as ourselves. That reflects on the measure and quality of our love for Him.

Surprisingly (?), the church harbors resentment, prejudice, pride, fear and unforgiveness, which show when it talks of unity. It does not know that it needs the other parts of the church [or does not consider those other parts to be of the church]. It requires the other parts of Jesus’ body to first repent and change, then “come to me.” Until that changes, ecumenicity is little more than a feel-good show. Having grown up with this attitude, the church thinks things are well enough as they are. But Christ is not yet formed in us [Gal. 4:19] and we are nowhere near having attained to the unity of the faith [Eph. 4:13] that Christ’s ascension offers. He has set the standards, not us.

For righteous brotherhood and godly unity we must relax our judicial-like stance that says, “You must believe sufficiently like I believe before I can have a living, brotherly relationship with you.” We know that position is wrong towards those of other skin color, socio-economic class, nationality, etc., and it is wrong in regards to varieties of doctrines. We should embrace a brother in Christ because he is a brother. In fact, the more the church’s brotherhood and unity is designed around common doctrine, the less Life there is in the church. What grief we must be giving our Father!

I don’t want to swing my point too far to the right or left in the matter of the non-necessity of acceptable doctrine in regards to unity and fellowship, but I do want to make the point that the church has swung too far to the left or right [take your pick]. By that I mean that I know good doctrine is important, but is wrongly used as the quick determinant and litmus test for unity it is used for today. Our tender doctrines are much like our tender feelings – too quickly offended and certainly not bedrock material for Family stability.

Every Christian denomination considers itself to have right doctrine. That’s good. Some hold their doctrines loosely in regards to being able to have fellowship with other denominations; some hold them more firmly in regards to not being able to have fellowship with others. In either case, doctrines are weak material when used for bonding among Christians. And, wherever doctrines are used for establishing unity, it is not long before equally frail material such as traditions and personal opinions begin to rise in importance. All are poisons in the pot of Christian unity. All are wood, hay and straw when used for building a house meant to stand fiery tests. In my lifetime I have seen many denominational splits among those of whose doctrines were paramount.

For brotherly unity we do not need to change our doctrines or the names on our church houses, only our hearts. Changing a heart requires a good look into the face of Jesus. His love changes us [“repents us”] the deeper and more often we look. Love is that which is missing. It is the material the Head of the church has provided us for developing and preserving a perfect bond. Love is also rewarding later in that it makes unity worth having been restored and preserved. Note Colossians 3:14 and Ephesians 4:3. By the way, the Holy Spirit did not come to make those first disciples in Jerusalem of one accord; He came because they were in one accord. He was on the throne of their lives personally and corporately, so He manifested His reign. He will do the same with us whenever He is on our throne(s).

A brief note about brotherhood other than Christian-to-Christian brotherhood: We are human brothers with all humans, American brothers with all Americans, farmer or factory brothers with all farmers or factory workers, and Christian brothers with all Christians. There certainly are various types of brothers, and each brotherhood-type serves its own purposes. The question is, “Am I brotherly?”

The Spirit of Christ in every Christian is ready and able to be brotherly toward anyone, whether that brotherhood is reciprocated or not. It is our job to first clean the inside of our cup and dish, then our outside actions will become clean. Christian missionaries are more successful at presenting Jesus by word and deed when they are genuine brothers and servants to those to whom they have been sent.

Here is a challenge for us: On June 8,2014 [that was this month] the Pope had a time of prayer and brotherhood with the following in his private residence in Rome: The president of Israel [Jew] and rabbis, the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority [Moslem] and imams, and the Patriarch of Constantinople [Eastern Orthodox] and priests. Each prayed in respect of their own faith. I doubt that they came away from that meeting as joint members of a one world religion, but it is possible that some degree of brotherliness ensued. It is possible that the Lord used that occasion to encourage the brotherhood of all men, each of whom He loves and for whom He sent His Son to die. End of brief note on Christian-to-non-Christian brotherhood.

Back to Christians only: Our failure to live as brothers weakens the fabric of Christianity and fails to sustain our ambient society to whom we have been sent. The church is simply not good news to the world when we are divided. Understandably, we are bad news when the church, which should speak with one voice, begins to speak to society with many and divided tongues. [It does speak with one voice wherever it has one Head!] When divided, it doesn’t take long for the power of its word to be diminished, and then ignored. Our worldly opposition also has its one head, and much of the time seems to be much better organized and coordinated than we are.

Note to ourselves: The church is not a democracy, but a theocracy. It is a wife with a Husband, a church with a Head, a kingdom with a King. All of those analogies contain a basic truth for us to live by and are defined in Scripture and in any dictionary.

The declining church becomes just another ingredient of its local culture as the power of its united voice fades. As such it can be ignored, marginalized and “used” for cultural purposes. In my one-man and short-time exposure in this world, it seems that the church doesn’t mind being used, just so its religious functions are adequately appreciated, and that by at least a few.

As the church weakens, immorality begins to prevail, consciences decay, the public press loses moral discrimination, and [if formerly-Christianized] society degenerates. That includes the legislature, courts, military, founts of education, families, etc.

Charles Finney, in a sermon called “The Decay of Conscience,” that he preached to preachers in 1873 said: “Brethren, our preaching will bear its legitimate fruits. If immorality prevails in the land, the fault is ours in a great degree. If there is a decay of conscience, the pulpit is responsible for it. If the public press lacks moral discrimination, the pulpit is responsible for it. If the church is degenerate and worldly, the pulpit is responsible for it. If the world loses its interest in religion, the pulpit is responsible for it. If Satan rules in our halls of legislation, the pulpit is responsible for it. If our politics become so corrupt that the very foundations of our government are ready to fall away, the pulpit is responsible for it. Let us not ignore this fact, my dear brethren; but let us lay it to heart, and be thoroughly awake to our responsibility in respect to the morals of this nation.”

Part of the tragedy of division in the Lord’s body is that it is religious leadership that continues the division. Those in the pews are able and willing to have more open and broad fellowship. Differences in worship styles indeed can be uncomfortable when new to us, but ordinarily do not long remain obstacles to unity and worship. It is the shepherds who are keeping the sheep apart and dispersed. The Good Shepherd works to unite His one flock, but hirelings keep them scattered – John 10:1-18. God’s mind and heart on shepherds are revealed in Jeremiah 23:1-8 [godly shepherds gather God’s sheep] and Ezekiel 34:1-16 [ungodly shepherds scatter God’s sheep]. The harvest of unity is sown in love and reaped in peace.

3. Saltwater is good for you, especially if in the form of tears and sweat.

4. If you have been wondering how a body could be resurrected for the resurrection when it had rotted in the grave, been eaten by fish or wild animals, or etc., remember that God knows your DNA, genes, chromosomes [and more such things that we don’t even know about yet], and all it takes for Him to re-create your body is that information, or less. Even scientists can do that. He will not have any difficulty resurrecting your body no matter how, where or when you died.

That’s another worrisome problem temporarily put to rest for the scientifically minded among us.

5. Listen really well. Attentive listening is an indication that you care. You will be appreciated and trusted more by the speaker. Also, listen well and long to the Lord; it makes a lot of difference to Him, too – Prov. 18:13.

6. We may not like to hear much about hell, preferring to hear about heaven, but Jesus spoke more about hell than about heaven. Carefully draw your own conclusions. I decided not to.

7. The depth of our righteousness or unrighteousness is shown by the strength of our resistance to sin, knowing that it took Jesus’ death to forgive and redeem us. We take heart when we think of Jesus, the one who always strengthens and delivers us. I think that you are like me, having not been tested to the point of shedding blood, so we must not have been tempted much at all, yet – Heb. 12:3-4. We do have brothers and sisters around the world who have shed blood and given their lives as He strengthened them against the world, the flesh and the devil.

8. “We must be ready to get rid of the life we planned, in order to have the life that is waiting for us” – Joseph Campbell [1904-1987], American writer and non-Christian. If he had gained that knowledge from insight of Scripture, he might have had a better recent 27 years.

9. If the Lord [or anyone else] has given us more, more is required of us – Matt. 13:10-17; Luke 12:48. It appears likely that Jesus eventually began speaking in parables to those who were not benefitting from His open and direct teachings [because His Father had closed their ears], because in withholding or concealing information from them He was being compassionate toward them. If He had continued giving them more of His understandable teachings and they had continued rejecting them/Him, they would have been held more responsible for their disobedience. The other side of the coin says, “If the Lord [or anyone else] has given us less, less is required of us.”

Built into the story of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar, the same principle applies – Luke 16:29-31. Father Abraham turned down the rich man’s plea that more information be sent back to his brothers so they could avoid his fate. Abraham said they already had adequate information for their needs, and were not using it. They would not believe more, they would reject more, and rejecting more would get them into more trouble with God.

It is good to not know too much. Let’s live that which we already have – James 3:1. More will be given in due time.

10. Along a very similar vein, withholding the truth can be an act of mercy. If it is about a gory report, withholding it from tender souls is often appropriate. That is true also in regards to information that is simply over the head of the listener, as Jesus did on occasion with His disciples – John 16:12. But then, Jesus tells His friends things that He withholds from others – John 15:15. Don’t miss His customized definition of “friend” in verse 14.

11. China has 1.2 billion people. Twenty percent (+/-) are Christians. It is said that China is on the verge of a Christian revival that is unrivaled. What a goal. What a God!

Even though it has been through severe persecutions for 80 years, there is another, probably greater, challenge to the church in China – prosperity, because last year the government did two remarkable things; they relaxed the one-child policy, and closed down all prison labor camps. People can still be sent to general prisons for 3 years without trial but there are no more labor camps, which is where the most severe persecution occurred. Various lesser means of persecution continue, such as church buildings being demolished, believers arrested and fined, and discrimination of various sorts. But China could be the world’s most Christian nation within 15 years.

Mao murdered millions of Christians. He thought he could eliminate religion of all types. He thought He had done it, but the church went underground and mushroomed. He failed completely because the church does best when it is persecuted. The worse the persecution; the better the church. Hmmmm!

12. It’s not a new Thought, but all that is true cannot be scientifically proven. An unbalanced scientific approach to truth would seem to say otherwise. Remember that facts, as usually defined by science, provide only one branch of the truth. Jesus’ parables contained the truth, but they were not true, factual stories. My wife’s love for me and Jesus’ love for all cannot be scientifically proven but they are true.

All of Scripture conveys the truth, but its truth cannot always be submitted to the scientific method to determine its truth. Certain of it can be scientifically examined for factuality. If good science is used, and the part of Scripture being studied is properly understood, they will always agree. The one Creator is responsible for both.

Science also lacks the ability to answer the whys of life. “Science takes things apart to see how they work, but religion puts things together to see what they mean.” – N. T. Wright [1948-present], New Testament scholar, retired Anglican bishop, currently Research Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at St. Andrews University in Scotland.

13. N. T. Wright is also credited with having said, “Justice never means ‘treating everyone the same way,’ but ‘treating people appropriately.’” As I have shared with you on other occasions, we did not treat our 5 sons the same. They were all different individuals as shown early-on and in the outworkings of their lives. We treated them according to their individuality, due to each not having the same attitudes, aptitudes or level of maturity at any given age.

Note: They were treated differently also because of the variability of our parenting and the continual changing of our family’s circumstances.

We still do that, although each now has an adult level of maturity and self-responsibility that allows us to treat them and relate to them much more equally. Each has individually selected lives and developed talents, they understand and trust one other, and function together as adult brothers should.

“And wisdom is vindicated by all her children” – Luke 7:35.

14. How often do you find yourself in a tough situation that you had to get into, although it was against your better judgment? There are various reasons for getting into those tight places, other than “by accident.” I have gotten there due to loving someone, deciding to go through a tough time with a brother instead of letting him go alone, or some authority required it. I think we automatically do lots of that – especially you wives and mothers. [Most of my tight spots were due to my sin or ignorance.]

So, the disciples knew that the weather was threatening a storm. They had lots of common sense and experience. They were from the Sea of Galilee area, except for Judas who was from the south below Jerusalem. They did not want to get into that boat! So why did they? They had good reason – their Rabbi insisted, ordered, constrained, forced, made them get in -- according to which translation or paraphrase you are reading. See Matthew 14:22 and Mark 6:45-51. Of their own volition they would never have put themselves in that dangerous position because they knew the probable outcome. However, if they had known their very special outcome they would have bravely sailed into the storm.

That also applies to each believer today. We are in the hands of the One who knows the end from the beginning, so we can trust Him and “get in the boat.”

The Lord Jesus Himself did things that He knew would expose Him to difficulty and danger, but He also intentionally avoided many dangerous situations. His is the perfect example of walking by faith, obeying our Father, and using our sense. I think that doing so is ordinarily a walk involving the use of a logical mind that is scripturally informed and sensitive to the Holy Spirit – not filled with weird decisions that leave a litter trail of failure, impurity, unreliability, instability, division and such.

Additional comment: Why did the disciples not recognize Jesus when He came to them walking on the water? I think it was because they did not expect Him. They, like us, did not expect Him to get them into trouble, did not expect Him to be with them in their trouble, so, having not recognized either His workmanship or His presence, were indeed in a tough, lonesome, faithless place.

The same could be said of the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus. They did not yet know of the personal application of God’s workmanship to themselves so could not perceive that He was with them in their despondency; even after He spent hours walking on the road with and teaching them the gospel. It took the repeat of a recent and very meaningful event for them to recognize Him, their breaking bread together.

15. Jesus, through whom we receive all good things and through whom we have an open portal to the heavenlies, has no difficulty with our weaknesses or with our being weak. A weakness is anything in any area at any time in any circumstance that is less than His perfection. We are weak; He is strong. We are poor; He is rich. He understands our weaknesses and responds accordingly on our behalf as we draw close to Him. He is on the throne of grace, ready when we need grace to move onward into His rest during our tests and trials. Hebrews 4:15-16 is all about grace to enter His rest, without which we are a mess.

A large part of our job as Christians is to bring people to where that grace is, so they can fight a good fight – being given grace by the Prince of Peace. There are many good things to do when in need, but without God’s peace even our prayers can become just beggars’ talk. Among other good things, peacefulness is evidence that we trust the Lord.

16. Abraham was told by God to walk before God, and he did. So did Isaac and many others. So do many current believers. However [and I don’t want to make a major point of this because it may not have firm substance or be absolute truth] there is a better place to be invited to walk than before God. That place is with God. Enoch walked with God and God eventually took him up without his first having to die his earth-death – Gen. 5:21-24. Walking with implies being arm-in-arm, side-by-side, conversing intimately and continually growing closer. That is better than walking before God, which implies following instructions as He watches over you.

Consider your response to such an invitation. As far as I understand, the place of walking with the Lord is worth whatever it costs. He has already paid His part of the total price and anyone else who joins Him must pay his/her own part – the cost of discipleship. We will get that which we pay for. [Remember that our initial salvation was a gift, which cost Him everything, but us nothing.]

It is interesting and encouraging to note that Enoch was married, had children, family obligations and associated responsibilities. He was an ordinary person in many ways. He was a part of the naturalness of this world but not part of the nature of this world – Heb. 11:5. Jesus prayed the same for us – John 17:15.

17. “If the path be beautiful, let us not ask where it leads.” – Anatole France [1844-1924], French poet who was raised and educated Catholic but later separated/was separated from the church. That quotation sounds like the thinking of a self-directed person bent on making a grand time of life at whatever the cost to others or himself. It is atheistic thinking and is borrowed at times by Christians.

18. When the Lord reveals Himself to someone in another denomination or religion, what would you prefer Him to do: Join that convert to your group to get his theology straight or leave him where he is so he can be a living witness to those of his present group? If we will genuinely love the convert, the Lord will sort that out and possibly involve us.

19. Napoleon said: “The object of war is victory; the object of victory is occupation.” It is obvious that after we have been born again if we are not regenerated by the Holy Spirit’s occupation our lives will have been deemed failures. We may be citizens of Christ’s eternal kingdom but be very poor examples of that citizenship. The One who conquered the world, the flesh and the devil wants to reproduce/regenerate in us and in society the character, culture and works of the Conqueror, not simply win each one’s initial battle and thereafter hold on to us.

20. Is there a better or higher category of testimony to the Lord Jesus’ love and power than those of His healings and miracles? Perhaps. It may be a matter of it being in the eyes of the testifier, such as beauty being in the eyes of the beholder. In that case, I will nominate the way He died to Himself, finishing with His death on the cross. In whichever way He laid down His life, it was always life-giving – especially on the cross.

The same applies to ourselves. The greatest testimony of our love and power is not of the miraculous results of our prayers but of the daily laying down of our lives, ending in how we lived and how we died.

21. Testimonies of the spontaneities of the Holy Spirit are particularly life-giving because humanity is often too plodding and agenda-bound. We need spontaneity. On the other hand, testimonies of the Lord working through long-time study and planning are also particularly life-giving because humanity is often so unruly and licentious. It takes both approaches to establish balance.

22. Here is a scientific breakthrough that is a great big praise to the Lord. It’s about preventing malaria, which kills an estimated 627,000 people yearly, mostly in sub-Sahara Africa. Over 3.4 billion people are at risk from malaria.

Under usual circumstances, half of the Anopheles mosquitoes [the only type of mosquito that can transmit the malarial germ] are male and the other half female and, although both bite us, the female is the only one of the sexes that carries and transmits the malaria germ. Scientists have developed an enzyme that causes almost all [95%] of their offspring to be male, thus ending transmission of malaria. The enzyme works by cutting the DNA of the X chromosome during production of sperm, so almost no functioning sperm carry the female X chromosome. As a result, almost all of the offspring are male [with the Y chromosome].

23. This morning I heard that a high number of pastors are leaving their pulpits and getting jobs. It was reported as if those pastors were failing the Lord by leaving the highest calling for a simple job. It may be exactly that for some, but others are finding that their ministry is not of the traditional model but in the workplace. The workplace is being loaded with “full-time,” effective ministers.

24. Jesus endured the cross, despised the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God in heaven [next to the throne of His and our Father] – Heb. 12:2. If we follow Him by taking up our own crosses, the time will come when we too can sit down in a remarkable seat, although in another location. We can sit down with Jesus on His throne when He reigns in Jerusalem during the millennium. That position will be granted if He judges us to be overcomers at the judgment seat of Christ – 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 3:21.

Remember that the most accurate definition of bearing our crosses is when we choose to be faithful during a trial that we have gotten into due to our righteousness and that we could have avoided or prematurely ended. Jesus did not only go to the cross for righteousness sake, but He could have avoided or ended it.

25. “There is always the need to carry on.” -- Marjory Stoneman Douglas [1890-1998], American journalist, feminist and environmentalist. She did carry on, living until she was 108.

26. The Holy Spirit’s job is to flood our hearts with the love of God: “.. the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” – Rom. 5:5. Another of the Holy Spirit’s jobs [an apparently opposite one] is to convict humanity of sin and failure: “And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin; ..” – John 16:8. It takes God the Holy Spirit to do those two opposites, in the same person or nation, and often at the same time. When we chastise our kids, being careful to remind them that, “I love you,” we show that we realize our need to be dually godly in the same way.

27. It is common to see crosses that are polished, bejeweled, and in many other ways beautified. That’s fine with me, for whatever difference my simple opinion may make. Crosses can be made into beautiful ornaments. It’s only a Thought, but it is likely that those who are walking the way of the cross will shun the beautiful image because it does not truly represent their walk. The cross is a savage instrument of destruction whose way is painful [but results in spiritual power and fruitfulness]. When taken for what it is, the way of the cross will be a rugged way to death and Life. Selah.

28. Here is a little life-evaluation exercise that you will enjoy taking. It is a progressive series of questions with a focus on moving from the most basic elements of Christianity toward the Lord’s formation of Christ among us. Read Ephesians 2:1-3 [we were born as dead dogs] and John 3:3-6 [so we had to be born again]. Then read Galatians 4:19 [Jesus in each of us is not good enough for Paul or the Lord. He wants us to be formed corporately into Christ] and Ephesians 4:12-16 [the Holy Spirit’s assignment, using you and me as material]. Now for the questions:

 1. Were you born in sin, needing to be regenerated? How do you know?

 2. Have you been born again? Describe in 30 seconds or less.

 3. Have you been anointed with/by/in the Holy Spirit? How do you know?

 4. Are you fixed on following the Lord no matter the cost? Has that been adequately tested?

 5. Have people withdrawn from you because of your dedication to Jesus? Or because of your

 unrighteousness?

 6. Is there a body of believers functioning in your life to which you submit in any way that body says

 you need be?

 7. Are you presently unconditionally committed to those individuals?

 8. Do you have more confidence in your walk because of that group?

 9. Are you drawn closer to that group when difficult times come to you?

 10. Are the individuals in that group drawn closer to you when your difficult times come?

 11. How closely knit are the lives in that group, meaning sharing money, possessions, recreation, life

 plans, vacations, etc.?

 12. Do others who are not part of the group recognize your group’s unity and love for one another?

 13. Do you have the Lord’s assurance that together you have the mind of Christ?

29. Wonder on this: In His great mercy, the Lord has deliberately chosen you to be His most outstanding example of a particular character strength to those in your life [family, neighborhood, hangouts, carpool, job, etc.], so they can be brought into His eternal family. For myself I would say, “Likely.” See 1 Tim. 1:16.

30. We gain confidence when we know 3 things about ourselves: Who I am, what I have, and what I am to do. Without knowing those things, we suffer from “drift.” With knowing them, it is hard to get overcommitted. They help us lead the normal Christian life as meant for each of us.

31. Voltaire [1694-1778], French writer and philosopher, said that love is a canvas furnished by nature and embroidered by imagination. That sounds fairly accurate when speaking of human love. In that case, God’s love is a cross furnished by Jesus and embroidered by faith [which abides in the place in our souls called imagination]. Without an imagination, it would be impossible for us to have faith, or to be inventive, or to plan, or to believe that there is a God.

32. God’s unconditional love is applied to us as soon as we are born again. The love of the Father immediately is granted us through His Son’s life and death. That magnificent gift through Jesus will never be removed because we are then God’s family, part of God Himself, and He cannot deny Himself. Jesus’ heavenly Father loved Him with this same unconditional love.

Then there is the love from our Father that we earn. Jesus said His Father loved Him because He always did that which His Father wanted Him to do. That applies to us, also. Our Father’s love is poured out upon us as we move toward maturity after having been born into His family. In fact, it is His unconditional love for us that helps us grow up, encouraging us every faithful step.

33. The question has been asked: Why did and will God twice destroy the world? I will be rephrasing that question several times, but the central answer is that God is like the artist who destroys his work because it does not adequately represent his vision/reason/purpose for its creation. He destroys the part that is inferior and starts over. A good way to ask our basic question is: Why did God create the world? When we get a picture of His wonderful purposes, we will understand and agree with His methods.

The entire world has never been destroyed and will not be destroyed. When Scripture refers to the destruction of the world, it refers to the surface of the world and its then-present atmosphere. It appears that such has already happened twice and will happen once more. The first time is briefly referred to in Genesis 1:1-2, the second time in Genesis chapters 6 through 9, and the third time in The Revelation chapters 21 and 22. The Book of the Revelation is history written in advance, like was much of the Old Testament.

A good way to determine why God created the world, if we do not find an earlier answer, is to look at what He accomplished at the end of His project – His finished product. He is doing that which He determined from the beginning. See His earliest information in Genesis 1:26-31, 15-25; 2:5, 22-24. Then go to The Revelation 21:1-7, 9-10, 22-27; 22:1-5, 14.

Now let’s go into those three historic times when God twice destroyed and will a third time destroy the surface of the world and its then-current atmosphere.

THE FIRST TIME: It is foundational to the study of both science and Scripture to know that good science and good Scripture always and fully agree 100% of the time. If they don’t, one or both are wrongly understood at least to some extent. The One who wrote Scripture also is the Creator of all things. Therefore, the thought and science that says the world is billions of years old needs to be backed by Scripture, if indeed the Author of Scripture ever cares to inform us in that area. And perhaps He has.

In Genesis 1:1-2 we are told that in the beginning [but we are not told how long ago was the beginning] God created the heavens and the earth. It is considered by some that that was the pre-Adamic earth, the earth that archeology and other earth sciences say is billions of years old. Verse two is then read as, “And the earth became formless [disorganized and chaotic] and void [lifeless and empty], and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving [hovering, brooding] over the surface of the waters.” [brackets mine, ed.]. If so, there was apparently some sort of destructive process, perhaps a spiritual civil war against God and His plans for beginning a new creation for the purpose of a family of God beyond Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Looking into Scripture for information on such a time leads us to the story of Satan being cast from heaven because he, the highest angel, became prideful and tried to elevate Himself above God and His plans – Is. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:11-19. Those two passages from God through those two prophets were obviously written to Israel and to the king of Tyre, but obviously overstep their application to those humans and are understood to be speaking to Satan/Lucifer. If so, then in simple terms, Lucifer led a rebellion in heaven in which he and one-third of God’s angels were cast out of heaven upon the earth – Rev. 9:1; 12:3-4, 9. In his wrath, satanic forces fought righteous forces on earth and the first-formed earth’s surface and its atmosphere were destroyed. In the second part of verse 2 the Holy Spirit began the process of re-creating, which is described in the remainder of chapter one.

THE SECOND TIME: In Genesis 6 begins God’s explanation of why He destroyed the earth’s surface and its atmosphere by the flood in Noah’s day. Verses 5-7 sum it all up – man’s wickedness was great and continual. However one man, Noah, and his family found favor in God’s eyes because Noah was “perfect in his generations.” The previous verses [1-4] tell us what it meant for Noah to be “perfect in his generations.” In modern scientific language, Noah’s genes, from Adam to himself and his family, had not been contaminated by the fallen angels [“sons of God” of v. 2, 4]. The descendants of “Nephilim” [fallen angels] and human women were giants. The flood was meant to wipe out the humans and giants, which it did, although the fallen angels continued their pollution of the human race after the flood, as was recorded even until the days of King David.

An interesting bit of related information is found in Mark 12:25, where Jesus says that when we humans rise from the dead we will not be involved in any way with marriage [or having offspring] but will be “like angels in heaven.” He excluded angels outside of heaven, such as those on earth. Scripture gives us many examples of angels being active on earth, including information that the earth and its atmosphere are the abode of those who once made up 1/3 of those originally in heaven.

THE THIRD TIME: The third time that the world’s surface and its atmosphere are destroyed is shown us in chapters 21 & 22 of The Revelation. The earth’s atmosphere and the surface of the earth will be replaced by a new heaven and a new earth as the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God. Therein is the last condition of believers about which we are given information. In many places in Scripture we are given assurances that the earth itself will never be abolished – Eccl. 1:4; Ps. 104:5.

34. We know how to keep ourselves clean, how to keep-up our house and yard/garden, how to keep up appearances [not such a good thing], and how to keep or keep-up lots of things. But, how do we keep ourselves in God’s love? Jude [v. 21] wrote: “.. keep yourselves in the love of God, ..” We are accustomed to the Lord keeping us in His love, so how do we keep ourselves in His love? I believe it is by rejecting lies and unbelief and choosing truth and faith.

The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write that nothing can separate us from the love of God – Rom. 8:33-39. It does no good for those words to be in the Bible or elsewhere if I am not going to believe it enough to live by it, especially when I might be tempted to believe the Lord does not love me. Actually, I cannot remember a time when I was even tempted to disbelieve in His love for me – but it can happen. It can come suddenly or subtly, head-on or obliquely. When and if so, the Holy Spirit will remind us that we are forever and totally loved by the Lord. Good things happening to us do not prove God’s love, and bad things happening to us do not disprove God’s love. His love was proven on that cross 2,000 years ago.

35. A final encouragement: Don’t fret too much when you make a mistake. Only the mediocre are always at the top of their game.