

From Sinai to Zion

Part 1 of *The Eternal Purpose of God*

By George Davis and Michael Clark

The proverb is true, "Where there is no vision people cast off restraint..." (see Proverbs 29:18). On the other hand, our behavior is constrained and inspired when we see and hold the Eternal Purpose of God. People who do not know the eternal purpose of God cast off His loving restraint and make some lesser thing supreme. The restraint and inspiration of a heavenly vision is grossly lacking in Christendom today. Christians spend their existence moving from one new hope to another, and in time each hope proves to be of no eternal consequence. These Christians are sincere, and undoubtedly true to what they think is the ultimate in their lives, but Hosea prophesied about them when he spoke to Ephraim and Judah, "your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away" (see Hosea 6:4-6).

This article is an attempt to share the vision that has radically changed our lives, constraining us and captivating our thoughts and actions. When we see God's eternal plan, the many worldly practices of the modern-day church become obvious--they are like the early morning dew that comes and goes with predictable regularity but never lasts or satisfies. We pray that as you read these pages you will be apprehended by the heavenly vision, so that more than ever you will be set aside as a holy instrument for the One Who seeks to apprehend you!

The Five Mountains

For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow. And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.") But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that

speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven. (Hebrews 12:18-25, NKJV).

In this passage, the author of Hebrews compares natural Israel's journey through the wilderness to our heavenly calling and pilgrimage. This spiritual journey corresponds, in type, to each stage of Israel's pilgrimage from Mt. Sinai in the wilderness to Mt. Zion in the land of promise. Every leg of their journey is significant--every mile contains a lesson. We can learn about our spiritual journey and what it means to come to Zion by recounting this historic pilgrimage.



God marked Israel's progress on this trip by using mountains and hills as milestones that later commemorated certain truths and events. In the generations to follow, when a specific mountain or hill caught the eye, the event it memorialized came to mind. Two more mountains and one hill were in the path between Sinai and Zion, making five memorials in all. In the following pages, we will consider these five memorials and the truths they foreshadow.

If we understand how natural Israel came to Mount Zion, we can better appreciate what it means to have come to the heavenly Jerusalem, the habitation of the living God. God's purposes extend far beyond natural Zion, natural tabernacles and physical temples, reaching the heavenly realm, entering into the true tabernacle in the heavens that God pitched and not man (see Hebrews 8:2). First the natural, then the spiritual.

We invite you to put on your walking shoes and join us as we trace the footsteps of Israel from the mount of trembling--Sinai in the wilderness--to glorious Mount Zion, the city of the Great King. To some of you this will be a stroll down memory lane. To others it will be a radical call to leave the outland settlements of religious men who have stopped following the cloud of God's presence, and travel on to the heavenly Jerusalem. It is a call to leave the shadows of religion and journey on into the light and substance of an eternal God. We will begin where the author of Hebrews began, at the mount of trembling, Sinai.

Sinai and the Eternal Purpose of God

It had been two months since the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, which we all recognize as a type of the believer's deliverance from this present evil world. Finally, after miraculously passing through the parted waters of the Red Sea and witnessing the demise of the armed forces that were sent to bring them back into bondage, Israel had come to the wilderness of Sinai.

Israel camped there while Moses went up on the mountain at God's bidding. God spoke the following message to Moses. Keep in mind that this was God's first message to Israel regarding their calling, purpose and destiny as a nation.

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel. (Exodus 19:4-6)

Because of previous Sunday School and cinematic conditioning, we tend to view Sinai purely as the place where God gave the law. If that is all we see, we are missing the point altogether. Sinai is the place where God first revealed His eternal and guiding purpose to the people of Israel. "I ... brought you to Myself... you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." This was the point of the whole matter. This was the message that God commanded Moses to speak to the children of Israel.

Moses called for the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which Yahweh commanded him. All the people answered together, and said, "All that Yahweh

has spoken we will do." Moses reported the words of the people to Yahweh. (Exodus 19:7-8)

At this point God's relationship to the people and their relationship to Him were strictly conducted through Moses. Moses took God's word to the people and reported the words of the people back to God. However smoothly this may have worked, this kind of secondhand relationship fell far short of God's ultimate intention for His people. He desires intimacy, with each one coming before Him as part of His kingdom of priests.

The realization of God's desire to bring a people fully to himself is documented in Revelation 21:2-4. While John watched the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, he heard a great voice saying:

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

We will consider this passage again later. For now, suffice it to say that God desires to have a people fully brought to Him in intimate union--so close that He can personally wipe the tears from their eyes and remove the sorrow and suffering of the former things from them. He is still bringing such a people to Himself and will continue until all that are called by His name stand in a face-to-face relationship with Him.

Let's pause for a moment and further consider the twofold emphasis, "I have brought you to myself" and "You shall be a kingdom of priests...a holy nation," because this is the great priority of God. Since Eve and Adam fell, God's first priority has been to reconcile man to Himself, to restore that cool of the day communion that was lost through Adam's sin. This is the chief and guiding purpose in God's dealings with men. Only those He has brought to Himself through a great redemptive work of His Spirit can be that kingdom of priests, that holy nation He seeks. This priesthood exists to accomplish His first priority of reconciling men unto Him. Only those God has brought into close union with Himself can be His priests, showing forth His virtues.

God's first order of business at Sinai was to establish that connection and draw a people unto Himself--to invite them into His sanctifying presence so that they could be

an extension of His love to the rest of the world. God revealed His divine purpose to Abraham, the father of the nation. "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Genesis 22:18, NKJV).

As is God's custom, He began this process with one man. We see in Moses the true function of this priesthood. Moses came to God at the burning bush and was sent as a prophet to lead a great exodus, prefiguring the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 3:22). Moses' greatness was not due to some natural rite of passage but to his face-to-face relationship with the Lord, which was unparalleled among the prophets of Israel.

Later, it was written of Moses:

"And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face-to-face." (Deuteronomy 34:10).

Because of his face-to-face relationship with God, Moses possessed an uncommon knowledge of the ways of God. The Psalmist wrote, "He made known his ways (*derek* ...manner, habit, way...course of life...moral character) unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel" (Psalms 103:7). What was the heart of this true priest and prophet who knew God's ways? What did he do when the people deserved the wrath of God?

The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." So Moses went back to the LORD and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin--but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written" (Exodus 32:30-32, NIV).

Moses showed the heart of the one Mediator between God and man, the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Timothy 2:5). Men who have not come into a face-to-face union with God cannot know His ways and therefore can never be priests unto Him, representing Him.

Today in Christendom, we see a great emphasis on knowing God's acts. Thousands run to conferences and seminars all over the world seeking a touch from God, some manifestation of His power. They also study the Book of Acts and hope to replicate what happened when He acted by His Spirit in the infant church. The unspoken motto

of many has become, "Build it and He will come." Few know Him in a truly face-to-face reality, because they seek His hands, not His face.

Jesus said to the woman at the well of Sychar, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father...But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him."

The word translated truth here is very revealing: a -- negative participle and *lanthano* - to be hidden, to be hidden from one, secretly, unawares, without knowing. Together *lanthano* means not hidden, not secretive, fully aware, and knowing. In God's mind, this is true worship. The tendency to hide from God and man, becoming unaware and without an intimate knowledge of Him, goes right back to the fall of man.

This was the state of Adam and Eve after their sin. "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings...So he [Adam] said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.'" The root word in the Hebrew that was translated naked here is:

>Mre `aram (aw-ram')

AV - subilty 1, crafty 1, prudent 1, beware 1, very 1; 5

1) to be subtle, be shrewd, be crafty, beware, take crafty counsel, be prudent

In the mind of God, the opposite of truth is not only the telling of a lie, but also when your whole life is a lie, a cover-up and deception. After the fall, Adam and Eve became subtle, crafty, shrewd, wary, and cunning. God said, "Behold, man has become like one of us." They had become like Satan. They had become cunning, hiding their motives from their fellow man, never living openly and in truth because of the evil in their hearts. We see this in Cain as he drew Abel out into the field and killed him, allowing the one who was a Liar and Murderer from the beginning to fully manifest himself in man for the first time.

It is time for those who name the name of Christ to put away childish things of the fallen nature. Paul wrote:

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect thing comes, then that which is in part will be caused to cease. When I was an infant, I spoke as an infant, I thought as an infant, I reasoned as an infant. But when I became a man, I caused to cease the things of the infant. For now we see through a mirror in dimness, but then face-to-face. Now I know in part, but then I will fully know even as I also was fully known. (1 Corinthians 13:9-12, GLT).

God's great priority is, has been, and always will be to bring a people back into a face-to-face fellowship with Him, so they can make His ways known in Spirit and in truth. This is the true story of Sinai. God did not desire a single priest or a select caste of priests but a kingdom of priests. He was not seeking just a holy man but a holy nation. It was not enough that one man should have an intimate knowledge of Him, because He wanted to make the entire nation of Israel peculiar through a face-to-face relationship with Him.

If you carefully read the entire record in Exodus 18 to 24, you will discover that those who drew closest to Him later led the nation of Israel on to Zion. For the sake of brevity and emphasis, we will give you the condensed version.

God told Moses to sanctify the people for two days, instructing them to wash their clothes, because on the third day He would come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. At the sound of a trumpet, they were to come up to the mountain but be careful not to touch it. Moses did as the Lord commanded and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. On the morning of the third day, God descended on the Mount in fire. Billows of smoke ascended as though the mountain itself was a furnace, and the whole mountain shook violently. There was thunder and lightning, and a thick cloud on the mountain, and the sound of a very loud trumpet. All the people in the camp trembled as Moses led them out of the camp to meet God. They stood at the lower part of Mount Sinai. When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice. Then God came down to the top of the mountain and called Moses up. It was then that God told Moses, "Go down and you shall bring Aaron up with you, but don't let the priests and the people break through to come up to Yahweh, lest he break forth on them." (It should be noted parenthetically; that although no one else was allowed to even so much as touch the mount, God invited Aaron, the chief priest, to ascend the mount with Moses. He would not be the last.)

Then God uttered ten points of law that would govern Israel's relationships with both Him and each other. (See Exodus 20:1-17). God instructed the people to draw near the mount but when they saw the lightning, smoke, and heard the thunder, the sound of the trumpet and the voice of God, they drew back in fear, trembling and staying at a distance. They could tolerate the fire, smoke and thunder, but not God's voice. They liked things the way they were before, when Moses brought God's word to them and took their response back to God. This seemed much safer.

So they said to Moses, "Speak with us yourself, and we will listen; but don't let God speak with us, lest we die" (Exodus 20:19). Moses explained that God was simply testing them and would not kill them, but they still would not come near. No! They drew back! Perhaps the saddest words in the Bible are in Exodus 20, verse 21. "The people stayed at a distance, and Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was."

F. B. Meyer wrote of religious man's tendency to draw back from God and seek mediators to speak for God.

But the typical church-goer of the time shrinks in alarm from such a Divine interpenetrating of life. "Not so near!" he cries in apprehensive tones; and then bids his priest or minister, his creed or sacrament, his church or meeting-house become his Moses, to mediate God and supply the smoked glass, that the tempered light may be mitigated for his seeing. "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak, lest we die . . ."

What a contrast is this to the condition of soul that says with Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," or, with David, "Be not silent unto me, lest if Thou be silent unto me, I become like unto them that go down into the pit."

Up to this point, only Moses and Aaron had gone up on the mountain of God. That number was about to increase exponentially. In Exodus 24:9-17, we read, "Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up; and they saw the God of Israel... and ate and drank before Him. From there, Moses and Joshua his attendant went on up into the mountain of God" (See Exodus 24:13). Aaron the High Priest and Joshua, Moses' successor, who would eventually lead the children of Israel into the land of promise, both ascended the mountain of God with Moses. They must first see Him and know His ways before they could lead and have anything to bring to the people.

The call to greatness is a call to come near to God. Only those who have a face-to-face relationship with Him, who know His name, can know His ways and be a holy priesthood unto Him. As we follow Israel on their trek from Sinai to Zion, we will see this thread throughout, coming to its fullness in His Son and many sons.

Moses knew God face-to-face and knew God's ways. The children of Israel drew back and knew only the acts of God. This filled the journey to Zion with constant conflict, bickering and complaining. God said of that stubborn generation, "...for forty years...I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways'" (Hebrews 3:10 ESV). This is cause and effect. They always go astray because they do not know His ways. How much sin and confusion would disappear if God's people knew His ways.

A generation died in the wilderness because they refused to walk by faith and know His ways. Rather than sharing God's vision and purpose by drawing near to Him, they gave mindless and halfhearted obedience to superficial interpretations of the law. Because of this lack of vision and faith they were "as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle" (see Psalms 32:9). It is for lack of vision that people cast off restraint (Proverbs 29:18), not for the lack of law.

The message of Sinai was not the law. All God's dealings with Israel, including the law, had this end in view. "I brought you to Myself... you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." This is God's stated purpose. It has never changed. It is eternal. The ultimate realization of this eternal purpose is in Christ.

The Apostle Peter wrote, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9, NKJV). The word translated *praises* in this passage bears a closer look. The Greek word used here is *arete*, which means, "a virtuous course of thought, feeling or action." It goes much deeper than mere lip service to the Lord. His priests are vessels of His nature and His virtues. Their thoughts are His thoughts. Their feelings are His feelings. Their actions are His actions. Their ways are His ways. This is how we show forth His praise; by displaying His virtues, proclaiming Him in power. Only those who have been in His presence can mirror His glory. . Because of Moses' face-to-face encounter with God, his face shown

so brightly that he had to cover it with a veil. Since Christ's death and resurrection, God has taken the veil away! And ["we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, \[even\] as by the Spirit of the Lord"](#) (2 Corinthians 3:18 KJV). Stephen's face shone like the face of an angel as He beheld the exalted Christ.

Let us keep this purpose foremost in our minds as we continue with Israel on their journey from Sinai to Zion. God's utmost desire is to deliver every individual out of bondage and bring him or her to Himself. Then begins the process of transforming His people, by His sanctifying presence, into a holy nation, a corporate kingdom of priests that will show His virtue to a lost and dying world. The world needs His virtues, not our theology.

"You have compassed this mountain long enough"

Having served its purpose, the Lord said to Israel, ["You have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward"](#) (Deuteronomy 2:3 WEB) God told Israel that they had camped around Mount Sinai too long and that it was time to move on. Therefore, the cloud of God's presence moved on from Sinai in a northeasterly direction, toward Kadesh-barnea. Because they stood afar off from God and did not know His ways, what was only an eleven-day journey took them forty years. God determined their destination, direction, and pace, no faster than the slowest lamb. Israel's job was merely to follow the cloud. This proved to be the ultimate test for them, just as it is for us today.

Sadly, not all that were baptized in the Red Sea were baptized in the Jordan. God said, ["I swore in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest."](#) So after an unbelieving generation died in the wilderness, a new generation received the word to enter the land. They were led by Joshua, who had gone up in the mount with Moses. There at Gilgal, on the far banks of Jordan, the Lord rolled away the reproach of Egypt from them (Joshua 5:9).

As Israel entered the land, they followed a narrow pass that cuts through the mountain range, opening a way from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea. There they passed between Mount Ebal (the mount of cursing) and Mount Gerizim (the mount of blessing), where Joshua would later read the book of the Law of Moses. A great lesson can be

learned by comparing these two mountains, which we feel was God's intention from the moment that He formed them.

Gerizim and Ebal

It shall happen, when Yahweh your God shall bring you into the land where you go to possess it, that you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim, and the curse on Mount Ebal. (Deuteronomy 11:29 WEB).

Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, Keep all the commandment which I command you this day. It shall be on the day when you shall pass over the Jordan to the land which Yahweh your God gives you, that you shall set yourself up great stones, and plaster them with plaster: and you shall write on them all the words of this law, when you are passed over; that you may go in to the land which Yahweh your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has promised you. It shall be, when you are passed over the Jordan, that you shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in Mount Ebal, and you shall plaster them with plaster. There shall you build an altar to Yahweh your God, an altar of stones: you shall lift up no iron tool on them. You shall build the altar of Yahweh your God of uncut stones; and you shall offer burnt offerings thereon to Yahweh your God: and you shall sacrifice peace-offerings, and shall eat there; and you shall rejoice before Yahweh your God. You shall write on the stones all the words of this law very plainly. (Deuteronomy 27:1-8 WEB)

Ebal--the Curse of the Law

After conquering the central region of Palestine, Joshua led the people back to Ebal. There he erected an altar of uncut stones and wrote a copy of the law on the stones as the Lord had commanded. Then he placed half the tribes on the slope of Gerizim, and half on the slopes of Ebal. The ark with the priests and Levites were stationed in the center of the narrow valley formed by these two mountains. Then the blessings and the curses of the law were read (Joshua 8:30), and the people responded in dramatic fashion (Deuteronomy 27:11). Those on Ebal, the mount of cursing, responded to the curses, those on Gerizim responded to the blessings. The curses were many. The blessings were few.

Mount Ebal looms in the very heart of the land, higher and more barren than the adjacent Gerizim. It reminded the people who saw it of God's law-covenant with Israel.

It was on Ebal that God commanded Israel to build the altar and sacrifice upon it. It was upon that altar that He instructed them to inscribe the law. The law is written on the mount of cursing, not the mountain of blessing because the Law cannot bring life. The Law cannot save! (We will discuss this in greater depth in part two.)

Because of the contour of the hills, this area has a natural amphitheater effect that enabled the whole nation to hear the reading of the Law. Ebal spoke loud and clear and served as a constant reminder of sin and condemnation because of Israel's inability to keep the law.

Hundreds of years later and after the earthly ministry of Christ, Apostle Paul wrote of the curse of the law.

For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, "Cursed is everyone who doesn't continue in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." Now that no man is justified by the law before God is evident, for, "The righteous will live by faith." The law is not of faith, but, "The man who does them will live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. For it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree," that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:10-14 WEB)

The blessing could never come through the law. In his notes on Deuteronomy 27:4, Wesley wrote:

Mount Ebal - The mount of cursing. Here the law is written, to signify that a curse was due to the violators of it, and that no man could expect justification from the works of the law, by the sentence whereof all men are justly accused, as being all guilty of the transgression of it in one kind and degree or other. Here the sacrifices are to be offered, to shew that there is no way to be delivered from this curse, but by the blood of Christ, which all these sacrifices did typify, and by Christ's being made a curse for us.

Every time the Israelites looked up at Mount Ebal, they were reminded of the curse, but when they look over at Mt. Gerizim, which represents the Spirit, and saw its fruitful slopes, they were given hope for the future.

The Apostle John made this important distinction, differentiating between the law and truth.

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth (verity or reality) came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)

John sets the law on one side and grace, truth, and blessing, on the other. Is the law against grace and truth? No. It simply cannot impart the needed grace (life) to keep its demands.

The law is not truth in the sense in which John uses the word truth. According to the author of Hebrews, the law had only "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things" (Hebrews 10:1). It takes two things to cast a shadow--an object (substance) and a separate source of light. The law was shadow, not substance. The substance is found only in Him who is full of grace and truth, "the only begotten of the Father" (see John 1:14). Truth (reality) comes through this Great High Priest in whom "all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

Like the law inscribed on its altar, Mount Ebal was a shadow of Good things to come and those good things were substantively represented in glorious type by the mount of blessing, Mount Gerizim.

Gerizim -- The Blessing

We should note here that those who stood at the foot of Mount Gerizim were all children of Leah and Rachel. This shows that God's blessings belong only to those who receive the Spirit of adoption and liberty, the children of the free women.

John Wesley noted this when he wrote,

Then the contrary blessing was pronounced, "Blessed is he that doth so or so:" To which all who stood on the foot and side of mount Gerizim, said, Amen! ... All these were the children of the free-women, Leah and Rachel, to shew both the dignity of the blessings above the curses, and that the blessings belong only to those who are evangelically such, as this is expounded and applied [in] Galatians 4, even to those that receive the Spirit of adoption and liberty.

Today, the foot of Ebal is covered with gardens and orchards, fed by the streams from the large fountains under Mount Gerizim, spreading fertility and beauty throughout the land below. Gerizim is a parable of life. The Law, with its impossible demands, was there on Ebal, but Gerizim pointed to the Source of life and blessing.

It is very interesting that this same place, Shechem, between Mt. Gerizim and Mount Ebal, the future capital of Jeroboam's Israel, was also Sychar, the place of Jacob's well. It was at this well, under the shadow of Mount Gerizim, that Jesus met a Samaritan woman and declared that the true worshipers of God must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.

Jesus asked this woman for a drink of water. She was shocked that He would even talk to her, let alone ask her for a drink. Jesus said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

The woman answered, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. From where then have you that living water? Are you greater than our father, Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, as did his children, and his cattle?"

Jesus answered her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst again; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

"Sir," said the woman, "Give me that water!"

There is much talk in Christendom today about "the blessing." But what is the blessing? Is it some spiritual awakening? Is it an experience that leaves you lying on the floor? The psalmist David defined the blessing as follows. "[As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore](#)" (Psalms 133:3). Here we see that the blessing is eternal life and it is at Zion (of which we shall speak shortly) that God commands the blessing.

The blessing is eternal life! Jesus gives us the definition of eternal life in His priestly prayer in John 17. "[This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ](#)" (John 17:3 WEB).

Eternal life is not just eternal existence, for those who go to eternal punishment exist forever (See Matthew 25:46). Eternal life is not a gift given apart from God. Eternal life is union with the only true God and with His Son Jesus Christ. Like salvation, eternal life is not something separate from God, an "it," but God himself. Eternal life is an abiding union with God. He is living and eternal!

Remember God's guiding purpose that He shared with Israel at Sinai, "I brought you to myself." All that He has done and is now doing is to bring us to Himself and to make of us a people that would share in His divine nature and show forth His virtues. He has called all believers to be partakers in His divine nature through union with Him and His Son. This is eternal life. ["The Word was made flesh and dwelt \(tabernacled\) among us."](#) This is the blessing!

This is the blessing of Abraham: that through Jesus Christ "we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:14). That out of our innermost beings would flow rivers of living waters that would bear fruit surpassing any that the waters of Gerizim or Jacob's well could ever produce. It is through His Spirit that God indwells us, and it is through this union that the living water (a type of the Spirit) flows out of our innermost beings and brings life to the barren places--something that Gerizim, as a physical type, only foreshadowed. The Mount of Blessing was not the blessing, nor were the streams that flowed out from under it. Neither was the well of Jacob that was fed by the rain of heaven. These merely pointed the way onward to that river, the streams which make glad the city of God (Psalms 46:4), flowing out from the very throne of God.

Immediately following His discourse with this woman at the well, Jesus said to his disciples, ["Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, that they are white for harvest already."](#) When they looked, they were likely looking at the center of the valley where the ark with the priests and Levites was stationed when the curses and blessings were pronounced. Was Jesus referring to harvesting souls, as so many evangelists tell us today, or did these whited fields represent something far greater, just as the salvation of the single soul is only a piece of a far greater picture? This is a reference to the culminating purposes of God that He clearly stated long before on Sinai, "I ... brought you to Myself... you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Christianity today has made the salvation of the individual larger than the eternal purposes of God. Consequently, "our inheritance in Christ" has all but eclipsed God's inheritance in the Saints. This is reflected in an attitude that makes God the servant of man's desires, conforming God into man's image, with little or no regard for His ageless plan to bring us into His image. No. These disciples were looking at well-watered fields, drinking from the springs of Gerizim. These springs had produced an early harvest; already they were white for harvest. All that Gerizim foreshadowed had come to fruition. That water springing up from within was about to come forth and bring great fruit in the earth. What must have been running through the minds of the disciples as they looked on those whitened fields? Was the purpose God had made them a nation for at hand? Was the time of the full corn in the ear upon them? The fields that once were trodden down by the feet of weary Israelites, led by the cloud of God's Spirit, were now full-grown. A time of great transition and realization had come.

Jesus continued,

He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit to eternal life; that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true, "One sows, and another reaps." I sent you to reap that for which you haven't labored. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor. (John 4:35-38)

This is a reminder of God's dealings with their forefathers, to whom He said, "I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities, which you did not build, and you live in them. You now eat of the vineyards and olive-yards which you did not plant" (Joshua 24:13 MKJV). One had sown for another to reap. One builds for another. We have been sent to reap where we have not labored, to eat of the vineyards and olive orchards which we did not plant, fed and nurtured by that stream springing up unto eternal life. Like Isaac, we do not work for our inheritance, but are born heirs of all things. In that sense, we reap what we have not labored for.

God sent these disciples of Jesus to reap where they had not planted. It was all God's doing--all of grace! Jesus sent them to reap the faithful labors of the prophets God had sent before. The blessing brings the fruitfulness. The water, springing up from within, brings God's end-time purposes to maturity. Those God sends into His fields answer the call to reap where they have not planted. Here is a perfect picture of grace. We are not called to be builders or planters, but reapers, sent to harvest a crop planted by God

and watered and brought to fruition by His Spirit. It is fitting that Jesus made this point under the shadow of Gerizim.

Back at the camp of Israel, the Cloud of God's presence was rising and beginning to move in a northerly direction, where we come to another set of monuments, making another divine comparison. Slowly but surely, God is bringing us closer to the heart of Zion. Can you feel the excitement?

Gibeon and Zion

For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. (1 Chronicles 21:29)

Only the tabernacle and the altar of offering rested on Gibeon, not the ark. What transpired that the ark would no longer be in the holy of holies? At this point it would be good to do a brief history of how the Ark of the Covenant and the tent of meeting (the tabernacle which came to rest on Gibeon) were permanently separated and how this seeming disaster served to advance God's eternal plan.

At first, both the Ark and the tabernacle moved around together from point to point in the Promised Land during the time of the judges. The tent housed the ark when it was stationary. One of the later judges named Eli was also the chief priest and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests before the Lord when the tent of meeting was at Shiloh.

One day a woman came and was weeping and groaning in prayer at the door of the tent and Eli rebuked her because he thought she was drunk. Hannah replied that she was not drunk, but rather grieving because she was barren. Eli assured her that God heard her prayer. Soon she conceived and gave birth to a child named Samuel. When the child was weaned, as promised, she brought him to the tabernacle to minister before the Lord as a Nazarite and prophet. Though Samuel was not of the family of the Levites, but of Ephraim, he ministered there at Shiloh before the Lord and God started speaking to him at a very early age.

God was about to replace Eli as judge over Israel because he and his sons were corrupt. The Philistines came up to invade Israel and the army of Israel went out to

head them off at the pass. The battle was not going well, so someone got the bright idea to fetch the ark of God from Shiloh, believing that God would fight their battle for them because of the presence of the ark. Wrong! Hophni and Phinehas brought the ark to the field of battle, but when the Philistines heard of it they became more determined. They routed Israel, killed the two sons of Eli, and took the ark as a trophy of war.

At this point, a runner brought news to Eli that his two sons had been killed and the ark had been lost. Eli was old and obese, and when he heard the ark was in enemy hands he fell backwards off his chair, broke his neck and died. When the pregnant wife of Phinehas heard of the death of her husband and the loss of the ark, she went into labor early and gave birth to a son. She named the child Ichabod, saying, (1 Samuel 4:21-22, NKJV).

Samuel and those who remained at Shiloh packed up the tabernacle and all its furnishings and headed south to avoid the invading Philistines. The tent of meeting finally came to rest on a hill called Gibeon, but without the Ark of the Covenant. The priests who succeeded Eli and his sons continued to minister before the empty tent for many years, though the glory of God's presence was not there.

A reporter once asked Billy Graham what he feared the most. He said it was building up such a well-oiled evangelistic organization that it could go right on doing its thing even after God departed and not even know the difference. Such is the case with empty religion. This is truly a very sad state of affairs, but all too common today. It is too bad that they are not as honest as the wife of Phinehas when they name their organizations.

Meanwhile, the Philistines brought the ark to Ashkelon, one of their five major cities, and put it in the temple of their god Dagon, an idol with the head and hands of a man and the tail of a fish. They came back the next day to find Dagon fallen off his perch, prone before the ark of the Lord. Thinking it a fluke, they set him back up. The next day they found him fallen before the ark at the threshold with his head and hands broken off. It was a knock out in the second round and God was the winner!

The ark was too hot for the king of Ashkelon and the priests of Dagon to handle. They decided to send it away to another Philistine city, where the people broke out with a plague of tumors (hemorrhoids in the Hebrew) and the city was overrun with a plague of mice. So the Ark was shipped on down the line to the next city and the next, each

breaking out with the same afflictions until after many months, they got the bright idea to send the ark back to Israel. Their priests and diviners told them to put five golden "tumors" and five golden mice in a box, one for each of the lords of the Philistines. They put the ark on an oxcart with the box of offerings beside it, and then hitched up two milk cows that had calves. They tied the calves to a post to see if the mother cows would ignore their bawling and take the ark to Israel. If they did, the Philistines would know that their woes came from the ark and that they had broken the plague by returning it to its rightful home.

The people of Beth Shemesh in southern Israel, reaping in their fields, heard the cows bawling as they came pulling the oxcart with the ark. They went out to see it with great rejoicing. The cart came to a halt at a great rock. The local Levites took it down from the cart, placed the box of golden mice and tumors along side it, chopped up the oxcart for firewood and slaughtered the two cows as a sacrifice to the Lord. The narration continues.

Then He struck the men of Beth Shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD. He struck fifty thousand and seventy men of the people, and the people lamented because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter. And the men of Beth Shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? And to whom shall it go up from us?" So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath Jearim, saying, "The Philistines have brought back the ark of the LORD; come down and take it up with you." Then the men of Kirjath Jearim came and took the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD. So it was that the ark remained in Kirjath Jearim a long time; it was there twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD. (1 Samuel 6:19-7:2, NKJV).

This same Kiriath Jearim is also called Baale Judah in 2 Samuel. There the Ark stayed throughout the reign of King Saul (a type of the flesh), who never once sought it out. (See 1 Chronicles 13:3). Sacrifices were still being offered on the altar at Gibeon. The washings of the laver continued. The seven-branched candlestick was still lit and fueled and smoke was still rising from the altar of incense, but behind the veil of the Holy of Holies, all was dark. The glory had departed. There was no receptacle for the sprinkling of the blood of the slain lamb, i.e., the mercy seat. There was no light

beyond the veil, for He who is the Light was gone. In short, the system was still functioning but the Lord of glory was gone with the ark.

The ark was gone during the whole reign of Saul and no one looked for it. No one missed it! Why? The ark of God's presence is despised and neglected whenever and wherever the flesh of man reigns. Religion works quite well without God. His presence is not required for it to function. Israel was never more religious than at those times when they were in outright disobedience to God or had completely forgotten Him. Regardless of their condition, they continued to burn incense long after God's presence had departed.

God spoke of this through Jeremiah, "[But my people have forgotten me, they burn offerings to a delusion; they have stumbled in their ways, in the ancient roads, and have gone into bypaths, not the highway](#)" (Jeremiah18:15 RV).

Eugene Peterson, translator of *The Message*, captures the true meaning of Isaiah 1:13 through 14. "[Quit your worship charades. I can't stand your trivial religious games: monthly conferences, weekly Sabbaths, special meetings--meetings, meetings, meetings--I can't stand one more! Meetings for this, meetings for that. I hate them! You've worn me out! I'm sick of your religion, religion, religion, while you go right on sinning.](#)"

The point is that men will continue to burn incense, give offerings and go right on worshiping long after the glory has departed. Jeremiah noted that in the midst of the religious hubbub and digging of religious cisterns, not even the priests thought to ask, "Where is the Lord?" (See Jeremiah 2:8). The fact that people are unified in religious activity is not an indicator that God is present among them. If anything, it is a sign of apostasy. As Isaiah prophesied, it is quite possible for a people to come near to God with their mouth and honor Him with their lips while their hearts are far from Him. Their worship consists only of rules taught by men. (See Isaiah.29:13-14).

Mount Zion and the Open Tent of David

After Saul was killed in battle, David--a man after God's heart who knew God's ways--took the throne of Israel. Mighty Saul could not take the fortress of the Jebusites, which was the last and most difficult stronghold in the land. This task fell to him who said to Goliath, "[You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin. But](#)

I come to you in the name of Jehovah of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied" (1 Samuel 17:45 MKJV).

Saul was head and shoulders taller than the rest of Israel, and Goliath was a giant of a man. But God takes no pleasure in the natural strength or power of a man; instead He chooses the weak and the foolish to confound the mighty and worldly wise. Saul and all Israel with all their weapons quaked before this giant for many days, but he fell to a lowly shepherd boy who spent his days before the Lord, tending his father's sheep! David was armed with nothing but a sling, five smooth stones and the Spirit of the Living God.

As surely as Goliath fell, so did the stronghold of Zion (2 Samuel 5:7), which came to be called "the city of David." David made Mount Zion the capital of Israel, not because he fancied this city but because God chose to put His name there as the place of His rest (see Psalms 132:13-16). Today's Davids also seek that heavenly Jerusalem where the Prince of Salem (Peace) reigns. These, too, are after the order of Melkizadok and do not settle for earthly kingdoms as Saul did.

Several hundred years after they began their journey, David finally led the children of Israel to Mount Zion, which is the ultimate goal of every believer. The happenings of Zion prefigure, in amazing detail, the glorious reality of the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of us all where the Seed of David now sets enthroned.

Unlike Saul, David yearned for the ark of God's presence. He was the shepherd king, a man after God's own heart, a glorious type of our Lord Jesus Christ. He hungered for the presence of the Lord above all else and wanted to bring the Ark up to a central place in Mount Zion. David had a heart to make God king. The "Great King" that David promoted was not himself, but God. David had a heart to rectify the error that the people of Israel made when they rejected God and chose Saul (see 1 Samuel 8:4-22).

The Ark rested at Baale Judah until David found it. "And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, whose name is called by the Name, the LORD of Hosts, who dwells between the cherubim" (2 Samuel 6:2, NKJV).

The problem was that David and the people presumed to move the ark the same way the Philistines had. They built a new oxcart, perhaps thinking that they had gone the

extra mile and perfected what their enemies had done. You can see them thinking, "If God blessed the Philistines and stopped the plagues when they sent the ark back to Israel on an old oxcart, then He will surely bless our efforts to bring it forth to Zion on a new oxcart." Wrong again! The narrative continues.

So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the LORD on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals. And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God. And David became angry because of the LORD'S outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day. David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?" So David would not move the ark of the LORD with him into the City of David; but David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months. And the LORD blessed Obed-Edom and all his household. (2 Samuel 6:3-11, NKJV).

The trouble with oxcarts is that oxen invariably stumble and men invariably feel the need to steady the results that come from the works of their own hands. God is not impressed with our best efforts to bring forth His presence in our congregations. All of our polished sermons and worship performances, our hanging tapestries and highly decorated buildings are only flesh to Him. He wants us to seek His face and ask Him what He wants to do and when.

The saints of the young church in Antioch fasted and ministered to the Lord for many days, before the Spirit spoke and sent Paul and Barnabas to take the gospel with power to the Gentile world. This took place more than twenty years after Paul had his encounter with the Living God on the Damascus road. As soon as we have an encounter with God, we want to run right out and start a "ministry" with all our flesh still intact, but Paul knew that the resurrection power of God does not come without the fellowship of His suffering and being conformed to His death. The warning came with

the commission, "...for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:15, 16, NKJV). The greater the calling, the greater the suffering that is necessary to purge this new oxcart mentality out of us.

Finally, David asked the help of the priests of the Lord.

And David made houses for himself in the town of David; and he got ready a place for the ark of God, and put up a tent for it. Then David said, "The ark of God may not be moved by any but the Levites, for they have been marked out by God to take the ark of God, and to do his work for ever." And David made all Israel come together at Jerusalem, to take the ark of the Lord to its place, which he had got ready for it. And David got together the sons of Aaron, and the Levites...

And David sent for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, Uriel, Asaiah and Joel, Shemaiah and Eliel and Amminadab, And said to them, You are the heads of the families of the Levites: make yourselves holy, you and your brothers, so that you may take the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel, to the place which I have made ready for it. For because you did not take it at the first, the Lord our God sent punishment on us, because we did not get directions from him in the right way. So the priests and the Levites made themselves holy to take up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel. And the sons of the Levites took up the ark of God, lifting it by its rods, as the Lord had said to Moses.(1 Chronicles 15: 1-4, 11-15 BBE).

At last, the ark of God's presence came through the gates of Zion. The sound of singing and rejoicing filled the air! "This is the generation of those who seek Him!" they sang. "They seek your face, oh God of Jacob. Lift up your heads, O gates; and be lifted up, O everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates; even lift up, O everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? Jehovah of Hosts, He is the King of glory" (Psalm 24:7-10 MKJV).

Can you hear it! Can you hear the heart-cry of the shepherd-king who, like the four and twenty elders in Revelations chapter four, earnestly desired to cast his crown at the feet of the Great King? Among God's people, crowns are wonderful frisbees, made for throwing down at the feet of the King of Glory, not for exalting the person they have been given to.

David's life, words, and songs expressed this passion throughout. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King" (Psalms 48:2). When David brought up the ark with singing and dancing, he knew he was bringing the true King of Zion through those gates. Overcome with joy, he could not hold still; he leapt before the ark with all of his might. David knew that an earthly king was not God's original intention, so he gladly discarded his kingly robes and crown to dance in a linen ephod, the garb of a humble priest, before the Great King of Zion.

In this figure, David perfectly foreshadows the priesthood that God so earnestly seeks. In David we see the heart of our great High Priest, Christ, who now longingly waits for the day when He will deliver all power and authority back to His Father (1 Corinthians 15:28). David had set himself to right that wrong done when Israel demanded a king (Saul), and in doing so, rejected God as their King.

David brought the Ark to Zion and placed it in an opened-faced tent, thereafter called "the Tabernacle of David" (2 Samuel 6, 1 Chronicles 13-16). This act of David seemed to be against the laws that governed the rightful use and placement of the Ark. By law, the Ark should have been taken over to Gibeon and placed in the most holy place in the tabernacle of witness, a place that was accessible only once a year by the High Priest after thorough cleansing and the shedding of blood. However, God elected not to return to the Ichabod-system that rested on the crest of Gibeon. Instead, David brought the Ark to Zion where it was accessible every day to everyone. Though it appeared arbitrary, this was no random act. David made it very clear that he had not chosen Zion but, "Jehovah has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling-place. This is My rest forever; here I will dwell; for I have desired it. I will greatly bless her food; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I also will clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy" (Psalm 132:13-16 MKJV).

The priests at Gibeon must have been asking themselves, "What is going on here? Why have they not brought the Ark back to its proper resting-place?" And more troubling, "Why have they instituted a new priesthood to minister before the Ark in place of the old, traditional, orthodox one? We've never done it like this before!" It was true, God had chosen a new dwelling place and a more perfect priesthood to minister before the Ark night and day--something David may have been ushering in when he danced before the ark in a linen ephod.

It took a king/priest to introduce a royal priesthood, the full realization of which is known in Christ our King and Priest. Those who were appointed as priests to minister before the Ark at Zion continued in the same festive spirit of singing and playing instruments before the Lord. This went on for forty years. The contrast between the events at Gibeon and at Zion, during this time, is an example to God's people today.

What happened on the great Day of Atonement when the high priest entered the tabernacle of Moses at Gibeon and passed beyond the veil to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice upon the mercy seat? Did God have a higher priority than this? The redemptive work, typified by the slain lamb and the sprinkling of blood, was to accomplish the single goal of reconciling man to God. The tabernacle of David is a 40-year prophetic glimpse that confirms God's desire to dwell among His people in a face-to-face relationship. In David we see the Priest-King, a type of Jesus whose mediation makes the restoration of all things as foretold by the prophets possible.

Zion represents the realization of God's great desire to dwell among His people. In coming to Zion, the habitation of God, we have also come to the general assembly and church of the firstborn. Only when we live in the good of all that Zion represents can we truly be unified as that holy nation and kingdom of priests that declares His virtues. Only those who are dwelling in His habitation can bring the reality of Him to others. Only those with shining faces, aglow with His presence, can truly model Him before a lost and dying world. Only those who ascend the Mount of God have any leadership to offer the people of God.

Unlike the Tabernacle of Moses on Gibeon, the Tabernacle of David was an open tent. Everyone, Jews and Gentiles alike, could stand before the Ark. The tabernacle of David is a fore-glimpse of Christ's Church, in which Jews and Gentiles become one new man. Before this time, the Gentiles had no place in the commonwealth of God. James acknowledged this when he quoted the prophecy of Amos, "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up" (Acts 15:16). The context of this prophecy is as follows:

On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old; That they may

possess the remnant of Edom, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name," says the LORD who does this thing. (Amos 9:11, 12, NKJV).

James spoke this in reference to the Antioch Church--a Gentile Church, which was experiencing the reality of God without the trappings of Judaism. Now God had not only brought Israel unto Himself as a holy nation but, just as he had promised Abraham, he has included the Gentiles as well. His priesthood was growing exponentially.

Unlike the tabernacle of Moses, which remained at Gibeon, the tabernacle of David had only one piece of furniture, and that was the Ark. In Moses' tabernacle there were three compartments: the Outer Court, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (where the Ark was supposed to be). David's tabernacle only had the Holy of Holies which was open not to a select priesthood but to all. In Moses' tabernacle, the Holy of Holies was accessible only by the High Priest once a year. Now, without schedule or condition, Jew and Gentile alike freely flowed in and out of David's tabernacle to worship before the Lord. This was a wonderful glimpse of our access beyond the rent veil, through which we may now come boldly to the throne of God and worship in His presence. In David's tent there was no veil that barred the way into the presence of God. By this, we see the heart of our God. He wants everyone to come into His presence and has opened the way through the shed blood of the spotless Lamb.

Most of the Psalms were prophetic songs sung before the Lord in David's Tabernacle. They cover the full spectrum of human emotion, from deep despair to great joy. Israel was catching the first glimpse of a God who was touched with the feelings of their infirmities, on whom they could cast their every burden.

In a fallen world where men are filled with ulterior motives, it's difficult to imagine that a Father could simply desire to be with His children with no other motive in mind. God is after the simplicity of fellowship that He once had with a man and woman that knew no sin in a wonderful garden long ago. No pretense, no guile, no subtlety, no hiding behind religious fig leaves, veils and pretentious ceremony. Just a coming together as friends in a love bond that defies our churchly imaginations.

In Revelation 21:3-4, we read of the final climax of God's great desire to bring a people to himself. Here we see the white fields--God's full thought for His people-- come to fruition. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself

shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

All the trials and sorrows of life have come to this--at last the tabernacle, tent or dwelling of God is with men. He dwells with them and is eager to wipe away all tears and abolish death, sorrow and pain forever. God's great objective in redemption is to restore His presence and likeness in mankind, to walk with them as He had walked with Adam long ago in the cool of the day. This little mountain in Jerusalem is an earthly replica of the heavenly Mount Zion (Revelation 14:4). Physical Zion was the place of God's dwelling. We dwell in Zion when we make our abode in Him. The Psalmist understood something of this mystery when he wrote, "[Lord, you have been our dwelling place for all generations](#)" (Psalms 90:1). He is our dwelling place! He is Zion! He is our temple!

When John saw the heavenly Jerusalem coming down as a bride prepared for her husband, he could not help but notice that there was something missing. The thing that was central in the earthly Jerusalem was not to be found in the heavenly Jerusalem. "And I saw no temple there," said John. Why was there no temple? "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple..." (See Revelation 21:22). God is the temple! God is our dwelling place. Paul said, "[For in him we live, and move, and have our being](#)" (Acts 17:28). In Him! Can you see yourself totally enveloped in this wondrous God that created the heavens and the earth for one purpose, to become the dwelling place of thousands and thousands of sons and daughters? The very thought captures our hearts!

From Genesis to Revelation, God's dealings with men have constituted one progressive transition from the earthly back to the heavenly, displacing the religious trappings that served as object lessons only for a season with an ongoing disclosure of Himself. More often than not God had to forcefully remove those trappings that were given to aid in this revelation because of Israel's attachment to them. Stephen rebuked the high council of the natural Jerusalem for their excessive devotion to the earthly temple, citing the fact that God no longer dwells in temples made with hands. But these stiff-necked scholars of Israel would not accept it as truth, even though it was one of their prophets that first said it! Stephen paid with his life for daring to speak against their holy relic. Regardless, just as Jesus had prophesied, not one stone of the natural

temple remained upon another by 70 AD. God has abolished the holy sites, symbolism and ceremonies of religion, which were only shadows given by Him to point the way to the greater substance to come.

The Substance has come. Christ has fulfilled all types and shadows of the Old Covenant. God is light and in Him is no shadow of turning. It has always been His plan to replace the shadow with light and substance--to replace the symbolic with reality--to strip the scaffolding of religion away until only He and the Lamb are left. He has stripped and will continue to strip until there is no other temple left but Jesus and the Father--no holy places but them, no light or wisdom but them. In the heavenly Zion, to which we are called, there are no holy services or priests to mediate between God and His people, only the high Priest, Christ Jesus.

In Zion, God is no longer veiled, but the tabernacle of God is with men. God calls us to live in this heavenly reality right now, every day. Do we really know what an honor this is? Do we really know what it means for God and the Lamb to be our temple, our Dwelling Place--to hold nothing as sacred but Them? John wrote of Jesus, The Word, "And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us. And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth " (John 1:14 MKJV). Isaiah prophesied of Jesus, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel ('God with us') " (Isaiah 7:14 KJV). Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men!

Meanwhile, over at Gibeon, the symbolic sacrifices, rites and rituals continued. In these two mountains we have a perfect example of the condition of Christendom today. On one hand are those who have made God their dwelling place, who worship Him in Spirit and in truth, who have no holy sanctum but Him and no worship but Him. Then there are those who prefer the shadows of religion, who think that burning candles and incense, sprinkling holy-water and all their icons are beautiful and therefore loved by God.

Religious man seems obsessed with sewing up the veil that God rent from top to bottom as He restored the open tabernacle of David. Religious man prefers the worship of worship to the worship of Him who wants us to worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Religious man idolizes earthly things, the transitory symbols that God gave for a

season to point to the heavenly thing. Inevitably, religious man makes the means into a permanent obstacle and refuses to let go of what God has torn and discarded.

So religious man refuses the new priesthood, "forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 6:20) by clinging to the model of the Old Testament intermediary priesthood that God replaced. Another holdover from the Old Testament era is the veneration of holy sites. This is the idolatry that drives fallen man and hinders God's purpose in calling a people to Himself. Most tragic of all is that this devotion to ceremonies and rituals that require only a passive participation is mistaken for devotion to God.

Jeremiah prophesied against this misplaced devotion to temples and ceremonies, which Israel thought would keep them safe from the invading Babylonian armies.

[Don't you trust in lying words, saying, "The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD are these." \(Jeremiah 7:4 HNV\)](#)

When we compare Gibeon and Zion, we have a prophetic glimpse of God's purpose in separating himself from the house or system of worship. The house stayed at Gibeon while God took up residence in Zion. The earthly tabernacle and priesthood were only shadows (Hebrews 8:5). God is light! The author of Hebrews wrote the following about the earthly sanctuary. ". . . who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses was warned by God when he was about to make the tabernacle, for he said, 'See, you shall make everything according to the pattern that was shown to you on the mountain.'"

God is substance! The earthly sanctuary served as a witness of heavenly things for a season, but that season is over. Reality has come! The Light has dawned! Bible history is the story of God's search for a people who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. He looked forward to a time when His passion to bring a holy nation and a royal priesthood unto Himself could be fully realized. This is what the Father wants, a spiritual house, made of living stones offering spiritual sacrifices.

We find several Old Testament types and shadows that point to this great Divine priority. He wanted to separate Himself from the house, to divide the light from the shadows, the ritual from the reality that He is.

We see a great example of this in the life of Jacob.

So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him. And he built there an altar, and called the place Elbethel: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother. But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak: and the name of it was called Allonbachuth. And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. (Genesis 35:6-10)

After having taken his brother Esau's birthright by deceit, Jacob found himself fleeing for his life. That very night he had a dream as he lay upon the ground sleeping. He saw a ladder set upon the earth, the top of it reached to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. God stood above the ladder confirming the covenant, which He had made with Abraham and Isaac, saying, "I am the lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac." Jacob named the place of this meeting Beth-El, meaning House of God.

Many years later, after he had been broken at Peniel, God called Jacob back to Beth-el, where Jacob did something very significant. He built an altar and changed the name of Beth-El, the house of God, to El-Beth-El meaning, the God of the house of God. (See Genesis 35:6-10). Finally, Jacob had seen beyond the physical and the geographical. He had seen beyond holy places to the Holy God. He had seen beyond Beth-El to El-Beth-El. This is the journey set before us all. Devotion to holy sites and holy practices must eventually give way to a pure heart devotion to the God of the house of God. Because of this revelation, God changed Jacob's name to Israel, "one who will rule with, and like God."

Religious man resists the transition from Beth-El to El-Beth-El. He loves his holy sites and will kill to preserve them. The early believers preached that a great transition had occurred, to the end that now "the Most High doesn't dwell in temples made with hands" (see Acts 7:48, 17:24). God is not worshiped in this mountain or that but in spirit and in truth. The early church grasped this truth quite well and made no attempt to construct "Christian" sanctuaries until well into the fourth century, after Rome and the Jews had systematically killed off most of God's Spirit-lead leaders. They knew that God is no longer confined in holy places but now fills everyone who will invite Him in. He no longer sanctifies "this mountain" or the old Jerusalem. Jesus spoke of a season,

"the hour comes, when neither in this mountain, (Gerizim) nor in Jerusalem, will you worship the Father . . . But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such to be his worshippers. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (see John 4:21-24). Will we make the transition? Will we cling to our holy sites and holy practices or worship Him who is Spirit in spirit? Which will we choose--ministry to the house or ministry to God--ministry to holy things or ministry to a holy God?

There has been a great transition from all that is figurative, ceremonial and symbolic to the Person of God. Such a transition requires a stripping. In fact, this is what Jesus came to do. This is the nature of the work of Him who said "Lo, I come to do your will, oh God." Jesus took away the first to establish the second (Hebrews 10:9). He takes away the first things of religion to establish the reality of Himself within us. We believe that we are in the day when that stripping has accelerated and God has further divided Beth-El, all things religious, applying to the house, from El-Beth-El, the God of the house.

Ministry to the House and the Zadok Ministry

We find another example of God's desire to distinguish himself from service to the house in Ezekiel 44. A new priesthood was designated to come nigh to God and worship Him. In I Samuel 2:35, we find the prophetic announcement of the judgment upon Eli the High Priest and his house, followed by the rise of a new and eternal priesthood. "And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed forever."

This faithful priesthood started out with Zadok, the descendant of Ithamar, the younger son of Aaron. Zadok was a prophet as well as a priest (see 2 Samuel 15:23-28). Here we see that God is calling a new priesthood out of the old one. This new priesthood would do what was on the heart and mind of God. This new priesthood would draw much closer to God's original intention for a royal priesthood, and like the Melchizedek Priesthood, it was also superior to the priesthood of Aaron.

This Zadok priesthood is the natural type of the Melchizedek priesthood. In fact, Zadok (righteousness) is the last part of Melchi-zedek (king of righteousness). The Melchizedek priesthood is an everlasting priesthood, having no beginning and no end.

In the mind of God this priesthood was conceived before the foundation of the world, in eternity past. In Ezekiel 44, we see two priesthoods, one changeable one eternal. One ministers to the house (temple) and the other to what is dearest to the heart and mind of God.

Jean Leads wrote:

There is a ministry that shall minister to the house, to the people of God, but there is another, more exalted priesthood, the Zadok or Melchizedek priesthood, which shall come nigh unto God and minister unto Him as well as to the people. "And when they go forth into the utter court, even into the utter court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments."

Long after Zadok the high priest, David and Solomon had died, Ezekiel prophesied a new priestly order, dividing the Aaronic priesthood into two parts.

"And the Levites who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who strayed away from Me after their idols, they shall bear their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, as gatekeepers of the house and ministers of the house; they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them. Because they ministered to them before their idols and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity, therefore I have raised My hand in an oath against them," says the Lord GOD, "that they shall bear their iniquity. And they shall not come near Me to minister to Me as priest, nor come near any of My holy things, nor into the Most Holy Place; but they shall bear their shame and their abominations which they have committed. Nevertheless I will make them keep charge of the temple, for all its work, and for all that has to be done in it. But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood," says the Lord GOD. "They shall enter My sanctuary, and they shall come near My table to minister to Me, and they shall keep My charge. And it shall be, whenever they enter the gates of the inner court, that they shall put on linen garments; no wool shall come upon them while they minister within the gates of the inner court or within the house. They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen trousers on their bodies; they shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes

sweat. When they go out to the outer court, to the outer court to the people, they shall take off their garments in which they have ministered, leave them in the holy chambers, and put on other garments; and in their holy garments they shall not sanctify the people. . . No priest shall drink wine when he enters the inner court. . . And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. In controversy they shall stand as judges, and judge it according to My judgments. They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbath. . . .It shall be, in regard to their inheritance, that I am their inheritance. You shall give them no possession in Israel, for I am their possession." (Ezekiel 44:10-28,NKJV)

As Ezekiel described his vision of the temple, he said, "This is the chamber which faces toward the South, intended for the priests who keep charge of the temple; but the chamber which faces toward the north is for the priests who keep charge of the altar. These are the sons of Zadok, who from the sons of Levi come near unto the Lord to minister to Him" (Ezekiel 40:45-46).

He saw the Zadok remnant as a priesthood called out of a priesthood! "These are the sons of Zadok, who from the sons of Levi came near to the Lord to minister to him. And you shall give to the Levitical priests who are from the offspring of Zadok, who draw near to Me to minister to Me," declares the Lord God, "a young bull for a sin offering" (Ezekiel 43:19). The Zadok ministry is separated from the world and has only one mission in life: to be at the Lord's table and minister to Him! This is the ministry of Mount Zion, the city of the Great King, God Himself.

The three-sided tent of the tabernacle of David that unveiled the ark to all testifies of this very thing. God warned David, making a clear distinction between His house and the temples built by men when Nathan the prophet corrected David for trying to build a temple of cedar to house the Ark and the priests that once ministered in the tent of meeting.

Go and tell My servant David, "Thus says the LORD: 'Would you build a house for Me to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My

people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?" Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel. "And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth. . . since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house.'" (2 Samuel 7:5-11, NKJV).

What is this house that God was to build for David, the type of His own Son? Stephen saw it, spoke of it to the priest that God banished to the outer court to minister to the people, and was killed for revealing their wicked hearts!

But Solomon built Him a house. However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me?" says the LORD, "Or what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things?" You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it." (Acts 7:47-53, NKJV).

Today, most of what churchmen call "ministry" is focused on the house. We hear a great deal about ministering to the people but little about ministry to the Lord. However, the true people of God have a different heart and focus. Their heart-cry is for one thing, that tabernacle of David in Mount Zion. Their passion is captured in the words of this song that were written over twenty years ago by a group called Petra:

- Take Me In
- Take me past the outer courts
- Into the Holy place
- Past the brazen altar
- Lord, I want to see Your face
- Pass me by the crowds of people
- The priests who sing your praise

- I hunger and thirst for Your righteousness
- And it's only found in one place
- Take me in to the Holy of Holies
- Take me in by the blood of the Lamb
- Take me in to the Holy of Holies
- Take the coal, cleanse my lips, here I am.
- Take the coal, cleanse my lips, here I am.

In His dealings with the sons of Zadok, the Lord began to make this very distinction. He clearly separated ministry into two categories--ministry to the house and ministry to Himself. He was introducing a new and higher order of ministry in which He is central, not in type but in reality, and in doing so, distinguished Himself from what religious man venerates above all else--ministry to the house and the congregants.

It would be good to note the words of a man that lived in England, a true seeker in the 1600's when there were many blind guides selling their wares. His name was George Fox:

I was sent of the Lord God of heaven and earth to preach freely, and to bring people off from these outward temples made with hands, which God dwelleth not in; that they might know their bodies to become the temples of God and of Christ; and to draw people off from all their superstitious ceremonies, Jewish and heathenish customs, traditions and doctrines of men; and from all the world's hireling teachers, that take tithes and great wages, preaching for hire, and divining for money, whom "God and Christ never sent, as themselves confess when they say that they never heard God's nor Christ's voice. I exhorted the people to come off from all these things, directing them to the Spirit and grace of God in themselves, and to the Light of Jesus in their own hearts; that they might come to know Christ, their free teacher, to bring them salvation, and to open the Scriptures to them.

God never intended the temple to be a permanent fixture in His kingdom. He winked at it because of man's ignorance. Like many other things, it was merely a shadow of good things to come, a temple not made with hands, built of living stones.

Could the current emphasis on ministry to people spring from a similar idolatry to that of the sons of Levi? Pastors take courses on church planting, church building, and how to make "user friendly" churches. We offer sacrifice, we tithe, we play worship music,

we minister to the people. It is all about the people and their needs and what makes them feel good and want to come back and keep supporting the machine we have created. In short, it is all idolatry because the real focus and motive behind "ministry" is not God but building up, through sweat and toil, the ministry of a man or men.

No Sweat

The holy priests of the sons of Zadok were not to wear anything that caused them to sweat.

It shall be that, when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come on them, while they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within. They shall have linen tires on their heads, and shall have linen breeches on their loins; they shall not gird themselves with anything that causes sweat. When they go forth into the outer court, even into the outer court to the people, they shall put off their garments in which they minister, and lay them in the holy chambers; and they shall put on other garments, that they not sanctify the people with their garments. (Ezekiel 44:17-19 WEB)

This is extremely significant considering that sweat is first mentioned in association with the curse. (See Genesis 3:19) Because Adam sinned, the ground was cursed and would only yield its fruit after much toil and sweat. Evidently, before the fall, the ground effortlessly gave up its fruit to Adam and Eve. There was no sweat. But now, because of his sin, Adam would work the ground by the sweat of his brow. Sweat speaks of human endeavor. It speaks of an unfinished task. The very moment that man fell out of rest he had to labor to produce what was once organic and natural. God would allow no such effort in this holy priesthood--no sweat of the brow, because He is all-sufficient. We borrow the words of Paul, "Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:5-6 ESV).

This divine sufficiency that characterizes New Covenant Ministry is directly related to the finished work of Christ. "It is finished!" All is done! There is nothing left for man to sweat over. There is no room for tilling and toiling in the kingdom of God. Every plant that God has not planted will be rooted up. The holy priesthood that God seeks is not called to toil, but to show forth His virtues as He said, "I am their possession." God not

only desires to possess a people, holy and peculiar, but wants them to possess Him in such a way that He is seen, felt and known in the world. God will have a priesthood that possesses Him, and, for lack of a better term, who model Him and minister by His sufficiency. This was His objective from the very beginning. It has not changed.

The closer we get to Zion the closer we get to the realization of our inheritance that is God Himself! At last, we are coming up the pathway home!

You have come to Zion

The glory of Zion was not that glory that the Queen of Sheba saw when she said, "The half has never yet been told." It was seen in the humble, open-faced tent of David, where the Ark of the presence sat in open display. It was there that God revealed, in amazing detail, His heart's desire to bring a people unto Himself and have a royal priesthood and a holy nation.

The Lord spoke His heart through Amos when he said,

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old. (Amos 9:11)

James recited the verse out of Amos as proof that the Gentiles were accepted into the commonwealth without adherence to the Old Testament law.

Simeon has reported how God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. This agrees with the words of the prophets. As it is written, "'After these things I will return. I will again build the tent of David, which has fallen. I will again build its ruins. I will set it up, that the rest of men may seek after the Lord; all the Gentiles who are called by my name,' says the Lord, who does all these things." (Act 15:14-17 WEB)

Amos did not prophesy, " I will again build the temple of Solomon..." No! It is the unveiled tent of David that God has purposed to restore in these last days. This is what Zion is--the habitation of the living God. God much prefers His tent to temples made by the hands of men.

When the author of Hebrews wrote, "You have come to Zion," it is certain that this tent of David, and all that it represents, was in mind. For he wrote, "you have come...unto God." This is what it is all about, coming unto God, reaching that place in the journey where He is all and in all. This is where the tent of God dwells with men and there are no temples except Him. This is where the house along with its shadows and trappings are replaced by the greater reality--God Himself. Jeremiah prophesied of just such a transition when the Ark of the Covenant would be forgotten and Jerusalem would be called "the throne of Jehovah."

And it will be, when you multiply and increase in the land in those days, says Jehovah, they will no longer say, The ark of the covenant of Jehovah! Nor shall it come to the heart, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they miss it, nor shall it be made any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah. And all nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem. And they shall not walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north, to the land that I have given for an inheritance to your fathers. But I said, How gladly would I put you among the sons, and give you a pleasant land, a beautiful inheritance among the multitudes of nations! And I said, You shall call Me, My Father; and you shall not turn away from Me. (Jeremiah 3:16-19 LITV)

Zion is the center of God's dwelling. It was there that the Ark came to rest. In the Old Testament God was localized. If you wanted to worship Him, you had to go to the place where He caused His name to be. "Lo here, Lo there." Today, there are no sacred places, no holy ground. He is not worshiped in this mountain or that, in Jerusalem, Constantinople or Rome. Where is the Lord today? Wherever two or three gather into His name, He said, "There I am." He dwells in that temple made of living stones. As soon as a company gathers around any other center than the Living God, they cease to live in Zion, for Zion is the place of God's presence. It cannot be a fixed place, because it is wherever God resides.

Finally, God called a people unto Himself--a kingdom of priests, a holy nation--at last a priesthood to minister unto Him--not a select caste of priests but the priesthood of all believers.

You are not come to Mount Sinai! You are come to Mt. Zion! You have come to God through a journey representing a tremendous changeover from the natural--what you could see with your natural eyes--to spiritual Zion. You have not come to a system that can be appropriated and touched by natural senses. What we have come to is more real than this! We re come (present tense) to the living God. We have come beyond veiled systems, beyond temples with degrees of ascensions, to the living God!

Zion is the end of the veiled systems and having come to Zion we stand, with open face beholding His glory. The temple veil was rent when the veil, Christ's flesh, was rent on Calvary.

Isaiah prophesied,

And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces. The rebuke of His people He take away from off all the earth; For the LORD has spoken. (Isaiah 25:7-8 NKJV)

All veils that obscure Him, keeping Him from His people, are removed in Christ. In its full scope and meaning, Zion is the realization of God purpose to bring a people, on eagle's wings, into an unveiled relationship with Himself, so intimate that He can even wipe the tears from their eyes.

Paul wrote of this, "[According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love . . .](#)" (Ephesians 1:4).

"Before Him in love..." This is the great criterion! No matter how noble the thought, act and word, if it is not conceived, nurtured and brought to fruition before Him in love, if it is not born and sanctified by the presence of the living God, it is not holy. It is the presence of God that sanctifies and makes holy. It is the presence of God that makes a gathering of people peculiar. We may preach, teach and otherwise nag people continually, exhorting them to do right, but nothing but the presence of the living God can reprove us and enable us to live above our fleshly failings. He is a consuming fire, burning away the chaff of our lives. Only what is before Him can be reckoned blameless. All God's dealings have one end in view--to bring a people unto Himself so

they can stand before Him in love. His heart takes no pleasure when people stand trembling at the foot of the mount, asking others to approach Him in their name.

No! His voice can yet be heard echoing through time and eternity, "I ... brought you to Myself... you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

God desires for the cloud of glory that once rested upon the Ark behind the veil in the temple to now rest on every dwelling.

And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory [shall be] a defense. (Isaiah 4:5 KJV)

There on Mount Zion, in a forty-year prophetic glimpse, the veil was removed and Israeli and Gentile alike stood before the ark in adoration. Zion is the realm of God's absolute presence and lordship! It is there that the veil is taken away. It was there that He rent the temple veil from top to bottom. It is there, in His presence, that death is swallowed up in victory. Only those who have beheld the unveiled God with unveiled faces may remove the veil from the faces of others. When you come into touch with those people, you come into touch with the Zion of God.

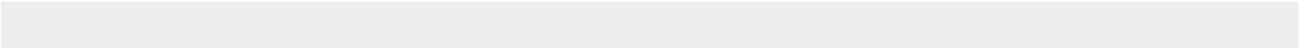
Christ words spoken from the cross, "It is finished," are an invitation to enter beyond the veil, into the heavenly habitation of God of which natural Zion was only a physical type. It is all completed. He has destroyed "on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations." The way into that heavenly habitation of God is open. The veil between the temporal and the heavenly is taken away in Christ. We have come unto Mount Zion, the city of the living God, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, and to God Himself.

Through the righteousness of Christ, we may now stand in God's presence. Yes, all works of righteousness that might gain us access through the torn veil into the holy of holies are truly finished in Jesus Christ, our great High Priest. Therefore, the author of Hebrews exhorts us as a holy priesthood.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need...Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated

for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 4:16, 10:19-22 KJV).

At last the way is open into the garden of God where we may again enter those works that were finished from the foundation of the world. It is this subject that will occupy our thoughts in part two.



From Law to Rest

Part 2 of *The Eternal Purpose of God*

By George Davis and Michael Clark

For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. (Hebrews 4:10, NKJV)

O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face. (Daniel 9:7, NKJV)

| [Part 1](#)

Righteousness Belongs to the Lord

Human nature denies the very idea that anything is beyond its power to perform. One modern day sage boasted, "What the human mind can conceive, it can also achieve." Such arrogant confidence in human potential is to be expected from the world, but it is painfully clear that this can-do spirit is equally present and welcome in what is called "the Christian Church."

Nothing could be more attractive to fallen man than the idea of recovering rightness and closing the breach between himself and God by his own moral efforts. He wants to be right by his own merit and force his version of righteousness on others. Sound familiar? It should, because this characterizes most of the activities of religious man for the last six thousand years. Ever since the serpent beguiled Eve with the promise that she could be "like God" if she would just disobey God and take things into her own hands, man's every action is proof that he does not know that true righteousness belongs to the Lord, nor does he know why it must be that way. In his quest for his own righteousness, religious man is blinded to true righteousness that comes only as a gift and can never be derived from any goodness in himself. It must be received as an unmerited gift from Him who alone is righteous (see Romans 5:17).

We do not become righteous through our own merits. Righteousness comes from a Source totally apart from man. The prevalent mentality that right doing equals righteousness is the hardest thing for religious man to give up because his every thought, motive and practice is predicated on it. Nothing so effectively blocks the flow of God's grace.

Before you can come to God in true repentance, you must first accept His judgment on all flesh. God's pronouncement upon everyone is, "There is none righteous, no not one." If we hold the misguided belief that there is anything good in us that would commend us to God, we fall into sharp disagreement with Him. Our very lives become a lie. Anyone who has not accepted God's judgment has not truly repented and his life becomes an ongoing effort to prove God wrong.

In its truest sense, repentance is coming into agreement with God. John wrote, "[If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us the sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness](#)" (1 John 1:9 WEB). The compound Greek word translated *confess* in this passage is *homologeō*. *Homo* means one and the same, and *logeō*, to say. Together they mean *to say with*. To confess something is to say the same thing as another is saying, agreeing totally with his assessment. This was God's judgment against Israel when He spoke through Amos and said, "[Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?](#)"

Here is the rub. Before man can truly repent, he must first say with. He must come into agreement with God about his sin/sins. It is much easier for man to admit to an occasional act of sin than it is for him to acknowledge his utter sinfulness. To admit that you have done wrong is less humiliating than admitting that you are wrong--skewed in your very being. A man is not a sinner because he sins. He sins because he is a sinner. He can do nothing else but live out his true inner condition. God wants to lay the ax to the root, not beat at the leaves. To deal with this externally by resisting external acts of sin is like fighting the mythological hydra. You cut off one head and two take its place. It is a losing battle. Paul made it clear that this "touch not, taste not, handle not" righteousness is profitless when it comes to restraining sinful passions (see Colossians 2). More is required. This kind of will worship might make you a prude, but it cannot make you a saint.

Believing that you must act righteously to become righteous is like believing that you can turn base metals into gold through alchemy. Man is corrupt through and through. Scripture bears this out conclusively. There is none good. What do you find when you assay man's flesh? FLESH! Didn't Jesus tell his disciples, "The flesh profits nothing"? Nothing? The Oxford Dictionary defines nothing as the state of having "no prospect of success or agreement." Nothing eternal or spiritual can come out of our fallen natures. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. There is no goodness anywhere in man. The

philanthropist and the hedonist are both on the same footing. Man's debauchery and his goodness come from the same source, his flesh. Isaiah did well prophesy, "We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall. And our sins, like the wind, sweep us away" (Isaiah 64:6, NLT). God's first order of business in redeeming man is to dispel the myth of his goodness.

The Myth of Man's Goodness

In Luke 18:18-19, a certain ruler asked Jesus, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? Nobody is good except for one, even God." If there is only one good, then this young man could do nothing to inherit eternal life. All his actions would profit nothing. The secret of true righteousness is contained in these few words "Nobody is good except One." When we finally come to believe these words, then we will stop our vain activities and receive the true righteousness of God.

Religious man's favorite question, "What must I do...?" presupposes that he can do something good enough to merit God's favor and blessing. Christ's answer pronounces judgment on all the supposed goodness in man, "There is only one good." Before man can experience true repentance and know the righteousness that comes from Him who alone is good, he must first agree with God's judgment on his flesh. Paul put it succinctly, "In me, that is in my flesh dwells no good thing."

This is the ground of controversy. The whole religious world labors to prove Jesus wrong. They erect good buildings in which good Christians gather to learn how to be better Christians with the aid of good programs and good doctrines, taught by good men. Everything is said and done to perfect the goodness in man that Jesus pronounced nonexistent. The notion that you can become good through practice is the delusion that keeps man on the religious treadmill, always trying harder to be good and always building towers unto the heavens. We must come into agreement with God and see that His judgment is as heavy upon our best efforts as it was on Nimrod's tower to heaven (see Genesis 11). We must repent of such dead works and come into agreement with Jesus' words, "There is only one good."

Most people learn this lesson after years of struggle and defeat. How would God teach man that there is nothing he can do to recover the rightness he once had before the fall? How would He show decadent humanity its utter lack of goodness?

After eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve stood, divided in their very beings, astonished and confused about what had just happened to them. Their eyes were opened, and they could see many things, but not their true condition. They fell from something wonderful on a higher plain of existence to a lower plain beneath the dignity and purpose God created them for. The goodness God spoke of when He said, "It is good" was lost. How would God show man how far he had fallen? How would He teach man of his deep inner infection and impurity? How would God show mankind that their righteous deeds are nothing but filthy rags? How would He show them their utter depravity and powerlessness in doing what once was as natural as breathing to Adam before the fall? How indeed!

Enter the Law

God chose a Pharisee who once stood proudly in what he called, "...my own righteousness, which is of the law" as the champion of an entirely different kind of righteous, the righteousness of God. God had to stop this Pharisee dead in his tracks and convince him that man's goodness is like dung, fecal matter, in His sight. Paul learned this lesson very well. He saw the depravity of his own murderous heart in a divine encounter on the Damascus Road, where the risen Christ said to him, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." Paul had been so sure of his righteousness in imprisoning and killing the saints of God. His righteousness blinded him to the truth that is only found in Jesus Christ.

After fourteen years of obscurity and wilderness, Paul wrote the following to the Philippian church. "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and count them nothing but refuse, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Philippians 3:8-9 WEB).

Throughout his epistles, Paul contrasts the righteousness that comes from God to man's law-based righteousness. To the Galatians he wrote:

...yet we know that a person is not justified by the works of the law but by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. We, too, have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law, for no human being will be justified by the works of the law. (Galatians 2:16 ISV)

If righteousness comes only by believing in Jesus Christ, and we are justified by our faith in Him alone, then what purpose did the law serve? Why was it given?

God gave the law as a tutor to teach that there is only *One* who is good. The law does not teach this through rote performance but through failure to perform. It demands a perfection or goodness from man that belongs only to God. Whoever tries to keep the law is destined for failure after failure until he becomes wretched and weary and, like the Romans chapter seven man, cry out, "Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" Only then can we accept the righteousness that comes from God by faith. Only then can we understand these words, "[But by Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption](#)" (1Corinthians 1:30 ALT). Here we see that this gift of righteousness is not a thing, but a Person. He is our righteousness! Righteousness comes in the form of God's gift of Himself to man and with that gift comes a new nature with new desires. All things become new. We are righteous when He lives out His righteousness through us.

Paul made this foundational truth clear to the Roman believers when he wrote:

Now we know that whatever the law says applies to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore, no human being will be justified in God's sight by means of the works prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the full knowledge of sin. But now, apart from the law, God's righteousness is revealed and is attested by the Law and the Prophets- God's righteousness through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and continue to fall short of God's glory. By his grace they are justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God offered as a place where atonement by Christ's blood could occur through faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because he had waited patiently to deal with sins committed in the past. He wanted to demonstrate at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the person who has the faithfulness of Jesus. What, then, is there to boast about? That has been

eliminated. On what principle? On that of works? No, but on the principle of faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works prescribed by the law... (Romans 3:19-28 ISV, emphasis ours).

First, Paul points out that "Whatever the law says applies to those who are under the law." This is an extremely important point that we shall discuss at length momentarily. For now, it is enough to say that we who believe and have received the righteousness of God through faith in His Son are not under the law and what the law says doesn't apply to us.

The point is that God gave the law to stop every self-righteous mouth and show man that there is no goodness in him, so that the entire world would stand silent and guilty before Him. God gave the law to prove that no mortal could keep it. "But the scripture (law) hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (Galatians 3:22).

No one can become righteous through law-keeping. The more you know about the law, the more convinced of your sinfulness you become. The law brought the knowledge of sin, not the remedy for sin. Paul described it this way, "I was alive apart from the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Romans 7:9 WEB). The law brought no remedy for sin but heightened the sense of it, leaving the sinner fully convinced of his ever-present body of death. "The law entered, that the offence might abound" (Romans 5:20) and "bring forth fruit unto death" (Romans 7:5). This is its only purpose. "I had not known lust, except the law had said, you shall not covet," said Paul (see Romans 7:7). "The strength of sin is the law" (1 Corinthians 15:56). The law brought the knowledge of sin but no life (Galatians 3:21). "For the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw near to God" (Hebrews 7:19 MKJV).

Difficult Questions about the Law

Any time we dare to bring up the fact that we are no longer under the Old Testament law, the hue and cry of those who have placed their identity in law keeping rises into a deafening din. They are quick to quote Jesus' words to the Jews.

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one

tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:17-19, NKJV)

Let us look at the two Greek words *fulfill* and *fulfilled*.

Fulfill - *pleroo pleroo* {play-ro'-o}

1) to make full, to fill up, i.e. to fill to the full

2) to render full, i.e. to complete

2a) to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim

2b) to consummate

2b1) to make complete in every particular, to render perfect

2b2) to carry through to the end, to accomplish, carry out, (some undertaking)

2c) to carry into effect, bring to realisation, realise

Fulfilled - *ginomai* {ghin'-om-ahee}

1) to become, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be, receive being

4) to be made, finished

Now with these definitions in mind, let's look at what Jesus is really saying here.

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fill up to the brim and consummate the law. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all of it is finished."

How were the righteous requirements of the law filled up? How was the law consummated? Jesus, the perfect Son of God who gave the Law to Moses, came to fill-up the just requirements of the law in One Life for all--in one perfect offering of a spotless Lamb, the Lamb of God.

Look at these words He spoke in regard to John the Baptist:

And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God

has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail." (Luke 16:15-17, NKJV).

"The law and the prophets were until John." John the Baptist came announcing the One who was to fill-up the purpose of the law in His own righteous life. The law and the prophets not only pointed to a higher order of righteousness, but they also pointed to the One who would fulfill all righteousness, Jesus Christ. Jesus first filled-up and then terminated the need of the law in His perfect conception, birth, life, death and finally His perfect resurrection that once for all tore down the wall of separation between man and God. As Jesus hung on the cross He cried out, "It is finished." It was then that the veil of the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom, opening the way into the holiness of God for all men. First, by faith in the Son alone we enter in by the sprinkling of the blood of the Lamb and secondly, being made holy by His holiness abiding within us. In the past only the high priest could enter in, but now everyone that believes in the One High Priest of God, Jesus Christ, has equal access to the righteousness and presence of Him who alone is good.

Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" What was finished? The same "finished" in the passage in John quoted above. "I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled [finished]."

Contrast this with what Jesus said to the Pharisees and all law keepers, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." Is the law an abomination? No way! The heart of man that thinks that he can do what only the Son of God could do is the abomination before God. It is an affront to His holiness.

Note John's opening words in his gospel speaking of John the Baptist.

John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" And of His fullness [filled up--"It is finished"] we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:15-17, NKJV).

Another difficult passage that seems to promote law keeping but does not is Romans 3:31.

Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. (Romans 3:31 KJV).

Does this passage imply that we should keep the law? Is establishing the law the same as keeping it? We must take these words in context. The Greek word translated *establish* in the above scripture means "to stand by...to set or place in a balance...to weigh: money to one (because in very early times before the introduction of coinage, the metals used to be weighed)" (*Thayer*). Among other things, Paul was implying that the view of righteousness held by Judaism at that time was far afield from God's view. He claimed to hold the law in proper perspective.

Paul stood by the law by showing how the law itself gives record of the righteousness of faith, without the works of the law. He asked, "What then will we say that Abraham, our forefather, has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not toward God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Now to him who works, the reward is not counted as grace, but as debt. But to him who doesn't work, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness" (Romans 4:1-5 WEB).

Paul went on to show how Abraham was pronounced righteous before he was circumcised. Therefore, circumcision does not make you righteous. He concluded that an uncircumcised person who believes in Christ is of the "faith of our father Abraham, which he had in uncircumcision" (4:12). What is Paul's point here? He is establishing the law! He is standing by what the scriptures say and showing, by them, the righteousness of faith without the works of the law. Paul stood by the law as it pointed to faith and grace. This is why he could write, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God" (Galatians 2:19). The law itself gives irrefutable testimony of our freedom from it. Paul was not promoting law keeping. The whole of his argument is against it. Remember that the law had not been given when God reckoned Abraham righteous. Therefore the faith of Abraham has nothing to do with the letter.

The Conflict between Two Sons

So the law, which brings forth fruit unto death, failed the main criterion for righteousness--life. "If a Law had been given which could have conferred Life, righteousness would certainly have come by the Law" (Galatians 3:21 WNT). The law

cannot confer life. This is its chief failing. It cannot impart grace and truth. If it could, "...then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:21). In stark contrast, John wrote of Jesus, "In HIM was life and the life was the light of men."

God's righteousness comes through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, inherent in His very life, apart from the law. This righteousness is never something inherently our own. For Jew and Gentile alike have sinned and continue to fall short of God's glory. None are righteous, no not one. Everyone is justified by the grace that comes through the redemption that is forever in Christ Jesus. Only He is full of grace and truth. In this, God demonstrates His righteousness. He demonstrates that He is just in justifying those who believe in His Son through faith alone.

The legalists of Paul's day viewed this as an unlawful act, because the law demanded circumcision before you could be reckoned righteous and accepted into the commonwealth of God's chosen people. If God were to justify the Gentiles through faith alone, He would break His own law, or so it seemed to the Judaizers in the Jerusalem church. So they set out to harmonize the two and developed a more balanced doctrine. "Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: 'Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved'" (Act 15:1 NIV)

Jesus warned the disciples to beware of the leavening of the Pharisees. After His resurrection, the Jewish establishment and enforcers of the law made inroads into the infant church in the city that killed Him (see Acts 6:7 and 21:20). In Acts we read that a little leaven began to leaven the whole lump. Even Peter was caught-up in it and later repented. These legalists became Paul's greatest persecutors and opponents of the gospel of grace.

He explained this phenomenon to the Galatian Church:

Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar--for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children-- but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of

us all. For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband." Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (Galatians 4:21-5:1, NKJV).

Even so it is now. He who is born according to the flesh persecutes he who is born according to the Spirit. Could this explain the divisions that exist among those calling themselves Christian today? Those of you who have found Jesus as your sufficiency in all things have also found yourselves targets of those who continue in the works of the Judaizers. No, today they do not demand circumcision as the proof of righteousness but they do glory in flesh by attempting to deal with the impurities of the flesh by a power no greater than the human will. Paul wrote,

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations--"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (referring to things that all perish as they are used)--according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 2:20-3:4, ESV).

Wherever Christ's liberty is found, legalists soon come in and seek to impose some form of self-made and self-powered religion. Paul even found this to be true in the Jerusalem church, of which he wrote,

And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into

bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. (Galatians 2:4, 5, NKJV).

Stand fast in your liberty, dear saints. Stand fast!

Now let us answer the claim that for God to fulfill the righteous demands of the law solely through the faithfulness of Christ was to break His own law.

God, the Law, and Grace

God fulfilled the righteous demands of the law through the sacrifice of Christ. It did not stop there. By that same sacrifice, He also freed those who were shut up under the law. Isn't that illegal? How could God do that and remain just? Paul referred to the law as the law of sin and death - you sin, you die! All have sinned in the past and still come short of the glory of God in the present. Then ALL, everyone, without exceptions, must die. You and I must die. That's the law.

How could God, who is rich in mercy, show kindness to those whom He loves, who sin and fall short, and yet fulfill the righteous demands of the law? Love found a way. God loved the world so much that He sent His only Son to die that whosoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life (see John 3:16). Through Christ's sacrifice, the demands of the law are fulfilled or finished. Through His death we are accounted righteous. The only way God could free us from the curse of the law was through death. "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the Law" (1 Corinthians 15:54-56 MKJV).

You sin - you die! The law demands it. God would be unjust not to execute its demands to the letter. How will mercy triumph over judgment? How is death swallowed up in victory? How can God remain just and yet show His mercy to sinful humanity? How will He justify the sinner who is incapable of keeping His law? How will He justify the Gentiles through faith alone and remain righteous? We must answer these questions and trust in the answer if we are ever to have the righteousness that comes from God.

We find the answer in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians.

For the love of Christ constrains us; because we judge thus, that one died for all, therefore all died. He died for all, that those who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who for their sakes died and rose again. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15 WEB)

Paul wrote of the impact of this death in his own life.

I have been put to death on the cross with Christ; still I am living; no longer I, but Christ is living in me; and that life which I now am living in the flesh I am living by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who in love for me, gave himself up for me. (Galatians 2:20 BBE)

What strange language is this? One died for *all*...His death is their death...all died. I am crucified with Christ, yet I live...yet not I but Christ lives. What in the world is Paul talking about here? How can I be dead and live at the same time?

Through our co-death with Jesus on the cross the penalty demanded by the law is paid in full and God is right to account us righteous. God is just in justifying everyone who lives by the faith of Christ. This consists of more than living by mere tenets of faith but Christ living through us. "Yet not I, but Christ..." Because of this death, God reckons us dead to the law and its curse. As we read earlier, the requirements of the law are demanded of those who are under the law. The person who has been crucified with Christ is not only justified but is also dead to the law, meaning, he is no longer alive to its demands. Paul explains:

Or don't you know, brothers (for I speak to men who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man for as long as he lives? For the woman that has a husband is bound by law to the husband while he lives, but if the husband dies, she is discharged from the law of the husband. So then if, while the husband lives, she is joined to another man, she would be called an adulteress. But if the husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she is joined to another man. Therefore, my brothers, you also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you would be joined to another, to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were through the law, worked in our members to bring forth fruit to death. But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held;

so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter. (Romans 7:1-6)

We can only conclude that anyone professing undying love to Christ while bound to the old husband (the law) is an adulteress, married to one man while professing to love another. They cannot be joined to Christ and bring forth offspring to God as long as they live. Only those reckoned dead through their death with Christ are beyond the reach of the old husband. Only these are free from the demands of the law. Divorce from the law is not enough, for in divorce we remain law breakers. Only death can free us from it. We pass beyond the realm of the law through the cross, baptism-burial and resurrection life. Just as Jesus was raised in newness of life and now sits in heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers, so we are raised to sit in a realm far above the elementary principles of law, sin and death. If we are crucified with Christ we are no longer under the law, and as we read earlier, "Whatever the law says applies to those who are under the law." Now let us further examine this condition of not being under the law.

The Two Covenants

It is impossible to understand the law without first recognizing that it is a Covenant made with one nation only. Paul wrote, "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law" (1Corinthians 9:20 KJV).

The first thing we learn from this verse is that Paul was addressing two groups of people, the Jews under the law and the Gentile nations that were never under the Law of Moses. God gave the Law to Israel as a Covenant between Himself and them alone. God said to Moses, "Write you these words: for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel" (Exodus. 34:27). The Law was God's covenant with Moses and Israel, not with the Gentile nations.

The Gentiles did not pass through the Red Sea nor stand at the foot of Mount Sinai when Moses came down with the law inscribed on tablets of stone. Neither did they follow Joshua through the parted-waters of the Jordan River into the land of promise. The Mosaic Covenant was purely between Moses, Israel and God. Although the Gentiles were not under the Law of Moses, they were included in a covenant made with Abraham four hundred and thirty years prior.

Paul also referred to the law as a covenant with the natural Jerusalem. "These things contain an allegory, for these are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to the Jerusalem that exists now, for she is in bondage with her children." (Galatians 4:24-25 WEB) Some people dissect the law of Moses and the traditions of the Jewish fathers and say that we are under one part as Christians, but not the other. This is so much double talk. As we see above, Paul makes it plain that all that has come down from Sinai (the law of Moses) and all that is of Jerusalem (the traditions of the fathers) are one. To adhere to any part of it is to be in bondage to it all.

What about this other Covenant? There are only two covenants. Today we call them "the Old Covenant" and "the New Covenant," but these distinctions are not completely accurate. Paul endeavored to show the Galatians that the New Covenant was really an old, old Covenant--the covenant confirmed beforehand by God in Christ. When? "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He doesn't say, 'To seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'To your seed,' which is Christ. Now I say this. A covenant confirmed beforehand by God in Christ--the law which came four hundred and thirty years after, does not annul, so as to make the promise of no effect" (Galatians 3:16-17 WEB). Consider the timeline on the following page.

The entire white portion of the timeline on the next page represents a single covenant--"the covenant, confirmed beforehand by God in Christ." This covenant was made with Abraham and His Seed (Christ) four hundred and thirty years before the law was given. We see then, that the gospel was first preached to Abraham (Galatians.3:8). The covenant that God made with Abraham and his Seed (Christ) was to bless all nations. This Covenant was wider in scope than the Mosaic covenant because it included everyone, not just Israel.

God's Covenant with Abraham has never been interrupted or added to. Paul wrote regarding this, "Brothers, I speak like men. Though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been confirmed, no one makes it void, or adds to it" (Galatians 3:15 WEB). Therefore, the law, represented by the gray portion of our timeline, is not a postscript to the covenant that God made with Abraham, but was added parenthetically only for a short season to bring a people to Christ, the Seed to whom the promise was made. The law-covenant stands totally separate from the faith of Abraham in which those who trust in Christ, as he did, now stand.



The Covenant that all believers share today is really the old covenant that was in effect four hundred and thirty years before the law. It was only new to the Jews who were under the law when they accepted Christ as their Messiah. Paul concludes that those who are Christ's are Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise (see Galatians 3:29). As we mentioned before, Jesus told the Pharisees, "Abraham saw my day and he rejoiced." Paul brings this truth home even more profoundly by including all believers with Isaac in the lineage of Abraham. "Now we, brothers, as Isaac was, are children of promise" (Galatians 4:28). Isaac was born an heir. He did nothing to inherit. Everything came as an unmerited gift from his father. So it is with us who are, as Isaac was, children of the promise. We are heirs of the promise through faith in Christ. Regarding this birth and inheritance, Paul wrote, "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God" (Romans 2:28, 29, NKJV). We who are in Christ and have the faith of Christ are the seed of Abraham, not the seed of Moses. The Covenant that we are under in Christ predates and postdates the law.

The law that came four hundred and thirty years after cannot annul or aid the Promise. The Promise is for both Jew and Gentile--all men and women in Christ. Simeon prophesied with the Christ child in his arms, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, According to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of your people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32, NKJV, emphasis added).

Is the law against the promises? No. Can the law fulfill the promise then? Same answer: no. Righteousness could not come by the law because the law could not give life and because it cannot give life, it cannot deliver the blessing. Righteousness and life are interconnected. We cannot have one without the other. The gift of Divine life is the gift of righteousness. Remember, only God is good and when His Spirit is imparted to the believer His goodness is given as well. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith..." (Galatians 5:22 KJV). Against such there is no law.

The blessing of Abraham that came upon all nations was not the law. Paul wrote, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:13-14). The blessing of Abraham is the Spirit that is now poured out upon all flesh (see Acts 2). God gave the Blessing of Abraham to all flesh, not the curse of the Law.

The Church at Antioch vs. the Jerusalem Church

The Church at Antioch was the first indication that God's Covenant with Abraham had come to fruition. We find clear evidence of this in the Book of Acts. No one knew how it happened, but a glorious expression of Christ's church sprang up at Antioch. The Antioch Church was a truly free Gentile church, led purely by the Spirit. They were not governed by law but by the Spirit (the blessing of Abraham). This anomaly became the talk of the Jerusalem Church. According to James and all the elders, the Jerusalem Church was comprised of thousands of believing Jews that were "all zealous for the law" (see Act 21:20).

The stark difference between these two churches caused a gathering in Jerusalem to discuss this matter. The focus was on whether the law would be placed on the Gentile believers. Thank God for Peter, who piped up just in time! "Brothers, you know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. God, who knows the heart, testified about them, giving them the Holy Spirit [the blessing of Abraham] just like he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you tempt God, that you should put a yoke on the neck of the

disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they are" (Act 15:7-11 WEB).

According to Peter, putting the yoke of the law on God's people is tempting God and being guilty of the very thing Jesus accused the Pharisees of, i.e., shutting up the kingdom of heaven against men. "For you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in . . . you bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but you yourselves will not move them with one of your fingers" (Matthew 23:13&4, NKJV). Today, anyone who encourages any of God's children to keep the law is putting a yoke of bondage on them that no one has ever been able to bear, consigning them to a life of wretchedness and failure. Is this the blessing that God promised the descendants of Abraham?

This Antioch Church had received the blessing of Abraham without the trappings of law. "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you all the nations will be blessed'" (Galatians 3:8 WEB). Israel's great conflict was that they took such pride in their distinctness, as God's chosen people, that they could not or would not embrace the full scope and intention of the Abrahamic Covenant. Instead, their exaggerated position often put them in direct opposition to the Abrahamic Covenant and caused them to scorn those God wants to include. They found their identity in the Mosaic Covenant, which made them the unique custodians of the oracles of God, elevating them above the cursed Gentiles. Israel became a divine powerbroker with the keys to lock out or admit proselytes into the commonwealth. Their instrument of power was the law and they found a sense of safety and pride in their knowledge of it. They despised and cursed those who didn't know the law (John 7:49). Why would they want to trade such power for equality with the Gentiles? But this was exactly what the gospel that was preached beforehand to Abraham demanded because it proclaimed blessing to all nations. Yes, even the gospel is not new. It also predates the law since it was preached to Abraham beforehand.

If we are honest with ourselves we must admit that a similar kind of elitism shuts up the kingdom of heaven today by taking those whom God has joined, in glorious equality, and separating them into classes, divided by badges and banners. On one street corner you will find the Baptist nation, on another the Lutheran nation and on yet another, some other nation.

Christ and all true believers are one Spirit. In the terminology of Adam, they are "bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh." The two shall become one and as man and wife become one flesh. "The person who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:16-17).

The words Jesus used to describe the horror of doing anything to separate a husband and wife apply to Him and His bride the church. "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mark 10:9 RSV).

Law or Grace

What comes to mind when you hear these words, "Under the law"? The word *under* (*hupo* [5259]) means beneath, underneath or below, an inferior position or condition. Paul wrote of this inferior condition. "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed" (Galatians 3:23 KJV). What is over us has usually mastered us. The law was given to master, NOT be mastered. Those who are under it are held in its power. Elsewhere Paul wrote:

Now we know that whatever things the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God. (Romans 3:19 WEB)

But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, shut up to the faith which should afterwards be revealed. So that the law has become our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor. (Galatians 3:23-25 WEB)

For sin will not have dominion over you. For you are not under law, but under grace. (Romans 6:14 WEB)

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (Galatians 5:18 WEB)

Romans chapter seven is an extremely telling passage that graphically reveals the true condition of the man under the law.

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? May it never be! However, I wouldn't have known sin, except through the law. For I wouldn't have known coveting, unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." But sin, finding occasion through the commandment,

produced in me all kinds of coveting. For apart from the law, sin is dead. I was alive apart from the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. The commandment, which was for life, this I found to be for death; for sin, finding occasion through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me. Therefore the law indeed is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good. Did then that which is good become death to me? May it never be! But sin, that it might be shown to be sin, by working death to me through that which is good; that through the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am fleshly, sold under sin. For I don't know what I am doing. For I don't practice what I desire to do; but what I hate, that I do. But if what I don't desire, that I do, I consent to the law that it is good. So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing. For desire is present with me, but I don't find it doing that which is good. For the good which I desire, I don't do; but the evil which I don't desire, that I practice. But if what I don't desire, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the law, that, to me, while I desire to do good, evil is present. For I delight in God's law after the inward man, but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord! So then with the mind, I myself serve God's law, but with the flesh, the sin's law. (Romans 7:1-25 WEB)

Why was this dear brother so frustrated? He was living in death rather than resurrection life.

Although this may sound like a sad tale it is really a tale of victory. It is in this school of defeat and failure that those misguided souls who try to keep the law learn the most valuable lessons of their lives. The man of Romans chapter seven learned such a lesson. "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing. For desire is present with me, but I don't find it doing that which is good" (Romans 7:18 WEB).

Perhaps you identify with this man, after years of dolefully observing the letter and trying to jump through the hoops (expectations) held out by well-meaning religious leaders. Your inability to perform up to the group-consensus is crushing you. What to do? Frustrated and defeated, the cry wells up from within you, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Death? Yes. Death is the

problem here. This is an interesting word to use in connection with law-keeping, don't you think? Throughout the scriptures, death (Greek *thanatos*) is separation. It is used to describe the separation of the spirit from the body, after which the body ceases to function. Death is not nonexistence but separation from the life of God. It is trying to perfect holiness without the Holy Spirit. God is Spirit and in his eyes, living without spiritual life is death. The result of Adam and Eve's sin was spiritual death, which was followed by physical death. We were dead in our trespasses and sins before God redeemed us. Paul wrote, "[But she who gives herself to pleasure is dead while she lives](#)" (1Timothy 5:6 WEB).

W.E. Vine wrote, "As spiritual life is 'conscious existence in communion with God,' so spiritual 'death' is 'conscious existence in separation from God.'" Though the Romans 7 man delighted in the law of God, he lacked the one thing required to keep it--the life of God. He set about to keep the law in his own energy, all to no avail. The law of sin, taking advantage due to the lack of divine life, sweeps everything before it like the onrush of a mighty stream.

Paul answered the question of who would deliver him from this death by declaring, "[There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who don't walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death](#)" (Romans 8:1-2 WEB). Human toil and effort cannot affect salvation or sanctification. "[It is not of him who wills, \(decides to do a thing\) nor of him who runs, \(puts forth the effort\) but of God who has mercy](#)" (Romans 9:16). Christ in you is the hope of glory! The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus transforms and enlivens us, setting us free from the law of sin and death. Only life can displace death!

How sad that man will not accept God's judgment on his flesh until he has exhausted every last ounce of his human energy. God allows this struggle in order for man to see his flesh as his Creator sees it. Bankrupt! Only then will he agree with God's assessment and cry out for help. Only then can he say from the heart, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." Only then will he seek God's deliverance and righteousness.

The only thing that will raise us up above the law of sin and death is another law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Remember Paul's words, "[if a Law had been](#)

given which could have conferred Life, righteousness would certainly have come by the Law" (see Galatians 3:21 WNT).

Satan's chief tactic is to alienate believers from the life of Christ by enticing them to keep the law and fall to the lower plain of the graceless treadmill of religion. He knows that in doing this he has effectively cut them off from Christ. Paul wrote, "Those of you who are trying to be justified by the law have been cut off from Christ. You have fallen away from grace" (Galatians 5:4 ISV). You cannot add anything to what Christ has already accomplished and filled-up in His own righteous life and death on the cross. If you do, you set aside the grace of God and make Christ's death of no effect, "For if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain" (Galatians 2:21).

Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.(Galatians 5:2, NKJV).

But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. (Romans 9:31, 32, NKJV). For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Romans 10:3, 4, NKJV).

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-9, NKJV).

Notice all the personal pronouns in Romans seven: I wouldn't, I was, I found, I am, I hate, I will, I do, I desire, I practice, I do not, and so forth. His only hope is found in I, Me, My. He has no power outside himself. Such is the state of the man under the law. He is left with an overwhelming sense of his impotence. Hope disappears, as his sin looms larger and larger.

In chapter seven the pronoun / is used thirty-two times, six times in verse fifteen alone. It is only used twice in chapter eight. Paul found that it was no longer I but Christ. In

chapter eight he referenced God, Jesus and His Spirit sixty-one times! Paul found Christ as his sufficiency and so must we. This is the difference between the man in defeat and the man in total victory.

The miserable lives of those who have been deluded into thinking that they can become righteous by their own works are a constant warning to anyone who will heed it. It all started with Eve, who thought that if she just could eat of that forbidden tree, she could be like God. Sadly, the greatest consequence is not just the misery of these poor misled souls but the loss of the vital presence and blessing of the Lord in their lives.

Rome imprinted its values on the early church, bringing forth Roman Catholicism, and this same mindset carried forward into the Protestant reformation. Catholicism boasts of its great learned church fathers such as Ignatius, Augustine, Aquinas, Sir Thomas More and so on. Protestantism has Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Spurgeon, Moody, all educated in the ways of worldly wisdom. Many spent their entire lives in universities. Having only a form of godliness, this apostate bride always denies access to the true source of power, preferring the tree of knowledge over the Spirit of God. What qualifies a man to serve behind a pulpit? A proper Christian education from a recognized university, of course! By this standard, not one of the leaders of the infant church was qualified to lead the body of Christ, except possibly Paul, and he counted his education under the best of Jerusalem as mere dung.

For the next few moments we will consider what we have chosen to call Calvin's Contribution to Covenant Confusion.

Calvin's contributed to our captivity by encouraging a mixture of law and grace. His contribution to the current condition of bondage among God's people cannot be overstated. He handed it down to us in the form of something called "Covenant theology." Out of this came the Reform Movement and many verities of Reform Churches. Calvin wrote:

"If it is true, that a perfect righteousness is set before us in the Law, it follows, that the complete observance of it is perfect righteousness in the sight of God; that is, a righteousness by which a man may be deemed and pronounced righteous at the divine tribunal."

This covenant confusion, which teaches that righteousness comes through keeping the law, has since surfaced in the teachings of many prominent Christian leaders, who faithfully handed it down to us. Here are some quotations from a few confounded converts to Calvin's covenant confusion.

"It is self-evident that the entire obedience to God's law is possible on the grounds of natural ability. To deny this, is to deny that man is able to do as well as he can."

(Charles G. Finny, *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, pg.407)

"Genuine sanctification will show itself in habitual respect for God's law, and habitual effort to live in obedience to it as a rule of life." (J.C.Ryle, *Holines*, pg. 27)

"Christ was made under the law (Galatians 4:4) and lived in perfect submission thereto, and has left us an example that we should "follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Only by loving, fearing, and obeying the law, shall we be kept from sinning...

"There is an unceasing warfare between the flesh and the Spirit, each bring forth after its own kind, so that groans ever mingle with the Christian's songs. The believer finds himself alternating between thanking God for deliverance from temptation and contritely confessing his deplorable yielding to temptation. Often he is made to cry, "O wretched man that I am!" (Rom. 7:24) Such has been for upwards of twenty-five years the experience of the writer, and it is still so." (Arthur Pink, *The Doctrine of Sanctification*, pp. 81,83)

Consider this question: Is this the abundant life of which Jesus spoke? These same men had thousands of devout followers. So did the blind Pharisees of 2000 years ago. As long as man glories in human potential, thinking that doing as well as he can is enough, there will always be blind guides leading the blind.

"Grace, grace to it!"

The Old Testament priest and prophet, Zechariah, saw this great truth that man is totally bankrupt when it comes to godliness and doing the work of the Father.

Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, "What do you see?" So I said, "I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. "Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left." So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, "What are these, my lord?" Then the angel who talked with

me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts. 'Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone With shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"'" (Zechariah 4:1-7, NKJV).

First, it is interesting that the meaning of the name *Zerubbabel* is *born in* or *seed of Babylon*. Imagine for a moment if you will what it must have been like for the "children of the captivity" who had been totally affected by the Babylonian ways and made artisans for its kings during this time (see Daniel 1-4). These people were sent to Zion to build a temple for God by one of these heathen kings! Certainly, they came somewhat cock-sure of their craftsmanship and ability to accomplish the task. They had done it and seen it done many times in Babylon. So what was the first thing that the children of the captivity had to learn? They had to learn that this work would not be accomplished by the means that built the hanging gardens, erected the Ishtar gate and raised the many monuments to Babylon's kings. Remember Nebuchadnezzar's boast that reflects the heart and attitude of Babylon, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling-place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30 WEB).

No! This work would not be accomplished by the might and power of man. Babylon the Great depicts the fallen church that knows no other way but the might and power of carnal men.

In his vision, Zechariah saw olive trees, the golden bowl, the seven pipes and seven lamps on a common lampstand. What do these symbols mean? In Revelation chapters two and three, the seven lamps are symbols of the seven churches and their seven spirits among whom Jesus is seen walking and pronouncing judgments. In this vision of Zechariah, we see the church as it should be, under the authority of Christ. Seven is the number of completion or perfection.

Each of the seven "churches" is fed by way of the one Golden Bowl from the source, the Two Olive Trees. Two is the number of witness and these two trees depict the work of Jesus in establishing the church on earth and the work of the Holy Spirit who continues to guide her. "These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth." (Zechariah 4:14). The source of light and energy is the oil that

flows from the two Olive Trees into the golden bowl and out from there to the seven oil lamps, the church in perfection. This explains the angel's interpretation of the vision which the prophet saw, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord."

Today we have a church that has abandoned its source of oil. We have foolish virgins following in the steps of the churches in Revelation chapters two and three, falling away from the simplicity of Christ. These same sins are often looked upon in the churches as virtues! What sins? In Revelation 2 and 3 we read of false apostles, leaving our First Love and our first works. We also read about false prophets like Baalam, those of the Nicolaitan spirit ruling over God's people, the seducing influence of the Jezebel spirit with its false teachers and seducing spirits, boasting of real life, but actually spiritually dead, and churches that entertain false Jews of the synagogue of Satan. Last but not least, we see the vast sea of mediocrity called lukewarm Christianity that boasts in its wealth and prosperity, wanting only enough of Jesus to be "saved," but not enough to become sons of God. To these Jesus says, "Repent least your lamp shall be removed."

Like the foolish virgins, today's average church member does not seem to know where to go for oil. When trouble comes, they do what they have always done, run to other virgins for oil.

In stark contrast to all this, we have the wise virgins who get their oil from the Source. They wait on the Lord. Their lamps are fed with that constant flow that is not dependent on today's temple priests and pulpit ministers. Their oil comes down into their lamps from Jesus and His Spirit alone. They are plumbed into the Head, the golden bowl above the lamps. Lamps that depend on the priest or minister to come around and fill them soon run out of oil when the hour of darkness comes. Only the wise virgins will make it through the dark night of trial coming upon the whole earth to see the coming of their Bridegroom.

The temple of God is not built of stones and mortar by the skill and ingenuity of men who study church growth. It is a temple built of living stones by the Spirit of the living God. Jesus said, "I will build my church." It is *this* church and no other that will stand against the gates of hell. Our passage continues, "Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with

shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'" The uninterrupted flow of this divine oil from the two olive trees is accompanied by their calls of "Grace, grace unto it."

We must learn that our best efforts are not good enough and never will be in the eyes of God. The oil we need as wise virgins does not come from our own efforts nor from the efforts of other virgins. It comes from the Word of the Lord, and the Spirit of Truth. It is not by our might, not by our power, but by the Spirit of God. Our "righteous deeds" may heap up unto heaven as a great mountain before God, but they will all be cast down as nothing before the feet of Jesus, Who in the end will say to us, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" Only those who know Jesus' covering, who know Him alone as their Cap Stone can appreciate Him and cry out, "Grace! Marvelous Grace!"

The Son, Not the Law

What is our part? Surely we must contribute something? Let's first consider what our role is not. We find several clues in the following verses.

From the place of His dwelling He looks on all the inhabitants of the earth; He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works. No king is saved by the multitude of an army; A mighty man is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a vain hope for safety; Neither shall it deliver any by its great strength. Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope in His mercy. Psalms 33:14-18, NKJV.
So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who has mercy.
(Romans 9:16 WEB)

We have nothing to boast about, because all righteousness is His! Only ONE is good. Only ONE possesses the power to save to the uttermost. He is our sanctification. God has made Him our Redemption, Wisdom, Sanctification and Righteousness. Even the life we now live, we live by His faith. Jesus living in and through us is our only hope of glory.

Both Paul and Peter agreed that no one can keep the Law of Moses. Considering this, we find some rather strange language in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. He seemed to be raising the bar of righteousness. He increased the burden of those who were deceived into thinking that they were meeting the requirements of the law by their own efforts. He said, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the

scribes and Pharisees, there is no way you will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:20 WEB). How would this new righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees? Elsewhere, Jesus said to them, "Woe unto you...hypocrites! For you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess" (Matthew 23:25). Christ makes it plain that our righteousness must go beyond a mere outside righteousness to an inside righteousness.

Jesus went on to change the law regarding murder. "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.

Jesus went on to say, "You have heard...'You shall not commit adultery' but I tell you that everyone who gazes at a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Mathew 5:27-28). It gets worse!

"It has been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, except for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery.

You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That you resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also. And whosoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two. Give to him that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you don't turn him away.

You have heard that it has been said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love them which love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:38-47)

Let us see if we can comprehend what Jesus just did. Jesus is showing us that we can keep the letter of the law and still fall short of the perfection of God. Keeping the law does not effect who you are in your innermost being. You may never have had intercourse with your neighbor's wife and even feel somewhat proud of your faithfulness, but what of your thoughts? Has anything changed inside? More than a mere dutiful keeping of the law is needed. Jesus is saying that outer compliance to a standard is not enough. What better way to do this than to raise the bar of righteousness so high that only God can keep it?

"Be therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Jesus had indeed raised the bar of the law, to reveal that outer conformity to a standard does not satisfy the righteous demands of God. The rich young ruler went away sad after assuring Jesus that he had kept the law perfectly from his youth, to which Jesus added, "If you would be perfect, sell all you have." Jesus always went right for the throat of man's self-righteousness. Our righteousness must go beyond a mere external righteousness or we will in nowise enter the kingdom of God.

God is not looking for good people who keep the law. He wants an entirely new creation, birthed of the last Adam, living by the breath of His Spirit, who stand in that goodness that comes from Him alone. The first Adam would never have dared to stand before God and claim any goodness of his own, and we creatures of the last Adam can no more boast than Adam could. We are God's workmanship, created for good works in Christ. We are new creatures with new desires. "For in Christ Jesus neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (Galatians 6:15 WEB). In dramatic style, Jesus was saying that nothing short of this new creation could stand in the perfection of God.

True righteousness must come from the heart. The one who has never touched his neighbor's wife may have already committed adultery with her, lusting in his innermost being. Moreover, if he truly loved his neighbor he could not even think of such a thing.

The Law of Moses demanded justice, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," but the law of Christ tells us to turn the other cheek when we are struck, and give up our inalienable legal right to justice. Even Stephen the first martyr, like his Master, knew the power of such a life when he prayed for his murderers, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do."

The Pharisee could think of himself as loving his neighbor--but his enemy, now that was a different story. Man in his own energy can no more be perfect as God is perfect than a cow can fly. The standard that Jesus presented was more unattainable than the Law of Moses. There must be a radical change of heart and administration within. Even the prophets foretold this need. Ezekiel prophesied, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26, 27, NKJV).

If no man can keep the law, then no man can truly love his neighbor as the law defines that love. If we cannot truly love our neighbor, then how shall we love our enemies? The truth is we can do nothing, and that is exactly the point! God was making it evident by giving the law and Jesus came to drive that point home. He gave the words of the prophet real meaning, and those who did not get it were totally frustrated with His teachings.

What Father requires is a total transformation, a new nature, having new desires and the grace from God to live it out. Christ had not died yet; therefore His hearers had not experienced His redemptive grace and power to live above sin and the law--the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The dispensation of the law was a time wherein God required His perfection but gave no grace to perform it. It was a time of teaching by a strict and heartless schoolmaster. The lesson to be learned was that we are all sinners and fall short of the perfection and glory of God. There is none righteous, not even one.

Christ died to lift us above the struggle for righteousness. He died to give us a new nature just like His so that we respond as He would. It is no longer, "What would Jesus do?", but, "Look what Jesus is doing in me!" If we walk in the Holy Spirit, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, so those who walk in the Spirit are not under the law. We must never fall for the deception that we can win God's favor by keeping the law. Paul wrote,

Such confidence we have through Christ toward God; not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God; who also made us sufficient as servants of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the service of death, written

engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly on the face of Moses for the glory of his face; which was passing away: won't service of the Spirit be with much more glory? For if the service of condemnation has glory, the service of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For most assuredly that which has been made glorious has not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasses. (2 Corinthians 3:4-10 WEB)

The knowledge that there is nothing good in us that would commend us to God is where brokenness begins. No one cries for help like a drowning man. When we have struggled with all our might only to be going down for the third time, we seek the intervention of another. Then we are ready to receive the help that God extends. We must understand that no one is righteous in God's sight, and that God gave the law, and allowed the struggle to keep it, to prove this very point. "For God has shut up all to disobedience, that he might have mercy on all" (Romans 11:32). How did God do this? We find the answer in Galatians, chapter three. "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed" (Galatians 3:23 KJV). Praise God, a Savior has delivered us from this kind of death. This is the triumphant call of Romans, chapter eight.

"So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death. The law of Moses could not save us, because of our sinful nature. But God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours, except that ours are sinful. God destroyed sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the requirement of the law would be fully accomplished for us who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit. Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death. But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God. But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all.) Since Christ lives within you, even though your body will die because of sin, your spirit is alive because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of

God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you. So, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its evil deeds, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family--calling him "Father, dear Father." For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we will share his treasures--for everything God gives to his Son, Christ, is ours, too. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.(Romans 8:1-17 NLT)

There is now no condemnation [an adverse sentence] for those believers who belong to Christ Jesus. The word condemnation is a legal term, appropriately used to describe a legal dilemma. It speaks of the condition and impairment placed upon all who set out to be justified by compliance to a law of any kind. It is a reference to the curse of the law. But "the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death. God put into effect a different plan to save us." God's plan is to destroy the dominion of sin over us. He did that by the sacrifice of His Son. Jesus fully bore the penalties for our sins, which met all the requirements of the law. The law said, "If you sin you must die." Jesus met our legal requirements by dying our death. God reckons Christ's death to be ours, and accordingly this is the legal basis on which we are declared innocent and free.

In England not long ago, a rich man could hire a boy to take the beating for an offence that the courts judged him worthy of. These young men became known as "whipping boys." This is exactly what Jesus did for us. He became our whipping boy so that we would be free, not so that we could do the same crime over again with impunity, but rather that we might live free of that sin in newness of life. It is one thing to be free of the consequences of our sin, but a whole other thing to have the grace of God working in us, freeing us from the bondage of our sin natures. This is resurrection life! This is life in the Spirit.

Those who attempt to come to God by way of law are still under the control of their sinful nature, without hope. They are frustrated and confused. They might be able to overcome many outwardly forbidden sins, but for each one of these they overcome, a

new form will rise up within them. Where before they murdered, now they hate and wish people were dead. Before they slept with women that were not their wives, now they burn inside with lust. The real evil of such a life is because they no longer do these things outwardly, they now judge those who do, again showing themselves guilty of the same thing (see Romans 2:1). God does not look on the outward when He sees a man, but He looks on the heart. In judging one another, the real harm comes, for we cut off God's compassion for the sinner from flowing through us, judging them without seeing into their hearts. We can be white-washed sepulchres or we can obey the upward call and become life-giving sons of God.

Those who are led by the Spirit, in whom Christ lives by faith, will soar with wings of eagles and defy the downward pull of sin. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes them free from the law of sin and death. Christ lives within them through the Spirit of God, the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. And in the same way that He raised Christ from the dead, God will elevate us above the legal and moral dilemma of law-keeping and sin. We are not obligated any longer to the urgings of the sinful nature, nor the rules of men that try to keep it in its place.

The only way to freedom from the sinful nature and the law is through the power of the Holy Spirit. "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God." We are not cowering, fearful slaves, but God's adopted children. He has sent forth His Spirit into our hearts crying "Abba Father" or "Father, dear Father."

Paul wrote,

"Pay all your debts, except the debt of love for others. You can never finish paying that! If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill all the requirements of God's law. For the commandments against adultery and murder and stealing and coveting--and any other commandment --are all summed up in this one commandment: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to anyone, so love satisfies all of God's requirements" (Romans 13:8-10 NLT).

Love is the fulfillment of the law. The law of love is the higher law. If I love my neighbor because of the new heart within, given me by God, I will not covet his wife, nor will I covet any of his possessions. If we truly love people, we desire the best for them. We will put their well-being before our own. We will never steal from them or hurt them in any way. So love satisfies the debt and obligation of all God's requirements.

How important is it that we contend for our freedom from the Law? Very important! For no one will ever be saved by obeying the law. If we attempt to go back under the law, we make ourselves guilty by rebuilding the old system of merits that God has already discarded. As Paul wrote, "Christ *is* our righteousness. Nay, I even reckon all things as pure loss because of the priceless privilege of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. And for His sake I have suffered the loss of everything, and reckon it all as mere refuse, in order that I may win Christ and be found in union with Him, not having a righteousness of my own, derived from the Law, but that which arises from faith in Christ--the righteousness which comes from God through faith" [span class="reference">\(Philippians 3:8-9 WNT\)](#).

We have died to the law, our old husband, by being crucified with Christ. And if we have done so, it is no longer us who lives, but Christ who lives in us. We must be careful to honor Christ's sacrifice by receiving His grace daily. We must not treat the grace of God as though it were meaningless. If you are attempting to be saved by keeping the law, you are acting as if there was no need for Christ to die. You are behaving as if you can do quite well by yourself. At Antioch, Peter was not living in accordance with the truth of the good news by refusing to eat with the Gentile believers, nor is anyone else who practices will worship and legalistic forms of "Christianity."

Freedom in Christ

Paul wrote:

So, Christ has really set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law. Listen! I, Paul, tell you this: If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ cannot help you. I'll say it again. If you are trying to find favor with God by being circumcised, you must obey all of the regulations in the whole law of Moses. For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace... (Galatians 5:1-4, NLT)

For you have been called to live in freedom--not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians. 5:13-15 NLT).

May God free us all from death producing, grace inhibiting, appeasement-oriented religion. May we also be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness but that righteousness that comes from God through faith! No one can brag in God's presence. Christ "was made to us righteousness...so that even as it has been written, 'He that glories, let him glory in the Lord'" (Jeremiah 9:24, 1 Corinthians 1:31).

John wrote,

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:4-10, NKJV).

The true Christian life needs no outward law. It is powered by an inward Life--the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. God desires truth in the inward parts, Christ in you.

God has reserved the rule of law, external governance, for those who will not be led by His Spirit. "But if you be led of the Spirit, you are not under the law" (Galatians 5:18). We will either live by the inward Truth of God, or be under the straight jacket of the law.

The Galatian assembly began in the Spirit--dependent on the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The champions of the law, known as Judaizers, had bewitched them into trading that freedom for the bondage of the letter. Paul, who had lived in the body of that death in his early years as a Pharisee, could clearly see that same death working in them. They had begun in the Spirit, but now they were attempting to reach perfection by the energies of the flesh (See Galatians 3:3). Paul's appeal to them is critical, for it is foundational to true faith. With this in mind, let us carefully consider the following question. "Therefore He who supplies [present tense] the Spirit to you and works miracles [continually] among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the

hearing of faith? Just as Abraham 'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness'" (Galatians 3:5-6).

The faith of Abraham was based on the hearing of faith. We tend to believe, due to years of evangelical conditioning, that the hearing of faith comes through reading the Bible. For years Christians have sat passively in church pews listening to Bible-preachers say, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Reading the Bible is wonderful, but this is not the hearing of faith because Abraham had no Bible. So what is it then? The answer is found in the passage above. The hearing of faith comes through union with Him who supplies the Spirit and works among you. When Abraham believed God he was not reading his Bible but listening to God through the Spirit. He believed what he heard and that was accounted to him for righteousness, not through works but through faith. Religious men struggle to complete by their own efforts what was begun by God. It was to such that He took the oath, "I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest."

Entering God's Rest

Adam had an established relationship with God and had been doing some marvelous, superhuman things with Him before Eve was created. He had named all the animals, considered each of them as a possible helper, and tended a garden the size of today's Iraq! Adam did all these things while abiding in the Father's rest because none of it was done from his own flesh. Adam lived fully in the rest and provision of God. He rested in the completed works of God that were "finished from the foundation of the world" (Hebrews 4:3). It was after some time (as we know it) that he was put into a deep sleep by God, then from his own body God brought forth for him a helper worthy of him, a bride for Adam whom he named Eve.

God gave them a warning, which if not heeded would subject mankind to a process of aging, decay and death. Here in Genesis we read:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:16, 17, NKJV).

Of this verse Adam Clarke writes:

Thou shalt surely die. twmt twm moth tamuth; Literally, a death thou shalt die; or, dying thou shalt die. Thou shalt not only die spiritually, by losing the life of God, but from that moment thou shalt become mortal, and shalt continue in a dying state till thou die.

Dying you shall die--literally, "you shall begin to die until you die." The clock began to tick when Eve took the first bite of the forbidden fruit. How long do you suppose that Adam had lived free of sickness, pain and death before he disobeyed God's warning? We read this as if God made Adam and Eve on one day, and the next day, they were walking through the garden and came across this tree with a talking snake in it. They were convinced that the way of the snake was better than the life that God had given them and were cast out of the garden.

Have you ever contemplated how God can be all places at the same time? Could it be that for Him there is no such thing as time? If He is outside of and not subject to time, for it is part of his creation, then it would be a small thing for Him to be everywhere at the same time. Could this be why, when asked by Moses for His name, He called Himself I Am? Why, I Am, why not I Will Be or I Was? God dwells in the eternal NOW! Could this be the very nature of God with which Adam and Eve were created in perfection, of which God said, "It is good"? They were never in conflict with the flow of the purposes of God. They were never running ahead or falling behind; they were one with Him and that was good in the eyes of God.

As far as Adam and Eve were concerned, before the fall there was no time--no aging. They were in a constant state of spiritual rest and well being. They did not toil or spin. They never knew anxiety or want. Their entire existence was filled with life and light. There were no worries about what they would eat or what they would wear. They lived in the constant provision of their Creator. He was their covering. The Garden of Eden was filled with food bearing trees. They lived in and were sustained by "the works that were finished from the foundation of the world." Theirs was a life of faith in their loving Father. But after they gave in to the enticements of the one who was a liar and murderer from the beginning, a series of events took place that put all of creation in chaos, groaning in anticipation of a day of deliverance. Paul wrote:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned-- (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from

Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. (Romans 5:12-14, NKJV).

In his book *Sit, Walk, Stand*, Watchman Nee wrote,

Adam, we are told, was created on the sixth day. Clearly, then, he had no part in those first six days of work, for he came into being only at their end. God's seventh day was, in fact, Adam's first. Whereas God worked six days and then enjoyed His sabbath rest, Adam began his life with the sabbath; for God works before He rests, while man must first enter into God's rest, and then alone can he work. Moreover it was because God's work of creation was truly complete that Adam's life could begin with rest. And here is the gospel: that God has gone one stage further and has completed also the work of redemption, and that we need do nothing whatever to merit it, but can enter by faith directly into the values of His finished work.

In Christ, God was once again working and creating anew. Just as Jesus was the Prime Mover of the first creation, so is He the progenitor of the new humanity, many sons unto glory. "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). Jesus, the Last Adam, was sent to work and restore man unto his former state, a new creation in the Father. In Christ's ministry on the earth we see a parallel to the six days of creation, the bringing forth of a new humanity that is once again in tune with the life flow of His Father. "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17 WEB). "For in Christ Jesus neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (Galatians 6:15 WEB). Like Adam, we who believe are a new humanity, a new race, born into the Sabbath-rest of the Father. We are not speaking of the Sabbath as a literal "day" but as a timeless reality, which we are called to live in for eternity.

Man cannot live that Life that God created him for without the abiding presence of his Creator any more than a fish can live out of water. He will struggle and flop on the bank, vulnerable and gasping to live in this foreign environment of time and finally, beaten by time and gravity, go back to the earth from which he came. Man was not made to live in time, ruled by the clock and calendar. Ever since the fall, he has been trying to beat the effect of time and defeat the sickness and aging brought about by sin

through his own self efforts. With each "cure" comes more side-effects, and each invention further prohibits his return to Eden and ends up being used as someone's new weapon of death or instrument of bondage. He even goes so far as to abort healthy full-term babies as they are being born so he can steal the matter in their brain stems in an effort to defeat the curse of aging and sickness. For the sake of saving his own self-centered life, he brings death to a new level, the holocaust of the unborn. How could we be so blind to our fallen and decadent state and not be repulsed by such sin and repent? It would seem that the soul of man, the self-centered one, knows no bounds in its downward spiral.

It is important that we grasp just what we as fallen men have lost. All of the thoughts of the natural man are focused on one thing, DOING! God's new creation is in tune with one thought, "It is finished." As Jesus the Pattern Son put it, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him" (John 8:28, 29, NKJV).

Being caught in self-generated works and accomplishments is the direct result of eating of that forbidden tree. "If you eat of this tree, you shall be like God, knowing both good and evil." The desire to be independent of the Prime Mover of the universe and be our own prime mover is in our every waking thought. Are we content with that God-likeness that is the direct result of His creative-workmanship? A Psalmist wrote, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness" (Psalms 17:15 NKJV). Is that enough? Or do we want to be like God, equal to Him, choosing and doing for ourselves--self-made, self-sufficient? In the first case we abide in His rest as He creates, resting and awaking in His likeness. In the second we compete with Him and try to take His place, which is the very essence of the antichrist spirit.

"I Thank God through Jesus Christ..."

So where is our hope? Are we destined to continue to degrade in body and soul, falling into ever-greater depths of separation from our righteous Creator? A thousand times No! Just as sin, sickness, aging and death entered in through Adam and Eve, so did *life* enter into the human equation by the Last Adam.

Carefully read this passage from Paul's letter to the Corinthian church:

So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:42-57, NKJV).

Here we read that the old man, this corruptible must put on incorruption, and it is done by abiding in the completed work of the Second Adam, the risen Christ. He has made every provision for us to rise from our fallen state. Yes, through the salvation of Jesus we will put on new spiritual bodies to live in that spiritual world called heaven. But not only this, He has also made the way for us to live in perfect communion with our Father and creator while we still live on this earth! We now enter into eternal life – not limited by time.

Jesus said, "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:54, NKJV). Note the present tense, has. He went on to say, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:27, 28, NKJV). The curse is broken as we abide in Christ, the last Adam, the Quickening Spirit, as our life. We who believe in Him never die. We simply

shed this natural body subject to corruption and move into an eternal body that is fitting for our regenerated souls for the rest of eternity.

Labor to Enter into Rest

Let us carefully consider this passage for in it is a fearful warning to all believers.

While it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest." Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience." (Hebrews 3:15-4:6, NKJV).

Earlier we mentioned that God is not bound by time, and that the effects of time came about because of the fall of Adam and Eve. God abides in the eternal now and invites man to join Him there. In his fallen state, man is driven to create and strive, to connive and scheme, to leave his mark upon the earth. In his quest for immortality, he wants to leave a legacy that he will be remembered for. For this man there is no rest because he does not know eternal life. It all started in the garden of God, "If you eat of this tree, you will be like (independent of) God, knowing both good and evil." They saw that the tree would make them wise and no longer dependent on their Father for direction.

Religious man is driven to judge what is good and evil in the lives of everyone around him. He insists on knowing all men after the flesh. He is ever accusing or excusing himself and others (Romans 2:15) as though he were the God who judges the living and the dead (2 Timothy 4:1). He is always trying to order his surroundings in an effort to recreate the harmony of the Eden of God. Consequently, his life is filled with toil and

struggle. His best efforts to make heaven here on earth always turn it into a living hell. From Augustine to Calvin to the present day those who strive to recreate "The City of God" set the stage for unthinkable tyranny and brutality. Augustine had to confess, "The earthly city (Rome), which, though it be mistress of the nations, is itself ruled by its lust of rule."

All his best efforts cannot rise above his own, fallen, corrupted heart. God's answer is not in more doing, but in resting. Heaven on earth is only found as we enter into God's rest. But what is the writer of Hebrews saying, "Labor therefore to enter into His rest"? Labor to rest? Isn't that an oxymoron? Aren't our lives already filled with enough labor as it is?

We refer again to the story in Genesis about a man named Jacob. Now this guy was an unbroken schemer, builder, shaker and mover. First he schemes to take his older brother's birthright and inheritance, and with his mother's help, he succeeds in getting it all. But as a result he has to run for his life because his brother Esau was "a man's man" and was mad enough to kill him.

So Jacob headed out for the hometown of his uncle Laban in Babylon. There he met his match. Laban was shrewd and tricked Jacob into laboring for him among his flocks for twenty one years, when all Jacob wanted to do was marry one of Laban's daughters. Now to the heart of the story.

Jacob finally set out for home with his two wives, numerous children and flocks and herdsmen, only to find out that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 armed men. Not to worry. Jacob, he who supplants and undermines, is not without resource. He set his scheming mind to buy his way out of trouble once again. His whole life was filled with labor. He knew no rest. He endlessly ordered and balanced his universe. Just when he started to get it all together, trouble was on his doorstep. "So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies. And he said, 'If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company, which is left will escape. Pass over before me, and put some distance between successive droves.' And he commanded the first one, saying, 'When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying, "To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose are these in front of you?" then you shall say, "They are your servant Jacob's. It is a present sent to my lord Esau."' I will

appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me" (Genesis 32:7,8, 17,18, 20 NKJV).

In his cowardly, self-seeking way, Jacob sent his herdsmen and livestock ahead in successive waves, trying to buy off the wrath of the brother he defrauded 21 years earlier. But word came back to him that Esau was not bought off so easily. Esau and his armies were still coming. Still scheming, Jacob divided his wives and children into bands. Genesis does not say this, but we can see him plotting to send his concubines and least favored wife Leah and their children to meet Esau first, then sending Rachael his beloved wife and her children directly in front of him.

But something happened to Jacob. He had an encounter with the living God. So what did he do? True to form, he grabbed the angel of the Lord and wrestled with him all night. Even now he took matters into his own hands, refusing to let go all night long, demanding a blessing. This man was desperate to save his hide. So God blessed Jacob. He crippled him for the rest of his life! What a blessing!

Up until then he was able to be his own god, relying on his own mind and his own strength to fix any fix he got himself into. No more, for now we read of a different man with a different heart. In the morning Jacob walked with a limp. Instead of sending the women and children ahead of him over the brook to appease the war-lust of Esau and his thugs, Jacob went over the brook to face the music ahead of them.

What was the result? Did Esau dispatch his miserable scheming, lame brother with one blow? No. They fell upon one another's necks and kissed. Esau was not there to kill his brother, but to love him. The one Jacob called "My Lord Esau" only wanted to be restored to his brother. Finally, Jacob had entered into God's rest. So much labor, always trying to avoid the inevitable, always trying to hedge his bets, but now we see a man that lives the rest of his life subject to what God deals him.

God will let us strive and struggle to save ourselves, to build our kingdoms, but in the end if we are truly one of His, He will touch us in our thigh, weaken us and bring us to the place of His mercy. He will have no strange gods before Him. He does not want our labor, what we can do for Him or give Him. He only wants us! He wants to fall on our necks and kiss us and hold us in His arms and love us. This process of getting to the end of our selves and finally yielding to Him in complete surrender is what is meant by "labor therefore to enter into His rest."

To participate in the works that God preordained before the foundation of the world and receive the benefit of the finished work of Christ, you must first cease from your own labors. The African proverb, "Lord Jesus, make my heart sit down," should be our constant prayer. Lord, make my heart cease from its scheming! Make my heart sit down! Make my heart rest in You alone, not in an unbroken and enterprising intellect! May I not be as Israel to whom you said, "'Your salvation requires you to turn back to me and stop your silly efforts to save yourselves. Your strength will come from settling down in complete dependence on me--the very thing you've been unwilling to do.... You've said, 'Nothing doing! We'll rush off on horseback!' You'll rush off, all right! Just not far enough! You've said, 'We'll ride off on fast horses!' Do you think your pursuers ride old nags? Think again: A thousand of you will scatter before one attacker. Before a mere five you'll all run off. There'll be nothing left of you--a flagpole on a hill with no flag, a signpost on a roadside with the sign torn off.' But God's not finished. He's waiting around to be gracious to you. He's gathering strength to show mercy to you. GOD takes the time to do everything right--everything. Those who wait around for him are the lucky ones" (Isaiah 30:15-18 MSG)

In returning to God and resting in Him we are saved. In quietness and confidence we are made strong. This is alien to the Jacob within man. Religious man loves to flee--riding upon the swift steed of religiosity--hedging against all possible threats. Ride, cowboy, ride! The Lord is waiting. He waits until our pursuers run us ragged, our horses collapse beneath us, or we receive a blinding revelation of Christ that makes us hang up our spurs. God waits for us to return, rest and quietly wait for Him. "Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) are all those who [earnestly] wait for Him, who expect and look and long for Him [for His victory, His favor, His love, His peace, His joy, and His matchless, unbroken companionship]" (Isaiah 30:18 AMP). He waits for us to assume that posture David describes in His Psalm of Ascent. "God, I'm not trying to rule the roost, I don't want to be king of the mountain. I haven't meddled where I have no business or fantasized grandiose plans. I've kept my feet on the ground, I've cultivated a quiet heart. Like a baby content in its mother's arms, my soul is a baby content. Wait, Israel, for GOD. Wait with hope. Hope now; hope always!" (Psalms 131:1-3 MSG).

Our hearts must sit down and rest fully in God's election. We did not choose Christ but He chose us and ordained us to go and bring forth fruit. When we come to see that He chose us before the foundation of the world, before we did anything good or evil, noble

or ignoble, then our hearts are made to sit down. What a mystery! God chose us before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4-5)! God said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the belly I knew you, and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5 WEB). If you belong to Christ, God knew you and called you *before*. Even the works He has called you to do were "before ordained" (See Ephesians 2:10). Nothing is left to our discretion. We enter God's Rest when we cease from our own labors and yield to the calling that God preordained for our lives.

The Author of Hebrews wrote of the delicate balance of work and rest:

For we who have believed do enter into that rest, even as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, they will not enter into my rest;" although THE WORKS WERE FINISHED FROM THE FONDATION OF THE WORLD. For he has said this somewhere about the seventh day, "God rested on the seventh day from all his works;" and in this place again, "They will not enter into my rest." (Hebrews 4:3-5 WEB)

Vincent comments,

The Sabbath rest points back to God's original rest, and marks the ideal rest – the rest of perfect adjustment of all things to God, such as ensued upon the completion of his creative work, when he pronounced all things good. This falls in with the ground-thought of the Epistle, the restoration of all things to God's archetype.

"God saw that it was good" and "It is finished" are two sides of the same coin. God works where his goodness is lacking. He will not rest until every area of our lives reflects His workmanship and righteousness. We will continue in the sixth day, laboring in our own strength until we rest in God's completed work, finished from the foundation of the world.

The word *work* implies an unfinished task; the word *rest* speaks of the cessation of work. Everything is finished. In John chapter seventeen Jesus prayed, "I have glorified You on the earth. I finished the work that You gave Me to do. And now Father, glorify Me with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the existence of the world" (John 17:4-5 LITV).

Peter wrote, "Seeing that his divine power has granted (past tense) to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and virtue..." (2 Peter 1:3 WEB).

Only if you enter the works that were finished from the foundation of the world can you know God's seventh day rest. In the chapter entitled, "The New Thing Which Is Old" of his excellent book *God's Reactions to Man's Defections*, T. A. Sparks wrote,

That which, from man's standpoint, has always been God's new thing, from His own standpoint has not been new at all. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world". (Acts 15:18) "The works were finished from the foundation of the world". (Hebrews 4:3). In all His fresh activities and revelations, God is working backward to an original position and design. God never leaves His original premise . . . God has before Him all the time the finished and completed thing, and He knows exactly, to a detail, what He wants. He must and will have that. He cannot be denied it, and He will never give it up or take less. Whenever there is a deviation from or a falling short of it there will be a Divine reaction . . .

What is our part in all of this? Who does the work? The Holy Spirit NOW works to bring all things into conformity to God's original position, premise and design. Our part is to be led by and yield to the Spirit, allowing His transforming work within us. (See Romans 8:14). The work is done through and by the Spirit. Paul put it this way, "For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness" (Galatians 5:5 RSV). Here we see that it is through the Spirit that we expectantly wait, in faith, for the full realization of righteousness. We wait because this is the Spirit's work. The Judaizers put their faith and hope in carnal activity and ordinances--circumcision, law-keeping and a host of other rituals, too numerous to mention here. Paul argues in favor of deference to the work of the Spirit. We wait in faith for the Holy Spirit of God to brood over and birth all things preparatory to the full realization of righteousness. Until we cease from our fleshly labors we can never know the faith and hope Paul wrote about, because it is a work of the Spirit. Remember, "It is we [true believers], not they [the Judaizing teachers, endeavoring to pervert the Gospel], who have received the true circumcision, for we worship God by means of his Spirit and rejoice in our life in union with Christ Jesus. We do not put any trust in external ceremonies" (Philippians 3:3 GNB bracketed emphasis ours).

Man is obsessed with perfecting perfection – to create the new and improved thing. He even tries to improve on the finished work of Christ. You who will enter God's rest must first cease from your own labors. Rest is the end of working. Religion is preoccupied with doing. Someone is always ready to tell you what you need to do to please God. "You need to stop this and start doing that, avoid these and associate with those..." If you engage in such self-improvement, you cannot enter God's finished work because you are resisting His workmanship in your life through your own labors. The works were finished (past tense) from the foundation of the world! John wrote of the Logos, "All things were made through him. Without him was not anything made that has been made" (John 1:3). How can we add to that?

We tend to view Christ's death on the cross as a redemptive afterthought, an addition that was not included in the original plan of God, a sort of stop-gap measure because of Adam's fall. Then we read, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8 KJV). It is finished! These thoughts and events were all included in the council of God when He said, "Let *Us* make man in *Our* image and in *Our* likeness." Father's works are complete and very good! All that pertains to life and godliness is ours if we will only stop trying to do it ourselves and in faith embrace the works that were finished from the foundation of the world, and then allow the Spirit to bring us into their full realization!

The Principle of Life in Christ

Jesus came as a living demonstration of another principle (or *Logos*) of life, one that gave life and true spiritual change in the lives of hundreds that He touched. "A Greek philosopher named Heraclitus first used the term Logos around 600 B.C. to designate the divine reason or plan which coordinates a changing universe. This word was well suited to John's purpose in John 1" (*Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*). The Greek word *Logos* would more correctly be translated reason or logic. Jesus is the logic of God. His ways were not and are not the ways of natural man.

Take the instance of the Pharisees dragging a woman who was caught in the very act of adultery before Jesus. They had a two-fold plot. First they were going to enforce goodness on this sinner and others like her by killing her for breaking their law. They also plotted to pull Jesus down by getting Him either to become an accomplice to her

murder, or excuse her because of His compassion for the lost. If he condoned her crime, they would be justified in stoning him as well.

Jesus' life was a continuous demonstration of Life. His reply to the Jewish leaders not only saved this woman's life, but exposed the sin lurking in their own dark souls. When He said, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone," He forced them to look at their own evil hearts. Paul wrote, "Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things" (Romans 2:1, NKJV). When we are judgmental and angry at those who commit a particular sin, we can be sure that very sin is lurking in the darkness within us and has not yet been exposed to God's healing light. It is this sin within that we find most repulsive.

After the challenge of Jesus' words, the self-righteous ones all went scurrying for their dwellings. He then said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more." We believe that just as "without Him was nothing made that was made," so the spoken Word of God, the *Logos* of Christ, created a new principle in the life of this woman. His commands are also His empowerment, releasing the grace of God. This is very different from the law that places a demand but gives no divine power to fulfill it. For the first time, this woman found rest for her troubled soul in Jesus' forgiveness and life. This is the difference between mere religion that demands adherence but gives no grace, and abiding in a relationship with the God that knows us.

An integral part of God's salvation and perfection of the saints in Christ is abiding and rest. Man entered into the decaying effects of time and came under the judgment of God when Adam sinned, but the Father has made a way for us to be where Jesus is, resting (seated together) with Him in heavenly places. "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more," Jesus said, "but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you" (John 14:19, 20, NKJV). To enter into Jesus with His Father is to enter into the rest of God. He was speaking of this when He said,

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28, 29, NKJV).

We must not pass by these words, because they hold the secret of rest. The answer for man's desperate need for rest is first met in Christ's words, "Come to Me." We will never find rest unless we come to Him, laying our burdens and works at His feet. He gives rest to those who are weary and overburdened by religion if they will only come to Him. The Message Bible interprets these verses as an invitation to "Learn the unforced rhythms of grace." Well put, Mr. Peterson! The words *learn from me* imply on the job training. Jesus is inviting the weary to shoulder the easy and light burden that he bore during His earthly sojourn. This yoke is the kind of burden that wings are to a bird and fins are to a fish. Christ's yoke has no bands except a love for the Father.

Jesus was referring to a young ox yoked with an older, well-trained ox for the purpose of learning. This is the quickest way to train a young ox to pull in the yoke. Jesus is inviting the weary to get into the yoke with Him and learn meekness and lowliness. I (George) am reminded of a poster I once saw in a Christian Bookstore. It was a front view of a little duckling coming out of the end of a culvert, looking exceptionally proud and confident. The caption read, "Rise! Go forth and conquer!" It was laughable, but made me question, "Is this how God sees us?" Does He see a duckling obsessed with world conquest or the meekness and lowliness of the Lamb in us? Does He find a lamb at rest or a cocksure megalomaniac who thinks the world and the church are his oyster?

Jesus gives us His remedy for the weariness and burnout in Christendom today. "I am meek and lowly in heart." This is the curriculum. If we take on Jesus' yoke and walk in tandem with Him, learning His meekness and lowliness, we will learn the unforced rhythms of grace – we will learn to rest. It is here that we learn to have no agenda but the Father's agenda. Through being transformed in His humility, we behave as sons, always doing only what we see the Father doing. To enter Christ's rest we must first learn His lowliness and meekness, the opposite of the ambition and strife of the religious leaders of His day. Christ's life-principle enables us to live in the goodness of the Father. If we are in Jesus' yoke, we will live as Jesus lived, not forcing any agenda, but simply trusting, waiting and allowing God to do the work in and through us in His time.

Anxiety is sure evidence that we are no longer sharing the yoke with Christ but have left His rest. Pride abandons the yoke of the lowly Christ and the governance of God to rise, go forth and conquer by might and main. Jesus said to such shakers and movers, "your time is always." Knowing the unforced rhythms of grace enables us both to wait upon and work with God. Jesus said, "...the Father that dwells in me, he does the works" (John 14:10). Can we say this? Can we honestly say, "He does the work"? This is the rest that Jesus modeled. Only those who are in Christ's yoke, learning the unforced rhythms of grace, know this rest promised to all that come unto Him and learn of Him.

In answer to the Jews who were out to kill Him for healing on the Sabbath day, Jesus said, "My Father is working straight through, even on the Sabbath. So am I" (John 5:17 MSG). Jesus worked when the Father dwelling in Him was working, indicating that when the Father was not working, neither was He. This is the yoke of Christ. This is what and how we learn from Him. This is rest.

The absence of this rest is responsible for a host of maladies that plague humanity in general as well as the Church. The medical field tells us that many of our diseases come from simple anxiety and unrest. We have seen interviews with someone that has lived over one hundred years, and these old folks tell about living a more relaxed lifestyle. Our anxiety-driven, industrialized society is not only killing us with chemicals and pollution that are harmful to our bodies, it is killing us by driving us to wring out every bit of productivity we can get from our every waking moment. We strive to get more bang for our buck in every level of our existence. Life in the western world is filled with anxious thoughts. A reporter once asked Rockefeller which million would finally be enough. To this he replied, "The next one!" In the life driven by the world it is always the next paycheck, the next job, the next woman or man, the next house, or the next town. A typical western man is never satisfied. He knows no rest.

Now contrast this driven life that is killing us with the words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount.

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and

the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6:24-34, NKJV).

On the one hand we have a lifestyle driven by the lust for worldly gain and well-being -- the Babylonian god called Mammon. On the other hand, we have this Holy Man telling us that this is not at all necessary and to give no thought for such things for, "your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things." So what is His answer? Are we to just be spiritual bums and ignore the needs of our natural bodies and that of our families and just hang loose and groove on God? Not exactly. Jesus put it this way, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." This is the labor to enter God's rest.

We are here to tell you that the Father does care and will meet all your needs as you seek first HIS kingdom and HIS righteousness. I, Michael, lived out the first year after being in-filled with the Spirit, proving Jesus to be The Truth. I had to know beyond a doubt that this one to whom I had given my life was indeed trustworthy. I had to know that His words were true. He called me to serve a group of young Christians that were freshly saved off the streets in what became known as "the Jesus Movement" of the early '70's. I served them as if they were my own family (and spiritually they were). My labor was a labor of love for my Savior. It was like reliving the first five chapters of the Book of Acts all over again. There was such love of God among us that none of us said what we had was our own. We shared almost everything with one another. The love of God compelled us from within to meet the needs of any who were lacking among us and to reach out to the lost with open hearts.

In that year I saw miracle after miracle of God's wonderful provision as I went flat out for God. We saw miraculous healings, people set free from drug addictions without a single withdrawal, food multiplied, people healed and hard hearts changed.

I went into that year with a wife and two small children, house payments, car payments, medical bills, and other obligations. My wife, Dorothy, had our third child during this time and neither of us had a normal job or regular source of income. We just served these young saints of God with our whole hearts. By the world's standards, we should have lost everything and been tossed out in the street. But guess what? I believed that if God hired me, He was also responsible to pay my wages. I worked in this labor of love for these young Christians as unto Jesus alone and by the end of that year, every bill had been paid and we owned our car and home free and clear. We were debt free and all without ever asking a single person for a dime or their support! Thousands of dollars were given us totally anonymously. It was all Jesus and I learned first hand what He meant when He said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." He had proven to us that He who holds the universe in His hands is indeed trustworthy.

Hebrews chapter eleven, the great "faith chapter," begins, "[Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.](#)" Have you ever thought that faith has substance? We have seen in the early lives of so many of God's people these same miraculous events or ones like them that instilled in them a faith that could not be shaken. Later as the going got rough, we were often stretched to the point that we wondered if God was still there as He had once made Himself so readily visible. But even then, we could remember that He once proved to us beyond a doubt that He cares and provides for the sheep of His pasture.

Often with His saints, as it was with Israel, we were once fed with manna from heaven. All we had to do was go out and pick it up each morning. But once we had learned the lessons of the wilderness, we find Him providing in a different way in the land of His promise.

... the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year. (Deuteronomy 11:11-12, NKJV).

Growth in Christ always stretches. It is always calling us to be bound by His love and be lead forth to places where we would never have ventured in our immaturity. One day in those early years of my new faith, I, Michael, was downtown in a large city, leaning against a building and waiting for a brother to come with his car and give me a ride back home. While standing there, I looked down at the gutter and saw a small sparrow fall out of the grill of a parked car in front of me. I thought to myself, "Poor thing. He must have been hit by the car and his body just fell out." But no, he jumped up and hopped down the sidewalk to the front of the next car. He then hopped down in the gutter again and flew up into that car's grill! He had found a food supply for which he neither had to sow, nor reap or gather into barns. Man had paved and built over all his natural habitat, but Father had shown him how to find food in these four-wheeled bug catchers, by picking their radiators clean. His food was truly hot off the grill. The Father was teaching me that my old supply would soon dry up like it did for Elijah at the brook Cherith, and that I was to look for another source, just as this sparrow had--all of it ordained from above.

Where Jesus said, *give no thought* in the Gospels, it would have better been translated, don't be anxious. We should not think it strange or enter into unbelief and anxiety during these uncertain times. Rather, we need to learn to seek His face and learn the lessons that these events provide as they shape us into the image of His Son.

Rest for the People of God

In chapters three and four of the Book of Hebrews there is an all-important key to walking by faith. It is called rest. When the Spirit showed this to me (Michael) the first time, I shared it with the leader of our fellowship, a shaker and mover, and he assured me that "We rest after we die. Now we must work!"

Christendom is filled with more taskmasters than Pharaoh's Egypt. Like Pharaoh, these men are driven to build-up their storage cities into ever grander and more inviting citadels. We never hear the word enough coming down from the hierarchy. Instead we hear a constant plea for "More bricks! More bricks! Get your own straw!" Solomon wrote, "The horseleech has two daughters, crying, 'Give, give.'" He could have as well been talking about today's church ministries and those who levy taxes.

Now let's take a closer look at this passage in Hebrews that speaks of entering into God's rest.

For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end. Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest." Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. (Hebrews 3:4-4:10, NKJV).

First we read that everything eternal is built by God. Jesus said that unless God builds the house, they who build it labor in vain. David observed, "It is vain for you to rise up

early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep." Activity is not righteous in itself, even busyness in "good" things.

Jesus said, "Many will tell me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, in your name cast out demons, and in your name DO many mighty works?' Then I will tell them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you who work iniquity.'" (Matthew 7:22-23 WEB). The word *knew* in "I never knew you" is used of the act of sexual procreation between a husband and a wife (see Matthew 1:25). All our Christian lives we have been told the importance of us knowing Jesus but here and in two other parables the emphasis is on Him knowing us! Does He know us? Does His flow of life find expression and channel through us unto fruition? Those who came saying, "Lord, Lord did we not...do" are offering Jesus illegitimate offspring, fruit of iniquity, bastards, not born of a love-union with Him, and therefore certainly not fruit unto God. If the works we offer Christ are not born in intimate fellowship with Him, but are conceived and done of our own initiative, even though they might be done in His name, they are iniquity in His sight. The knowledge of Christ that comes through His Spirit IS the fruitfulness that God requires. Is our fruit the result of His coming in and knowing us? Are our works the result of our intimacy with Him? If we do not bring forth this fruit, what will we export? If we do not produce what is of Him do we really have anything to give except notions, and patterns from the past, the works of our flesh?

The Greek word translated *fruit* in Romans chapter seven, "that we should bear fruit to God," means to be fertile or bring forth offspring, and is used in the context of our marriage to Christ. If fruit is not born in a lawful, intimate union with Christ, it is born of our flesh and is works of iniquity, children of promiscuity in the eyes of God. Everything else is an independent act, a demonstration of unrest and unbelief--another Ishmael to burden a world full of such bad fruit. God is looking for those works that He foreordained that we should walk in from the foundation of the world (see Ephesians 2:10).

Many people know the works of God, or at least try to do them in and of themselves. When Jesus fed the five-thousand, they wanted to take Him by force and make Him their king. To these who were so concerned with the things of this life He said,

Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on

Him." Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." (John 6:27-29, NKJV, emphasis added).

Religious man always asks, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" This isn't the question that sets the sheep apart from the goats. Instead, the question is, "Do we know and rest in His ways or do we merely know His works?" Works deal with the outward man, but the ways of God deal with the heart. It is one thing to have our bodies fed by Him, but something more to have our hearts changed by the working of the Spirit. Those so changed can say with Jesus, "I have meat to eat that you know not of."

Above we read in Hebrews chapter three, "'They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" To know His rest is to know His ways and to rest in them. "He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel" (Psalm 103:7, NKJV). Those who only knew His acts died in the wilderness. "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

Our passage in Hebrews continues, "For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.'"

In Paul's letter to the Galatians we see him pleading with these Gentile believers who were already starting to come under the law of the Jews.

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain? Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? -- just as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. (Galatians 3:1-7, NKJV).

How about us? Are we so foolish to think that WE can perfect through dead works what God has started among us by His Spirit? Did we receive Christ and His Spirit by works and law keeping or was it by faith? What makes us think that God wants us to continue what HE has started through His Spirit by the labors of our own hands? Yet, this is what we see everywhere in the church. We build buildings and pray for Him to fill them. We design programs and pray for Him to bless them. How-to and self-help books crowd the shelves in our Christian bookstores. God will not give life to the efforts of our carnal natures! His blessing will not fall on our Ishmaels, but on those born of faith and resting in Him – His works that were predestined from the foundation of the world.

The I AM

In the Hebrews passage quoted above, we see the word *today* occurring over and over. "Today, if you will hear His voice...exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' again He designates a certain day, saying in David, 'Today'...Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." To abide in God's rest is to abide in the I AM, the ever present now of the Father.

Think about it: can you alter anything in your past? Can you control what will happen tomorrow? No, the only thing you can deal with as you abide in the grace of God is the very present moment. How you live this moment may alter the future and it may change the past once today becomes yesterday, but our real lives are only in the present. This is what the above passage is addressing--living in the eternal now, today.

Carnal man spends the majority of his waking hours either worrying about tomorrow or fretting about his past. Rarely is he in the present in his mind, yet this present is the only place where God communicates and fellowships with us! Everything else is unbelief and unrest. Paul wrote to the Philippians,

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 3:12-14, NKJV, emphasis added)

It is noteworthy that the smallest measurement of time that God acknowledges is the day. "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years" (Genesis 1:14). There were no smaller measurements of time mentioned in the Bible, until the children of Israel were led away captive into Babylon. In fact, the only place in the Old Testament where the word *hour* is used is in the book of Daniel, in the context of worshipping idols.

The ambition to micromanage time leads to unrest and is not of or for the people of God. It is of Egyptian origin. In fact, one of the oldest clocks is the Egyptian Shadow clock or sun clock [3400 BC]. The pointer for this clock is the Obelisk, which was used in other forms of sun worship. How idolatrous is our ambition to micromanage the day--to order it, from morning to evening, according to our own designs? The more man got into merchandising and other goals in antithesis to God's eternal purpose, and tried to impose his desires on his neighbor, the more he wanted to segment his day. Before then people had no need to know the time of day. They had evening and morning. That was enough. It was only when great civilizations in the East began to rise, with their bureaucracies and formal religions, that men found a need to organize their time more efficiently. With that came the clock, calendar and itinerary. The clock has dictated the affairs of men from that time forward

The division of time was further broken down by the Alexandrian based philosopher, Claudius Ptolemy, who divided the hour into 60 minutes, which may have been inspired by the scale of measurement used in ancient Babylon.

We miss the mark of our high callings and cut ourselves off from such sweet fellowship with God by filling today with the things of yesterday and tomorrow! We do this in our lives with others, too. How often do we spend time with our spouse and children and they know that they do not have our full attention? We are not there; we are not dwelling in today. Our itinerary will not allow us to enter God's rest or the "place of God's stopping" (Concordant Literal Translation).

Since the invention of the electric light bulb, scientists say that 80% to 90% percent of Americans do not get enough sleep and consequently, cancer, diabetes and all kinds of diseases are on the increase. When God drove man from the garden of His rest,

sickness and death began to work in him--his days were numbered. "Dying you shall die."

Jesus said to His disciples, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Only God knows how much of the grief in this world is the result of borrowing regrets from yesterday and trouble from tomorrow. We accuse people of living in the past when all their present energies are spent reacting to some past reference point of hurt or disappointment. They suffer needlessly, interpreting the present through the lens of the past. Then there are those who are paralyzed for fear of what the future might bring. These cannot rest until they have many goods laid up for many days. To these God says, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?"

The last resort of the anxious soul when all other fears are allayed. The ghost of tomorrow stalks out with all its hobgoblins of doubt and distrust. (Robertson's Word Pictures)

The Message Bible reads, "Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes." (Matthew 6:34, emphasis added)

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." God met the needs of the children of Israel in the wilderness daily. They were not allowed to store up the manna. If they did, it would rot by the following day. When our lives are spent worrying about where the next meal or the next house payment is coming from, we fail to abide in Him who places far greater value on our welfare than He does on the sparrows. We must grieve His giving heart when we strive so hard to make ends meet, never casting our cares upon Him.

We labor at our jobs, we labor even at our hobbies and crafts to make something that will last beyond the moment. After "coming to Christ" we follow the examples of our Christian leaders and set out to build either their ministries or our own. But eventually, no matter how carefully we build something, "moth and rust destroy and...thieves break

in and steal." We are bent on leaving our mark upon this earth, to leave a legacy, yet nothing lasts. So where is our hope? It is found in the word *abide*.

A philosopher once said, "You cannot cross the same river twice." The very nature of a river is that it is always flowing. To stay in the now of God is to enter into the flow of the river which comes down from the throne room of Heaven. As Ezekiel discovered, it was not enough to wade in ankle deep water. It was not enough to be knee deep, for the angel of the Lord kept drawing him ever deeper. It was not enough to be waist deep or chest deep, either. The angel kept leading him until he was in over his head, "waters to swim in" (see Ezekiel 37). The prophet was in water that flowed from the throne of God, being carried along in the ever present now of God. God was teaching him about abiding by faith in His wonderful rest.

As long as we are resisting the flow--by wanting only enough of the river for to be "in the flow," we will never know the power or the rest of God found with the flow. The river that John saw in heaven was where the tree of life is found. "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:1, 2). Do you want to know the power of God in your life? It is only found as you yield up all control and let Him carry you where you know not as you abide in His rest.

The ascended Christ spoke to Peter of the nature of true spiritual maturity,

"Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me." (John 21:18, 19, NKJV).

This is the death of the old nature. This is the death that glorifies God alone. Here you are no longer dressed in your own righteous robes, but those fit for HIS wedding feast. Here you no longer presumptuously do your own will, but are led forth daily by the Spirit, doing things that you would never have done if left under the control of your old nature. This is the death that truly glorifies God.

The Greek word for abide is "*meno* {men'-o} - to continue to be present." To be present is to abide in the present, drawing nourishment moment by moment. With this definition in mind consider Jesus' words:

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. (John 8:31, NKJV).

"And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. (John 8:35, NKJV).

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. (John 15:4, NKJV).

"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. (John 15:6, 7, NKJV)

"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (John 15:9, 10, NKJV).

Hudson Taylor, writing to his sister in England from his mission station in Chin-kiang on Saturday, September 4, 1869, mentioned a liberating letter he had received from John McCarthy.

As to work, mine was never so plentiful, so responsible, or so difficult; but the weight and strain are all gone. The last month or more has been perhaps the happiest of my life, and I long to tell you a little of what the Lord has done for my soul....When the agony of soul was at its height, a sentence in a letter from dear McCarthy was used to remove the scales from my eyes, and the Spirit of God revealed the truth of our oneness with Jesus as I had never known it before. McCarthy, who had been much exercised by the same sense of failure, but saw the light before I did, wrote (I quote from memory): 'But how to get faith strengthened? Not by striving after faith but by resting on the Faithful One.' As I read, I saw it all!.... As I thought of the Vine and the branches, what light the blessed Spirit poured into my soul!

This truth literally revolutionized Hudson Taylor's life. After entering God's rest through abiding, he was never the same again.

"If you continue in my presence, you are my disciples. A son abides in my presence forever. Continue in my presence and you will bear My fruit. If you continue in my presence, I will give you your desires. Continue in my abiding love and you will fulfill all my commandments, for against love there is no law." This is rest, for the fruit is the produce of the Vine, not of striving branches.

The Lord's Day

We often get letters concerned about what day is the real Lord's day. Man in a religious spirit gives a lot of attention to worshipping on one particular day of the week. I, Michael, remember seeing a church marquee that read, "One day in seven will get you to heaven." But the words to an old rock song come closer to the truth, "Being holy once a week will make the odds against your getting to heaven six to one."

Some say that God's Sabbath is Saturday. Others say it is on Sunday or another day of the week. God's true rest spoken of in the Old Testament is not really a day of the week at all, but rather a place in His creation where He abides continually, a place where He bids us come and rest with Him in His Fatherly love. Could it be that all those who strive to keep some Sabbath law are also failing to enter His rest?

Religious man cannot see the forest for the trees. In his great zeal to keep the law perfectly, he misses what the law was given to teach him. In Hebrews we also read, "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect" (Hebrews 10:1, NKJV). The warning in chapter four is clear. We too can fail to enter into His rest by the same example of unbelief provided by those law keepers.

So if it is not about when we worship, the next thing the religious mind that does not know God's rest struggles with is where? The woman at the well of Sychar possessed this same question to Jesus.

"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." He answered her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father... the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in

spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:21-24, NKJV).

When two typical Christians meet, the first question after the introduction is, "Where do you worship?" Then what usually follows is "Who is your pastor?" This is so childish and carnal that it borders on the six-year-old saying to his peer, "My daddy is bigger than your daddy." Paul called this type of conduct carnal and those who do so are mere babes in the faith (see 1 Corinthians. 3).

Jesus made it clear to this woman of Sychar that worship is not about doing it in a certain place, but it is a matter of the heart, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." If not, it cannot be said that we are worshiping God no matter where or with whom we gather to "worship."

God is Spirit. If we want to worship Him we must get beyond this mentality that comes from our fallen natures. God is not about time or space. He does not dwell in houses made by men, here and there.

"However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says, 'Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the LORD, Or what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things?' You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you." (Acts 7:48-51, NKJV).

So where is the place of God's rest? Is it found in Israel? Israel of today is the focal point of the world's unrest! To worship Him we must transcend thinking in terms of time and place and enter into God's eternal rest *in* His Son. Where true faith abides there is peace and rest. Where it is lacking we read, "...for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord" (James 1:6-7, NKJV).

Have you ever wondered how Jesus, the Son of God who never knew sin, could break the Sabbath and the Jew's ceremonial laws over and over and still remain sinless? In the Gospels we read,

"Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grain fields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their

hands. And some of the Pharisees said to them, 'Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?' But Jesus answering them said, 'Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?' And He said to them, 'The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.'" (Luke 6:1-5, NKJV).

How could the Lord of the Sabbath break the Sabbath? It was impossible for Him and it is equally impossible for all who have entered into His rest and ceased from their own labors and efforts to be righteous. We need to understand the depths of what Jesus meant when he told those religious Jews, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." "For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His."

David, the great law breaker and raider of the sacrificial bread, wrote:

"LORD, my heart is not haughty, Nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, Nor with things too profound for me. Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, Like a weaned child with his mother; Like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in the LORD From this time forth and forever." (Psalms 131:1-3, NKJV).

You know that you have a haughty heart, lofty eyes, or concerned yourself with great matters and things too profound for you when you are not abiding in the rest of a weaned child leaning on the breast of our Father. Our faith, hope and rest must be in the Lord from this time and forever.

There is a great story in the gospels of a woman who found God's rest and it bears repeating.

"Now as they were traveling along, He [Jesus] entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him, and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one,

for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42, NASB).

Today's churches and ministries are about serving and doing, seeing what they can cook-up for Jesus in their religious kitchens. But those who have learned to enter their rest at Jesus' feet have chosen "the good part" and will never have it taken from them. Only in abiding in Him can we bring forth fruit that will remain. Only by abiding in His rest can we work the works of God.

Labor therefore to enter into His rest!

Sanctifying the Lord

There is a solemn warning given to the church in the New Testament that especially needs to be taken to heart. In the book of Hebrews the author is referring to the Israelites who fell in the wilderness and never saw the Promised Land. Here we read,

Therefore, a promise being left to enter into His rest, let us fear lest any of you should seem to come short of it. For also we have had the gospel preached, as well as them. But the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter into the rest, as He said, "I have sworn in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest;" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. (Hebrews 4:1-3 MKJV)

Here we read of an elect people who fail to apprehend that for which they had been apprehended. Though they were called to great things, because of their unbelief they failed to enter in to the realization of them. The author exhorts us to "fear lest any of you should seem to come short of it." You mean that WE could actually be in danger of missing what we have been called out of the world for and die, just like Israel did, without ever realizing God's Promised Land? How could this be? Paul wrote a similar warning to the Corinthians,

And, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. And all were baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were scattered in the wilderness.

And these things were our examples, that we should not be lusters after evil, as they also lusted. . . And all these things happened to them as examples; and it is written for our warning on whom the ends of the world have come. (1 Corinthians 10:1-11 MKJV)

Yes, this solemn warning is for us! We who have partaken of Christ, who have been baptized into Him and separated from the world (Egypt) and have walked under the cloud of the Father's protective covering and have communed together, we too can fail to cross the Jordon and enter the Zion of God. The author of Hebrews exhorts us, "be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience" (Hebrews 4:11 NASB).

We understand that the generation that was first called out of Egypt did not enter the land because of their unbelief. However, what is so often overlooked is the fact that Moses and Aaron were among those who failed to enter God's rest. They also died in the wilderness because of their unbelief. God told Moses and Aaron why they could not lead the assembly into the land, which He had given them, "Because you did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the people" (see Numbers 20:12). Here we see that believing in the Lord and sanctifying the Lord are the same thing. What does it mean to sanctify the Lord? To answer this question, we must go back to Kadesh, where a crisis was brewing in the wilderness.

When the congregation of Israel arrived at Kadesh, there was no water (See Numbers 20:1-29). As usual, the people assembled against Moses and Aaron. "Would that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!" They bewailed. "Why have you brought the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle? And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain, or figs, or vines, or pomegranates; and there is no water to drink." In short, "This is not the land you promised!" Imagine a lynch mob two and a half million strong protesting on your doorstep.

Upon hearing their complaint, Moses and Aaron withdrew themselves and fell on their faces before the Lord. The Lord told Moses to take the rod, assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes that it might "yield its water." Moses and Aaron did as God said and gathered the assembly together before the rock. Then Moses did something totally out of character. In the past when he had a rebellion on his hands He interceded for the people and even made himself humble and vulnerable before them,

depending totally on God to deal with the situation. He never put himself in the place of God and never chided the people from his flesh. But now look at these words coming forth out of his mouth, "Hear now, you rebels; shall WE bring forth water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses struck the rock twice with his rod and water came gushing forth abundantly. Thank God! All is well once again. Right?

Now at this point many of you might think you know where we are going with this. How many times have we heard this passage sermonized and it went something like this, "Moses blew it. He struck the rock. He struck Jesus! He was commanded to speak to the rock and he struck it! That was what made God unhappy with him to the point that he too had to die in the wilderness." This tidy little definition fails to explain the full scope and meaning of Moses' act of unbelief.

Though the thirst of the people and their livestock was momentarily satisfied, God was not satisfied. He said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (Vs.12). Moses and Aaron were now included among those, of whom God said, "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" Later, on Mount Hor, the Lord fulfilled His promise to Aaron. He said to Moses and Aaron,

Aaron shall be gathered to his people; for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the people of Israel, because you rebelled against my command at the waters of Mer'ibah. Take Aaron and Elea'zar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Elea'zar his son; and Aaron shall be gathered to his people, and shall die there. (Numbers 20:24-26).

So, Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them upon his son Elea'zar. Aaron died there on the top of the mountain, never having entered the promised rest.

Because he rebelled against God's command by refusing to sanctify the Lord before the eyes of the people, Moses also failed to enter God's rest. He was only allowed to see it afar off from the top of Mount Abarim.

Just before Israel entered the land, the Lord said to Moses: "Go up into this Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel. And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was

gathered. For in the Wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to hallow Me at the waters before their eyes." (These are the waters of Meribah, at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin) (Numbers 27:12-14 NKJV).

Moses and Aaron fail to sanctify or hallow the Lord before the eyes of the people. How does one go about sanctifying or fail to sanctify the Lord?

In Ezekiel 36 we read of how Israel had profaned God in the eyes of the nations. The nations assumed it was because of God's weakness that Israel was defeated and taken away captive. The reproach was proportionally related to the fact that this people, called to show forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness, had become darkened and was living far below the dignity and power of their calling. In this they failed to sanctify the Lord, hallow Him before the nations.

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states,

"True, it was because of Israel's sins, but the ethical is not wanting in these passages. The people are to be separated from their sins and given a new heart (Eze 36:25-26 Eze 36:33). But the word "sanctify" is not used for this. It is applied to Yahweh, and it means the assertion of Yahweh's power in Israel's triumph and the conquest of her foes (Eze 20:41; Eze 28:25; Eze 36:23; Eze 38:16; Eze 39:27). The sanctification of Yahweh is thus the assertion of His being and power as God, just as the sanctification of a person or object is the assertion of Yahweh's right and claim in the same . . . The story of the waters of Meribah illustrates the same meaning. Moses' failure to sanctify Yahweh is his failure to declare Yahweh's glory and power in the miracle of the waters (Num 20:12-13; Num 27:14).

First we must understand that God's holiness is not related to principles, ethics or doctrines of morality. God's holiness is much more. It is who He is. It IS His essential being, His supremacy, His sovereignty and glory. To sanctify or hallow God is to distinguish Him by acknowledging His supremacy and sovereignty, not with mere intellectual ascent but by humbly living in deference to and reliance upon His power. When we speak of lives lived in deference to His power; we mean more than platitudes about His lordship. We mean yielding to His sovereign working by first denying our own strength and self-glorification, allowing God to act on our behalf and in doing so, setting Him apart and glorifying Him in the eyes of others.

We can learn by comparing Moses' "shall we bring forth water..." with God's words, "speak to the rock ...that it may yield its water." Everything in the Christian life boils down to this. Will we spend our lives searching for means and methods that WE might bring forth water from the Rock? Will we pursue revival manifestations, or that Revival that is Christ Himself? Will we in faith cease from our works and ingenuity and allow the Rock to yield its water? Will we live by the life of God, allowing Him to distinguish Himself by His power and might? Will we allow Him to triumph over our foes, or will we attempt to make a covenant with death?

Isaiah contrasted Israel's dependence upon their covenant with the Assyrians with a life founded, in trust, on the precious Cornerstone, the Sure Foundation.

Because you have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol (the place of the dead) we have an agreement--when the overflowing scourge passes through, it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter. Therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am laying in Zion for a foundation a Stone, a tested Stone, a precious Cornerstone of sure foundation; he who believes (trusts in, relies on, and adheres to that Stone) will not be ashamed or give way or hasten away [in sudden panic]. (Isaiah 28:15-16 AMP)

Though not a translation, *The Message Bible* captures the meaning of this passage in language that addresses the trust issues in our lives today. "You say, 'We've taken out good life insurance. We've hedged all our bets, covered all our bases. No disaster can touch us. We've thought of everything. We're advised by the experts. We're set.'" (Isaiah 28:15 MSG). The test was and still is whether we will live by our life resources or His. Will we trust in, rely on, and adhere to that Stone that offends all natural sensibility? Those who do will never run away in panic. God's word to those who trust in any other covenant to protect them is, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (see Isaiah 30:1). This indeed is an offense to every natural self-saving drive in man.

Moses' behavior fell far short of this purpose. Moses' posture was not unlike that of the magicians of Egypt. God did not intend this to be Moses' Traveling Magic Show. God wanted the people to know that He alone was their provider in all their needs from His riches in glory, not some holy man who had great spiritual powers. In short, Moses' ministerial prowess stood in the way. He was accustomed to playing a big role, which

served God purposes for a time. But now God was asking Him to step back and set Him apart before the eyes of the people--to distinguish Him from the prophet, the rod, the priest and all other instruments that He had previously used. The Rock was to have the preeminence on this day. Because of this act of unbelief, this act of self-assertion, "must we bring forth water" and more grievously what it represented to those who watched, neither Moses nor Aaron would enter God's rest. These things serve as examples and admonitions for us today! How shall we then live?

Peter exhorts us, "[But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts . . .](#)" (1Peter 3:15 KJV).

Considering what we have just learned, how do we sanctify God in our hearts and before the eyes of other people? We must repent of the "must we bring forth water" mentality. We must cease from our own labors. Paul wrote, "[For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh](#)" (Philippians 3:3 KJV). We have no sufficiency except God's sufficiency. We see in Paul's life what it means to sanctify the Lord. If to sanctify the Lord is to hallow Him by living fully by His life and resources, if it is to live solely by the water flowing from the Rock, Christ Jesus, then Paul had few peers. Consider his words, "[Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God \(2 Corinthians 3:5 KJV\)....And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work](#)" (2 Corinthians 9:8 NKJV).

"Yet not I"

Paul sanctified the Lord in his heart by asserting God's glory and power in every area of his life, giving all the credit to the Lord. "[I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me](#)" (Galatians 2:20).

Paul made repeated references to the grace of God doing the work. He acknowledged that all that he was and did was a direct result of God's grace. "[But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me](#)" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

The Amplified Bible translates Philippians 2:13 as follows.

[Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight. (Philippians 2:13 AMP)

Here we see that we are called to live and work by the life of another. "Yet not I but Christ." This is what it means to sanctify the Lord Jesus in our hearts. It is to acknowledge that what we are and all that we will ever be is dependent upon God's grace.

Until we cease from our labors and sanctify the Lord in our hearts and lives, allowing Him to energize and create in us the power and desire, we cannot enter His rest. Only the effectual working of God's Spirit within us satisfies Him. Until we can say, from the heart, "yet not I but Christ . . . yet not I, but the grace of God," we will continue to glory in our flesh, boasting, "must we...must we...must we bring forth."

Even the lily of the field, which does not toil or spin, is a witness and testimony of God's care and provision. Even Solomon was not arrayed like one of these. But how much greater a testimony of His power, victory and glory, before all who have eyes to see, are those that are transformed by the working of His mighty power, out of whose innermost beings flow rivers of living waters. These sanctify the Lord! These enter His rest! Every area of their lives fully attests, "yet not I but Christ." To sanctify the Lord Jesus in our hearts is to allow the full proof of His victory and lordship in our lives by His mighty Spirit. It is not of works but is all of grace, "yet not I, but the grace of God . . . yet not I but Christ." Until we learn what it means to "live by the faith of Jesus Christ" instead of our own veracity, we cannot enter God's rest.

Eternity Present

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11:8-10 NKJV)

Here in this passage we read of a real man of faith. We say real because he had his gaze fixed on another world and "waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Unlike so many Christians today, he was not busy about

building "great things for God," but rather looked for a city built by God. Remember, this "faith chapter" starts out with the statement of fact that says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." If we cannot see this important difference between the temporal and the eternal, we are truly as blind.

In the New Testament we read of two Pharisees, descendants of righteous Abraham, who had a divine encounter with the living Son of God and had their worlds turned upside-down. One was Nicodemus and the other was Saul of Tarsus. Each one was invaded by a Man whose life and perspective was totally foreign to them, even though they each claimed to represent God to His people and prided themselves by living godly lives.

First let's look at the collision that Saul had with the risen Christ.

And Saul, still breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to Damascus to the synagogues; so that if he found any of the Way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. But in going, it happened as he drew near to Damascus, even suddenly a light from the heaven shone around him. And he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? And he said, Who are you, lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you persecute. It is hard for you to kick against the goads. And trembling and astonished, he said, Lord, what will You have me to do? And the Lord said to him, Arise and go into the city, and you shall be told what you must do. (Acts 9:1-6 MKJV)

"Who are you, Lord?" Have you ever noticed that Jesus seemed to appear in a form that the mind of religious man cannot accept? Have you ever noticed that when He speaks, His words are either confusing or totally unacceptable to the religious mind? He seems to be other worldly from start to finish as though He takes great pleasure in disrupting our present "reality." We like to have everything nice and tidy in neat little bundles and He comes along and blows on it and scatters our chaff to the wind.

We see this in Jesus' discourse with the Pharisee, Nicodemus, a religious man with all his right doctrines and theological ducks in a row. Nicodemus dared to approach this Man Who dwells and thinks in eternity, to his own undoing.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? (John 3:1-12 NKJV)

Nicodemus comes to Jesus and acknowledges that He is from God. He heard of the miracles and gave Jesus credit, and in so doing, he thought that he has really gone the extra mile with Christ. Then we watch Jesus commence to cut his legs right out from under him. "You must be born of the water and of the Spirit. . . You must be born again!" How many of us think that it is enough to be born of a woman (born of water), and then garner unto ourselves the right belief system and we will have fulfilled all that God requires of us. Billions of men and women have approached God this way. Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, and yes, even Christians do this. But is this what the Christ requires of those who would know His Father, the One True God?

"You must be born again! You must be born of the Spirit." What is that supposed to mean? After Jimmy Carter during his campaign for president started confessing that he was born again, we soon started to hear this phrase parroted all over the American culture. Madison Avenue picked up on it and soon the industrialists' new lines of products were "born again." A pop singer sang of having a new boy friend and thus was "born again." We soon had "born again" cars, "born again" restaurants and "born again" hamburgers being eaten by pop stars singing about their new earthly relationships as if their new affair was straight from heaven.

What does "born again" mean from a heavenly perspective? Does it mean that we go to a meeting, listen to a holy man speak and at his invitation slip up one little finger (or even go down to an altar) and zap, we are now born again? Let us look at what else Jesus had to say about being born again. "Unless you are born of the Spirit," unless you are born of the Spirit world you have not yet gotten to first base. That which is born of the flesh *is* flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. There is a division between the two. The first is of the world and worldly. The latter is of another world and manifests THAT world seeking nothing from this one. He sees the kingdom of God. His whole vision is filled with that kingdom and the prince of this world cannot turn his head. There is no going back.

Some of you are probably thinking, "Wait a minute, we cannot be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good! We must keep things in balance here." You have joined Nicodemus in saying, "How can these things be? Let's be reasonable, here. How about all these good things I have to offer God? How about my musical ability, my wealth, my administrative ability, my success in the sports world? How about my degree in theology? Surely God can use that!" To this, Jesus answers, "That which is of the flesh is *still* flesh." If Nicodemus' righteousness had no place in God's kingdom, how much more it is true of ours? Pastor, "are you a teacher of the law and you do not understand these things?"

Jesus went on to tell this leader of the Jews, "We speak what we know and testify what we have seen." Jesus speaks by the Spirit from a heavenly perspective and represents His Father's kingdom and will. Religious and carnal man can only speak for the flesh and the things of THIS world. He speaks of the things he has learned in the best of the world's seminaries. He speaks of what he has read in his volumes of commentaries that adorn the walls of his study. Or worse yet, he goes to a training seminar and speaks the things he learned about "church growth." His interest is in building up HIS religious kingdom, getting more and more people under his influence and control. But how many of today's Christians and their leaders speak what they have heard the Spirit say to them and speak only after spending time before the Father, enveloped in His love? How many speak what they KNOW with a knowing that only comes in kingdom reality, communing with God in the Spirit? Jesus said, "I only speak what I hear my Father saying and I only do what I see my Father doing." THIS is what it means to be born again.

Jesus blew this Pharisee away when He said, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." To this, Nicodemus' mind was resonating, "No, no, how can this be?" By implication, Nicodemus was saying, "Jesus, the implications of this are too much! If people who are led by the Spirit are like the wind, how can we control them and continue to channel their energies and money into our programs? If people start listening to God for themselves and obey His voice, they will become as unpredictable as You are! They won't show up on time at our meetings, because they will be doing ministries outside our walls that will get in the way. They might start meeting in homes and neglect the temple all together as they go from house to house in one accord and love on one another around a common meal. Our synagogues will become totally irrelevant and fall into disrepair. We will lose our grip on their lives!"

Jesus adds this insult to all this affront to this man's status quo, "You do not receive our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" In modern vernacular, "Nick, baby, you don't have a clue of what I am talking about and you will never have a clue until you fall on your face and cry out to Me in heart cleansing repentance, leaving all your titles, positions, righteous robes and Jewish pedigree behind, counting it as so much dung." A few years later, Jesus confronted Paul on the road to Damascus and the result in his life was this very thing.

So what is the cost to become "born again" to be one led of the Spirit like the wind, to obey that upward heavenly call that rips you out of this present non-reality into the reality of God?

And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight." Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." (Acts 9:12-16 NKJV)

We in the western church long to be like Billy Graham and have opportunity to preach Jesus to kings, presidents, and fill coliseums with admiring throngs. But are we willing

to embrace the cross of Christ and suffer "many things for HIS name's sake"? Will we follow Jesus to the cross? Are we willing to suffer the loss of everything that this world has to offer and live lives that are focused on a kingdom that is NOT of this world? Or are we like those seven women spoken of by the prophet Isaiah?

And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, we will eat our own bread and wear our own clothing; only let us be called by your name, to take away our shame. (Isaiah 4:1 MKJV)

Seven women, seven lampstands, seven churches, we want the best of both worlds. We want the independence of being lords over our own lives. We want a successful career, we want to live comfortable lives, we want to be well thought of by all men, we want to build ourselves a kingdom and leave a legacy with our name on it. So, Jesus, just give us your name that we might appear righteous to our fellow man. We want to appear like a rich philanthropist who really cares about the little people, as long as we can maintain control over our lives. We just want to be known as a "Christ-ian." We want people to see that we always do "the Christian thing." Just give us your name to cover us in our spiritual nakedness.

So there stands Nicodemus with his world torn to shreds, laying at his feet. Now comes the coup de grace. "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven." What? Are you saying that YOU not only have come down from heaven, but are *still* in heaven? What are you, mad? I was doing good to even believe in heaven and hold my own against the Sadducees who do not believe in the resurrection. Now you are telling me that you are not only here from heaven, but you are still there while you stand there before me here on this earth!

In the mind of this religious leader, Jesus was either demonized and a nut case or He was from another world. The works that He did, the miracles, spoke of that other world, so Nicodemus could not just brush Him off as a false Messiah. Jesus rocked this man's world view and He will rock yours if you try to follow Him by the Spirit's leading and power. Soon the things of this world will grow strangely dim as it has been with us, and your "pastor" will accuse you of not being of a right mind and of being "so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good." We wish all who name the name of Jesus were.

Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus,

Even when we were dead (slain) by [our own] shortcomings and trespasses, He made us alive together in fellowship and in union with Christ; [He gave us the very life of Christ Himself, the same new life with which He quickened Him, for] it is by grace (His favor and mercy which you did not deserve) that you are saved (delivered from judgment and made partakers of Christ's salvation). And He raised us up together with Him and made us sit down together [giving us joint seating with Him] in the heavenly sphere [by virtue of our being] in Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed One).
(Ephesians 2:5-6 AMP)

Notice the time warp here? This is the normal Christian life. Just as it was with Jesus as He talked with Nicodemus, so it is with all who are Christ's. We are here on this earth, but we are also there with Him in heavenly places. If the above passage says anything, it says that in reality we are spirit beings having a bodily experience. God has commanded it so. Our sins could not even terminate this destiny. For even when we were dead in our sins, He made us alive together in fellowship and in union with Christ in the same new life of Christ. We have believed by His grace. We have been saved by His grace and we walk out our very lives by His grace.

Are we walking in heavenly places? No, we have been made to sit down together in Him. He is the one who said on the cross, "It is finished." If we are in Him, then we find ourselves as Jesus was when He spoke to Nicodemus, "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven." It is in our resting in Christ in the heavenlies that we are in His kingdom here on earth. His prayer becomes a reality, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It is only as we rest in Him in the Father's kingdom that we can be of any kingdom good here on earth. We can only walk out Christ if we are sitting in Him in the heavens at Father's right hand. If we are busy building our own or the kingdoms of men ---and it is not the Spirit who we are obeying and following, but mere men--it is so much wood, hay and stubble and will all go up in the purifying fires of God.

To be in Christ we must be other-worldly. We will be so heavenly minded that this world and its religious leaders will cast us off as a profane thing.

If then you have been raised with Christ [to a new life, thus sharing His resurrection from the dead], aim at and seek the [rich, eternal treasures] that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. And set your minds and keep them set on

what is above (the higher things), not on the things that are on the earth. For [as far as this world is concerned] you have died, and your [new, real] life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in [the splendor of His] glory. (Colossians 3:1-4 AMP)

Are we to keep looking up? No way! If we are IN Christ we have a heavenly perspective and we can only look down with His eyes of love upon a lost and dying world. Our real focus is on heavenly things! We seek His heavenly treasures, not as some teach (to their own damnation) to seek earthly blessings to heap on our lusts. We are worthless to this world system and its kingdom builders. As far as they are concerned we are dead men and of no earthly good to them. We are in good company, though, for it was the Father who chose Christ to be the Chief Cornerstone, the same Jesus whom the builders rejected. When Jesus appears, we appear with Him in His glory because we are in Him. If we are standing down here and looking up at His second coming it is too late. We have missed the boat. Our lives have not been hidden in Him, but in the things and kingdoms of this world.

Paul wrote of this other worldliness to the Corinthian church.

For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:13-21 NKJV)

When a country establishes diplomatic relations with another country, they send an ambassador and he opens up an embassy on that country's soil. The building and its

grounds might be in a foreign country, but as far as sovereignty is concerned, that piece of real estate belongs to the country represented within its confines. The same is true of the ambassador. He is not his own. He is there to represent the country that sent him. He is not there to build his own kingdom or make himself look great to the dignitaries of that foreign nation, but to make his own country look great and do its wishes.

It is a grave offence to attack another nation's embassy. We are responsible to keep it safe from mob violence and never are we to over-run it with our own armies or police. If this happens, it is equivalent to an act of war and all diplomatic relations are broken off between the two nations. The same is true of an ambassador. If he starts making statements that represent his feelings or desires and not those of his home nation, he is recalled and another is sent. Now with all this in mind, let us look at the above passage once again.

We as members of the kingdom of God are to be "beside ourselves"! We, as heaven's ambassadors, are to represent God, not our own wishes. We are to be of a "right mind," the mind of Christ, so the inhabitants of this foreign land called earth can see the kingdom of God in us, and more importantly, see just who God really is. What manner of lives should we live? Lives that demonstrate Christ because He is the Pattern Son of God. We can do this only as much as we are dead in Christ to our old lives and lusts of the flesh and are alive in Him.

How do we of His kingdom relate to one another? Do we worship and elevate among ourselves to positions of authority and power the profound, the educated, the beautiful, and the powerful? No, not if we are of a heavenly mindset. We no longer know any man after the things of the flesh. Even here we are not to look on the outward things of men, but we are to be as Christ and look upon the heart. As Paul later wrote, "We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." How can we properly represent Christ and reconcile all men to God and show such favoritism? Our gaze, our thoughts, and our love must be for those things that are eternal, and our homeland must be the kingdom of God.

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His

glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20-21 NKJV)

How much more should this be true for those of us who are called to be His ambassadors? Subdue everything in us, oh Lord, and conform us into the perfect image and likeness of Your Glorious Son, "for in Him we live and move and have our being... for we are also His (God's) offspring.

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