

**— LIVING SACRIFICE —**



# LIVING SACRIFICE

Vincent C. Finnegan

# GOD

. . . Reconciling the world unto God . . .

## LIVING SACRIFICE, Kingdom Studies, Volume III

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## NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR:

***Living Sacrifice*** is the third in a series of three books written to correspond with the class *His Story: God's Purpose of the Ages*. The volumes and class teach the great theme of the Scriptures and the purpose of life — the Kingdom of God.

The primary purpose of this book is to help the reader understand the Bible and thereby live to the glory of God. Therefore, many scriptures are written out accompanied with an exposition. ***Living Sacrifice*** should be considered a study guide to be read along with the Bible. The author has no concern to impart his own or someone else's theology or opinion. The only matter of importance is to understand and obey God's will. The Bible records the will of God. The Bereans furnish the example every believer should imitate when reading or hearing things pertaining to God.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so. Acts  
17:11

If you are interested in acquiring, ***The Foundation*** (Volume I), ***Jesus the Christ*** (Volume II), or the class *His Story: God's Purpose of the Ages*, contact:

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# LIVING SACRIFICE

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## ***Renewed Mind***

### ROMANS 12

**A** major part of worship under the old covenant was the sacrifice of animals. The book of Leviticus details the sacrificial system which included five different kinds of offerings. The sacrifices which included the killing of animals provided a temporary atonement for sin and a shadowy type for man's ultimate sacrifice — the death of Jesus Christ. Since his perfect sacrifice, all the former ones are now completely obsolete.

However, God still requires sacrifice to be a central part of our worship today. No longer is the death of an innocent victim required, rather a living sacrifice which is holy and well pleasing to God. The book of Romans begins to explain the sacrifice expected today from those who have faith in Christ.

Romans, as do many of the Epistles that Paul wrote, begins with a doctrinal (instructional) presentation followed by the practical application of that doctrine. Romans 1-11 contain basically doctrine, and 12-16 are primarily practical application.

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

The word "therefore" is like a stop sign which says, "Stop and consider from where you have traveled before you proceed." It urges us to consider that which preceded before we consider that which follows. Since this study is devoted primarily to the practical side of Romans as it relates to being a living sacrifice, we will not examine Romans 1-11 in detail. Such a scrutiny would reveal unequivocally that mankind is dead in sin, helpless, and hopelessly lost. We deserve absolutely nothing other than judgment and condemnation; yet, by God's loving mercy, we are offered redemption and salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We are exhorted by the mercies of God (as seen in Romans 1-11) to present ourselves a living sacrifice.

A fundamental principle for sacrifice under the old covenant was that the offerer had to give of his own voluntary will. The offering could not be forced, compelled, or given with any reluctance. So it is today. We are to present ourselves of our own voluntary will while acknowledging the mercies of God. Sacrifice given due to compulsion, coercion, or any unloving obligation has always been, and continues to be, repugnant to God.

God wants us to live wholeheartedly for Him. Before we accepted Christ, our lives were self-centered and motivated primarily by "the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh" (Ephesians 2:3). Now we are to die to self and live for God. Jesus said it well when speaking to his disciples.

Matthew 16:24 and 25

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall

find it.

As we live for God, we present ourselves a living sacrifice which is our reasonable service. The phrase "reasonable service" is perhaps more understandable when translated "logical worship."<sup>1</sup>

Religious services are often referred to as worship services. Attending church once a week, however, is a very small part of the worship that God requires of us. Our worship should be inclusive of every aspect of our lives. Romans chapter 12 elaborates on how to live for Him.

We live in a present evil age (Galatians 1:4). Satan is the god of this age (II Corinthians 4:4) and greatly influences the thinking and behavior of mankind (Ephesians 2:1-3). Therefore, God commands us not to be conformed to this age.

Romans 12:2

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.<sup>2</sup>

The world's commonly accepted standard for thought and conduct is not to be acceptable to us. Our relationship to the things of this life is understood by the titles God has designated to us such as foreigners, strangers, and pilgrims. A foreigner is a citizen of another country. Our citizenship is reserved for us in heaven. Our country is coming in the future when our Messiah returns. A stranger

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<sup>1</sup> "Reasonable" is the Greek word *logikos* from which the English word "logic" is derived. "Service" is *latreia* meaning worship of God.

<sup>2</sup> "World" is the Greek word *aion* which is better understood when translated as "age." One definition for "world" is the things of this life and the people devoted to them. *Aion* can also have this meaning, but has the added understanding of a period of time.

is one who is out of place or not at home in something. Since the world is evil, we should feel very much out of place. A pilgrim is one who is on a journey to a holy place. Our pilgrimage ends when Christ returns, therefore we cannot settle down or settle for this current world.

Rather than conforming to this age, we are told to be transformed (Greek - *metamorphoo*). From *metamorphoo* we get the English word "metamorphosis." A tadpole is metamorphosed into a frog; a caterpillar into a butterfly. Our transformation happens as we renew our minds and is as radical as the tadpole and the caterpillar. Before a confession and acceptance of Christ, we are just like everyone else in the world. This is succinctly stated in Ephesians 2 as "dead in trespasses and sins; ...walked according to the course of this world."

Now that Jesus Christ is our Lord, we have the responsibility to change. The change begins in the mind. We renew our minds by shunning evil influences as well as openly accepting and embracing the godly.

As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7). All that we manifest in our lives is a direct result of the thoughts we harbor. If our thinking conforms to this world, our lives conform to this world. If our thinking is according to God's Word, so our lives will be also. Life is determined from the inside out.

As we put God's Word on in our minds and act accordingly, we prove by experience the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:1 tells us that our logical worship is to live constantly for Him. Verse 2 tells us that the renewed mind is the beginning of how to live for Him. Now we will see that verse 3 tells us how to renew the mind by thinking correctly.

### Verse 3

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to **think of himself** more highly than he ought to **think**; but to **think** soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

We are told how "not to think," how we "ought to think," and "to think soberly." Prideful and egotistical thinking is unsound thinking. "Sober" or sound thinking is according to the measure of faith God has graciously dealt us. We must remain humble and not think more highly than we ought to think: "...what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it*?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). Everything we are in Christ is by God's loving grace.

The believer's first and most important responsibility is to maintain a loving relationship with God the Father, and that requires the renewed mind. Fellowship with God also includes a recognition of others in His family and loving behavior toward them. We are all members of one body and have a responsibility to love one another (1 John 4:7).

Just as we have many parts to our physical bodies, so does the Body of Christ. We are all a part of it, and each of us is needed to make it complete. We each have different work or services to perform.

#### Verses 4 and 5

For as we have many members in one body,  
and all members have not the same office:  
So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ,  
and every one members one of another.

The word "office" means function or things to do. Each member of Christ's Body is significant. No other can take our place. No one else can do that which we can do because each is unique. God says that the function we

render in the body is unparalleled and absolutely needed. To think differently is to contradict God's Word. We may not feel important or needed, but feelings are not the criteria for truth. Feelings should never be our standard for living. They may be based in fear, doubt, or sin-consciousness; or they may be due to pride, stubbornness, or selfishness. The Word of God is truth and is the standard by which we should live, not our feelings. Therefore, we must sometimes overcome or change our feelings in order to line up our thoughts with God's Word. You do not want to disagree with God. Each of us is one of a kind! Each of us is needed!

In I Corinthians 12 God expands the illustration given in Romans. The section shows the relationship and interdependence of the members of the Body of Christ, again by using the example of the human body. Can the foot replace the hand? Can the ear replace the eye? Are the foot, hand, ear, and eye all needed in the human body? So is each member in the Body of Christ important. We need each other.

#### I Corinthians 12:14-25

For the body is not one member, but many.  
If the foot shall say, Because I am not the  
hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not  
of the body?

And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the  
eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of  
the body?

If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were*  
the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing,  
where *were* the smelling?

But now hath God set the members every  
one of them in the body, as it hath pleased  
him.

And if they were all one member, where *were*

the body?

But now *are they* many members, yet but one body.

And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness.

For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked:

That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.

As unique members of the Body of Christ, we each have a distinct function. God has already given us this ability to serve by His grace and expects us now to get busy serving.

Romans 12:6

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith;

The word "grace" is *charis* in Greek; and the word "gifts" is *charisma*. *Charisma* means the gift as a result of grace. The emphasis of this word is grace. God has given each

of us the spiritual ability to serve in the Body by His grace. As we render loving service to others, we must never forget the ability to serve is because of God's grace.

We cannot divorce loving God from loving our brother. If we love God and want to enjoy having fellowship with Him, we must love our brother. The Epistle of I John was written so we could maintain fellowship with God (I John 1:3). Throughout this epistle, God exhorts us to love one another.

We forfeit the fellowship relationship with our Father because we refuse to love our brother. When we love our brother, we eliminate the "occasion of stumbling."

I John 2:9-11

He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

As used here in I John, the word "hate" (Greek - *miseo*), implies an active ill will in words or conduct. Love can mean different things to different people; therefore, some clarity is needed. Often children of the same parents will answer authoritatively and affirmatively when asked if they love one another. Yet, they often say and do things to each other which are unloving and even mean. These individuals have a bond because of their common relationship and experiences. This bond is called love, but should not be confused with the love of God to which the Bible refers. God's love is not a passive mental attitude; God's love is a mental state which translates into godly

actions towards others. Deeds which emanate from a compassionate heart are the love of God.

I John 3:14-18

...He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death.

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

Loving our brother is not optional behavior if we want to stay in fellowship with God. God, our Father, requires us to love. Since God loved us, we are indebted to Him. This debt requires loving others.

I John 4:10-12

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

We love God because He first loved us. We are **COMMANDED** to love our brothers also.

## Verses 19-21

We love him, because he first loved us.

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

And this commandment have we from him,  
That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Christ provides the example that we are to follow. He said, "...the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matthew 20:28). So likewise, God wants us to minister to each other. The lifestyle of a Christian is one of love and service. We are no longer to be lost in our own little world with concern for self and self only. We are now part of a family, and we are to serve.

Romans 12:6-8 shows us that we have many ways of serving and exhorts us to get busy serving. If you excel in prophecy, get busy prophesying. If your ability is in ministering to others, get busy ministering; if in teaching, teach; etc. The point is not your specific function but your determination and zeal to serve. We need not wonder what our function is but rather just get busy doing whatever we are able to do, for that is our function. For a more clear understanding of these scriptures, eliminate the italicized words which were added by the translators.

## Romans 12:6-8

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, ~~let us prophesy~~ according to the proportion of faith;

Or ministry, ~~let us wait~~ on ~~our~~ ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that

giveth, ~~let him do it~~ with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

In the Greek, the word "cheerfulness" is *hilarotes* from which we get the English word "hilarity." When we are showing mercy, we should be cheerful. Our service in the Body is to be carried out not with murmurings and disputings (Philippians 2:14), but with cheerfulness because we are blessed, thankful, and happy to serve.

Quickly following the exhortation to get busy serving, we are commanded to ensure that all service is rendered in love without hypocrisy.

Verse 9

*Let love be without dissimulation....*

"Dissimulation" means hypocrisy or pretense. In the Greek language, this word was used to describe an actor on the stage, someone who impersonated, or someone who was playing a part or several parts. We are often tempted to go through the motions of Christian service without having our hearts in it. This mechanical behavior is like being an actor on a stage or an impersonator. Rather than **being** Christ-like, we **act** Christ-like. Whenever we find ourselves behaving in this robotic fashion, we need to slow down and bring our hearts back to God.

God wants us to serve with a genuine, pure, sincere, godly attitude. All service to our fellow man must emanate from hearts of love for God. Earlier, we saw that love as just a mental attitude is not sufficient but that deeds must correspond (I John 3:18). Now we see that deeds alone are not adequate either. God is not pleased with good works without the motivation of love. Love talk without actions is wrong, and actions without love are equally wrong. "Let love be without hypocrisy" brings our attention

back to the renewed mind communicated in verses two and three. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. The love in our minds and hearts should determine our actions. If we want to live for Him, we must serve others; but this service must be done His way, the love way.

Our motivation to serve is not for recognition, acceptance, or validation from others. All that we do should be done "...in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:5-6). We must keep God in the center of our hearts. Fellowship with Him must never be forfeited, not even for service to others. Our primary concern is to be always walking in oneness with Him. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17). As God remains the first love in our hearts, we will love as Christ did, without hypocrisy.

#### Verse 9

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

"Abhor" and "cleave" are two words with contrasting commands. "Abhor" is to shrink away from with horror. It is to loathe, to feel overpowering disgust or hate. "Abhor" describes the attitude and actions we should have toward evil. Regretfully, we live in a time when graphic violence and open sexual perversions are paraded before us continually in the media (television and movies, for example). Our culture has not only failed to abhor evil; but we have succumbed to entertaining ourselves with it.

"Cleave" means to hold fast, to cling faithfully, to be glued together. "Cleave" describes the attitude and actions

we should have towards good. Thus, we want to cleave to the things which are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, and having virtue or praise (Philippians 4:8).

What we cleave to is what we will think about; what we abhor, we will not be attracted to. The thoughts we dwell on determine how we live. Then, if we are to become mature Christians, we need to reject patiently and faithfully those thoughts which disagree with God's Word. As we cleave to that which is good, we will be kindly affectioned one to another.

Verse 10

*Be* kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

A similar command is given in Philippians, and Jesus Christ is shown again as an example of how we are to regard one another. We are encouraged to think the way he thought when he selflessly humbled himself to suffer and die for us on the cross. He preferred us; he honored us; he esteemed us above himself because of his love and obedience to God.

Philippians 2:3-5

*Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

God created us to love Him and others also. Christians are not to live for themselves, but for the Father and His family. "Preferring one another" implies a reaching out to help others. We live in an age when self-absorbed

estrangement is very common. Yet, we are told by God not to conform to this age, but instead to be transformed. Living love's way is to be our metamorphosis.

In the first century Church, God moved greatly among the believers. The book of Acts shows us that the believers had and maintained a loving relationship with their Father and each other. This relationship was called fellowship. "Fellowship" in the Greek is the word *koinonia* which means sharing fully. The believers were involved in each other's lives daily. They shared fully because they had genuine affection for one another. Brotherly love abounded. The believers cared about each other to the degree that they preferred one another.

Acts 2:42-47

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

In the twenty-first century, the Church is faced with a

great problem. Instead of behaving as the believers of the first century did, many behave more like those in medieval times when people lived in their own isolated castles. Separation and hostility, rather than fellowship, marked this time in history. So it is in our time; detachment and non-involvement describe the Church today. People have become self-absorbed rather than caring for others. Locked behind closed doors, staring mesmerized at the television, we live in our own private, isolated castles. We surround ourselves with a moat of fear and selfishness. Isolation, not fellowship, has too often become the way of the Church today. Yet, God commands involvement, caring, and sharing. We are created to love, and love demands involvement and abhors isolation. We are in a family, and our Father wants us to be busy serving each other.

Romans 12:11

Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

We are again reminded that the overall context of this section is "serving the Lord." Loving others is a part of serving God. "Business" is diligence. "Fervent" is to be filled with passion, hot, glowing. We are not to be lazy but diligent and are passionately to pursue the things of God, as we serve the Lord. Often others are the beneficiaries of our service, but all our service is to the Lord ("...ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake," II Corinthians 4:5). We minister to each other "...as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6).

To be a living sacrifice is the most logical way to live and is indeed also the most abundant way. Yet, we still face tribulations because we live in an ungodly world. Jesus Christ told us we would have tribulations (John 16:33), but we also have hope.

## Verse 12

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation;  
continuing instant in prayer;

When we decide to obey God, to love without hypocrisy, and to care for others, we are more vulnerable. We may have disappointments and setbacks. At times the very people we love and serve will turn on us and attack; hence we experience tribulation. Many think that if they remain isolated and uninvolved, they will be less vulnerable. But "castle living" is not God's will; living love is! Rejoicing in hope allows us to be patient in tribulation.

Jesus Christ is coming back! At that time we are going to be changed, and our vile bodies will be fashioned like his glorious body (Philippians 3:21). Our minds will be perfect (I Corinthians 13:12). We will be eternally with our Father and Lord in uninterrupted, perfect fellowship (I Thessalonians 4:17). When he returns, everyone in the Church will live in love and unity (Ephesians 4:13). Our Hope is cause for great rejoicing and gives us the strength to be patient in tribulation. Staying focused on our Hope is absolutely essential if we are to live for God. Hope is the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19). All the tribulations we face cannot be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us (Romans 8:18). Tribulations viewed through the eyes of the Hope are bearable. Christ's return makes all tribulation fade in significance.

## II Corinthians 4:17 and 18

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;  
While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen:

for the things which are seen *are* temporal;  
but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

Many individual parts make up the whole of living for God. We are briefly looking at the parts and must never forget that all of these things together provide a lifestyle of Christian living.

"Continuing instant in prayer" is a command repeated often to the Church because it is a vital part of living for God. Prayer is absolutely necessary if one wills to live for Him. Jesus Christ's earthly ministry was very short in time. Considering all that he accomplished, it is difficult to imagine anyone who could be more busy than he was. Yet, he often took time to pray. To carry out his ministry of living for God, he needed to pray continually, as do we. Not only did he need to pray, but he also loved to pray because it afforded him private time with his Father — so it is with us.

From the exhortation to pray, we are brought right back to our responsibility to care for each other.

Romans 12:13

Distributing to the necessity of saints; given  
to hospitality.

Again we see that involvement with others is not an option; it is mandatory. We are to give to those who are in need and to receive each other hospitably. God wants His family to be lovingly compassionate to each other and to be of the same mind toward one another. The Father does not want His children fighting and divided.

Verses 14-16

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and  
curse not.

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

*Be* of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits [in yourself].

We are members of the same Body; therefore when one of us rejoices or weeps, we should all have compassion and empathy with the other.

I Corinthians 12:25 and 26

That there should be no schism [division] in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

Romans 12 ends with an exhortation similar to that which was given by Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount when he said to "resist not evil" (Matthew 5:38-48). When we resist evil, we get pulled into being evil. We do not respond to evil with evil; rather we overcome it with good.

Romans 12:17-21

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.  
Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Evil is an ever present reality in this world, and we must learn how to deal with it in a godly manner, or it will be our demise. We are to love and leave the responsibility for justice and vengeance to the only righteous judge, God.

"Heap coals of fire on his head" is an Eastern idiom. In the small Eastern villages, one person would rise first and start the fire for the village. A boy then would take the burning coals in a piece of pottery, balanced on top of his head, to all the households. Not only was it a kind gesture to others, it was a pleasant task for the boy because, in the cold morning air, the coals warmed him. With our love, we can warm our enemies. Our good can overcome their evil. It may not change them from behaving in an evil way, but it will eliminate the evil effect on us.

Because we have a sin nature, evil is present with us (Romans 3:9-19; 5:12; 7:14-25). We have been delivered from, but must still live in, this evil age (Galatians 1:4). So we have evil within (the sin nature) and evil without (because Satan is the god of this age). The Lord's exhortation to pray daily to God for deliverance from evil (Matthew 6:13) is very needful to heed.

Romans 12 covers a broad range of practical steps for offering ourselves to God as living sacrifices. To help review, the following is offered as a summary:

<b>LIVING SACRIFICE</b>	
not conformed to this age	rejoice in Hope

## LIVING SACRIFICE

be transformed by renewing	patient in tribulation
not to think more highly	instant in prayer
think soberly as God dealt	distribute to the necessity
love and serve one another	be given to hospitality
get busy serving	bless them which persecute
love without hypocrisy	be compassionate to others
abhor (loathe) evil	recompense not evil for evil
cleave to good	be honest
be kindly affectioned	live peaceably
prefer one another	avenge not yourself
do not be lazy	feed your enemy
be diligent and fervent	overcome evil with good

The chapter divisions in the Bible were added by men and, as such, are devoid of authority for rightly understanding God's Word. The chapter division between Romans 12 and 13 hinders our understanding by stopping us from considering the flow of context. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21) is immediately followed by verses which instruct how to relate to the higher authorities in the world such as government leaders, police, military, etc.



## *Strangers and Pilgrims*

ROMANS 13

**M**an's absolute responsibility to God is succinctly communicated in a simple yet profound way in the book of Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 13:4

Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

Respect and obedience are continually seen throughout the Scriptures as man's only right response to Almighty God. The instruction in Romans 13, or for that matter anywhere else in the Bible, cannot contradict this primary and fundamental command.

Romans 13:1

Let every soul be subject [be submissive] unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Submission is not an odd concept in the Scriptures, rather very common. Wives are to be subject to their own husbands (Ephesians 5:22-24). Children are to submit to parents (Ephesians 6:1-3). Servants are to submit to

masters, or today employees to employers (Ephesians 6:5-8). Younger believers are told to submit to their elders (I Peter 5:5). Believers are to submit to leaders in the Church (Hebrews 13:17). All are told to be subject one to another in the fear of God (Ephesians 5:21). Likewise, we are told here in Romans 13 and in I Peter 2:13-17 to be subject to governmental authorities. Subjection implies a deliberate decision of will to submit lovingly in obedience to God's Word.

If a husband commands his wife to worship Buddha, should she? Absolutely not, because it would break God's commandment to worship one God. If parents tell their children to steal, should they? No, it breaks God's command. If your employer tells you to lie, should you? No, it breaks God's commandment. If the government demands that you worship a golden image or be thrown into the fire, does God expect you to obey? When the King of Babylon commanded Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to bow, they said: "...be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3:18). King Nebuchadnezzar had such fierce anger because of their disobedience that he threw them into a burning fiery furnace. God sent an angel to deliver them. Submission in human relationships is commanded, but never when it breaks God's commandments. We must obey God rather than man.

The phrase "the powers that be are ordained of God" needs clarification from the scope of the whole Word of God. Pharaoh in Moses' day was the ruler over the most powerful kingdom in the world. Egypt's rise to prominence was the direct result of God's involvement with Joseph. When speaking to Pharaoh on God's behalf, Moses said, "...for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to show *in* thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth" (Exodus 9:16; Romans 9:17). God brought Egypt up and, with the ten plagues, brought Egypt down.

Pharaoh foolishly thought he was the main man; not so.

The next world power after Egypt was Babylon. With Babylon, God's absolute sovereignty over all the kingdoms of the world was made clear. When God took the kingdom away from Israel because of their continual idolatrous behavior, He spoke the following by the prophet Jeremiah: "Because ye have not heard my words, Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them" (Jeremiah 25:8 and 9). God called Nebuchadnezzar His servant, that is one who would serve God's purposes, yet he was a pagan king over an idolatrous kingdom. What God said is indeed what happened.

After Nebuchadnezzar conquered most of the known world, he became very puffed up. Daniel told him that God was going to drive him from men to dwell with the beasts. After seven years of living like an animal, Nebuchadnezzar's mind came back to him, but with tremendous enlightenment about God Almighty.

Daniel 4:34 and 35

And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom *is* from generation to generation:

And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest

thou?

God helped this man understand that He was the most High God and completely sovereign. Before this incident, God showed the king all the world powers of the future in a dream, including God's coming Kingdom. The dream revealed that God was totally in charge then, and will be throughout future history. He is the Creator of heaven and earth; He is the Possessor of heaven and earth, and He is Lord of heaven and earth. He knows the end from the beginning.

The Persian Empire, led by Cyrus the Great, overthrew the Babylonian Empire. Isaiah prophesied, telling what Cyrus would do over 150 years before it happened. God knew exactly what he would do before he was even born. Isaiah said of Cyrus, "...*He is* my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure" (Isaiah 44:28). "Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden" (Isaiah 45:1). God's supreme rulership over the earth is evident in the Scriptures, and one can be well assured that He has not changed. Therefore, the instruction in Romans 13 is to be obeyed even though we do not understand God's ways.

Romans 13:1 and 2

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation [judgment].

If we do not submit to the laws of the government, we will be judged by those laws. By no means is God saying to us that worldly governments are holy or that their reign

is equitable, fair, and right. All governments are a temporary necessity in this present evil age to maintain a semblance of order until God's perfect Kingdom comes. When Jesus the Messiah reigns, then and only then, will there be a perfect government which is holy, equitable, compassionate, and always right. Today, if we resist the higher powers, we only bring problems to ourselves that will hinder us from freely living for God.

#### Verses 3-5

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil.

Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

The word "minister" could also be translated servant as it often is in other translations. Kings, presidents, governors, etc. are God's servants just as Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Cyrus were. They were not servants because they understood God's Word and believed it, but because God is Almighty and the supreme ruler of the earth.

In order to stay constantly living for God, we must have the right mind set and proper behavior in relationship to the kingdoms of this world. Our forefathers, who maintained faith unto the end of their lives, provide sterling examples.

Hebrews 11:13

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

They were persuaded by God's promises regarding His coming Kingdom. They embraced these promises to the degree that they determined their lifestyle accordingly. Their confession was that they were strangers and pilgrims on this earth. A stranger is one who is out of place or not at home. We are strangers today in this world because our citizenship is reserved in heaven as we await God's coming Kingdom. Pilgrims are those on a journey to a holy place. Our pilgrimage ends when we enter the Kingdom of God. Strangers and pilgrims do not get all wrapped up in the affairs of the land in which they live. They know their home is elsewhere.

We are also ambassadors to this world. As ambassadors, our citizenship is in God's coming Kingdom, and we are sent to represent this Kingdom to the world. We have the high and holy honor of representing our sovereign God. We do so by our behavior and by delivering the message we are commanded to speak. We have been given the ministry of reconciliation with the word of reconciliation which is the Gospel of the Kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

I Peter 2:11 and 12

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<sup>3</sup> II Corinthians 5:18-20 And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;  
 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation [observation].

"Visitation" should be translated observation. The day of observation for unbelievers is today. Our example of living for God should encourage others to glorify Him.

When someone fights or resists the government, he can be pulled into becoming entangled with the affairs of this world. Paying our taxes, buckling our seat belts, etc. are a lot less mentally, emotionally, and financially draining than tickets, jail, courts, lawyers, etc. Involvement in this web is not good works that attract others to God. We simply submit for the Lord's sake, not because governments are always right.

I Peter 2:13-17

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

Governments cost money; therefore, they levy taxes and use other ways of gaining money.

Romans 13:6 and 7

For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

When Jesus was asked, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" he responded as follows:

Mark 12:15-17

Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see *it*.

And they brought *it*. And he saith unto them, Whose *is* this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's.

And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

When talking to Peter about the subject of tribute, as is recorded in Matthew 17:24-27, he showed Peter that God would give provision to do what is right in obeying the financial demands of the government.

After establishing that the higher powers are due tribute, God informs us of the obligation we have to all:

Romans 13:8

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

God does not want us to owe anyone because indebtedness may place us in a compromising position to be controlled or influenced by someone other than Him. Abraham refused to be indebted to the King of Sodom when he was offered great wealth (Genesis 14:21-24). Nor would he accept the land to bury Sarah without paying, so he remained free from obligation to anyone other than God.

In a manner, we are indebted to love one another, but not because of man but rather because of God.

I John 3:16; 4:11

Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought [owe] to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought [owe] also to love one another.

We owe love because God loved us, and He commands us to love others. Love is the fulfilling of the Law.

Romans 13:9 and 10

For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Love worketh no ill to his neighbour:  
therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law.

The Law consisted of two major aspects:

- The tabernacle, and temple service, which included the substitutionary animal sacrifices, the levitical priesthood, the feasts, and special sabbath days. This aspect of the Law, for the most part, was a temporary measure until Christ came and foreshadowed him. Since Christ's coming, this portion of the Law is nullified.
- The ten commandments, which included the other information explaining them. The New Testament (especially Jesus' teaching) explained and enlarged these commandments but did not eliminate them. If we love our neighbor, we will not commit adultery, kill, steal, bear false witness, or covet. So, love is the fulfillment of this part of the Law.

The ten commandments address our behavior as it relates first to God, then to mankind. The first five pertain to God and the latter to men. Jesus said that all the Law and prophets are summed up with the two great commandments.

Matthew 22:37-40

...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the

law and the prophets.

Following the commandment to love, we are confronted with another vital aspect of presenting ourselves as living sacrifices for God. A spiritual slumber of unawareness, inactivity, and humdrum living is a temptation into which we all can easily be lured. In this slumber land, apathy, indifference, and passivity towards God and the things of God replace passion, concern, and aggressive godly living. In this place, time drifts away as we vegetate on nothingness. God shouts at us to wake up!

Romans 13:11 and 12

And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

When Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, the apostles were utterly amazed, so much so that they stood staring into heaven. Two angels appeared and asked them what they were doing. They then reported, "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). In view of his ascension and his promised return, the angels in essence told them to get busy doing what they had been told to do. As his followers, we are to maintain an awareness of the urgency of our times. Our salvation is nearer than when we believed because each day we are one day closer to his return or our death, whichever comes first.

We are to walk circumspectly, that is watchful on all

sides, cautious, and prudent.

Ephesians 5:14-16

Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,  
Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Indeed the days are evil, so we cannot afford to fall into a lackadaisical slumber and squander the time we could have had with God. "Casting off" and "putting on" are the disciplines we are to maintain.

Romans 13:13 and 14

Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.  
But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*.

In the quickly moving moments of our lives, we must acknowledge the time wasters and cast them off:

**Rioting** - The Greek word translated as rioting (*komos*) relates to Bacchus, the god of wine in Roman mythology. The Romans held an annual festival honoring Bacchus which featured drinking and wild behavior. At night a riotous procession of half-drunken men paraded through the streets with torches and music in honor of Bacchus. Rioting generally relates to feasts and drinking parties that last late into the night.

**Drunkenness** - A drunk person is unable to carry out the two great commandments of loving God and our neighbor. The drunkard is lost in selfishness and self-centeredness. The self-constraint and watchfulness that are normally required to guard oneself from immoral or hurtful behavior are greatly diminished. Therefore other sins often ensue. The proverbs speak accurately of the insanity of the drunkard.

Proverbs 23:29-35

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?

They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright.

At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.

Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.

They have stricken me, *shalt thou say, and* I was not sick; they have beaten me, *and* I felt *it* not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

**Chambering** - Having sexual intercourse before marriage or extramarital sex. Also included is cohabitation, that is, living with someone as a sexual partner without the commitment of marriage.

**Wantonness** - A broad range of unbridled passions, including greed, drunkenness, debauchery as well as sexual lust. The Greek (*aselgeia*) translated wantonness also indicates an insolent pride. A wanton person is often proud of their emancipation from the restraints of personal conscience or public opinion. They have lost all sense of shame.

When we give ourselves over to these fleshly passions, we forfeit our relationship with God and waste our God-given time on selfish behavior. Also included in the list of things to cast off are strife and envy. When we are living to the glory of God, we enjoy a peaceful, satisfying life. Contention with others is a foolish distraction from our fellowship with God. Envy, if permitted in our lives, will take us on a roller coaster ride of sick and twisted thoughts and actions which again destroy the life and peace we enjoy with God.

The way to avoid these sins is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 13:14

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*.

Casting off and putting on are two separate actions that must be connected. Casting off without putting on is impossible, as is putting on without first casting off. The two are inseparable companions and a mandatory part of living for and with God. The temptation to sin will remain a constant struggle until we are transformed when Christ returns. Therefore, this simple process must also take constant diligence.

The book of Ephesians explores the same concept a

different way and gives clear instruction on how to implement this procedure.

Ephesians 4:21-24

If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

We are to put off the former conversation, that is manner of life. Now that we have a new life in Christ, the old is referred to as the "old man." Putting off the old man and putting on the new man is a simple concept, but also takes a strenuous ongoing effort. The Scriptures illustrate this twofold method.

Verse 25

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

Put away lying, and speak truth.

Verse 28

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Stop stealing, rather work so we have to give.

Verse 29

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

We are to control our mouths not to speak corrupt words, but to speak edifying words.

Verses 31 and 32

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

We are to cast off or put off bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice. We are to put on kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. The responsibility to cast off and put on is ours to bear, but we are never left on our own. God is at work within us to will and to do of His good pleasure. He wants us to be dependent on Him and promises to help us as we live for Him.

The next chapter in Romans introduces a rather important subject under the same umbrella of offering ourselves as living sacrifices. We are to be put off harsh judgments and put on loving acceptance.





## *Judging*

ROMANS 14

**T**hose who have faith are a part of the Body of Christ which is an interdependent family relationship. The world is too evil; and we are too weak to walk alone. We need each other in order to stay faithful until Christ returns. Loving service to each other is characterized by the following commands: teach, exhort, warn, reprove, rebuke, restore. However to obey these commands, a Christ-like attitude must be embraced which is summarized in Ephesians 4:32: "...be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." With this in mind, we are equipped to help each other; and without it, we will become judgmental, condescending, and harsh.

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

When the spirit of meekness is not maintained, our ministering to others can become self-serving and a snare for both the one we are serving and ourselves.

Jesus commands us not to have a judgmental attitude

that tears others down in order to build ourselves up. Instead of criticizing others, we should examine our own lives and change when needed. The carnal tendency of men is to have 20/20 eyesight to see faults in others, but blindness to their own faults.

Matthew 7:1-5

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye?

Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

When Samuel the prophet was sent by God to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be king, God told him the following.

1 Samuel 16:7

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

God is almighty. He knows the end from the beginning. He inhabits eternity, and His ways are far above our ways. As the sovereign King of heaven and earth, He is in control.

Therefore He is the only One qualified to judge. We, on the other hand, know very little. Our perspective is very, very limited, and quite often our perceptions of people, circumstances, and situations are wrong. Whenever we measure out self-determined harsh judgments of others, we become the sinner and will receive the judgment of God.

Romans 2:1-3

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

Every person who has faith in Christ is a member of the Body of Christ. This Body is called the Church, and Christ is the head over all (Ephesians 1:22 and 23). There is only one Body (Ephesians 4:4), therefore, one Church. We all have one spirit, one Hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all Who is above all and through all and in you all (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Even with this obvious oneness, a great diversity of sects exists today. There are thousands of different Christian religious groups, and will be, until we all come into the unity of the faith when Christ returns. The existence of these various groups and sects does not automatically mean we must have carnal divisions with strife and

envying.

The carnal mind allows the difference among Christians to be an excuse for strife and envy. The Church has been guilty of biting and devouring one another because we walk by the flesh, rather than in love by the spirit (Galatians 5). The carnally-minded ones criticize, judge, condemn, and even label fellow Christians as evil, all because they have a difference in understanding or application of God's Word. Our Father is much more loving and tolerant of His children than they are of each other.

Romans 14 addresses the need for believers to love each other without strings attached but simply because we all belong to God and are in the same family.

Romans 14:1

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but*  
not to doubtful disputations.

The word "receive" is translated from the Greek word *proslambano* and means to receive to oneself, to welcome into the fellowship, to receive and treat with kindness. We are to receive him that is weak or less mature in the faith with kindness, welcoming him into the fellowship. "Doubtful" is *dialogismos* which means thinking evil thoughts. "Disputations" is *diakrisis* which literally means to scrutinize another's opinions in an evil way, searching out so as to pronounce judgment on them. We are not to receive him that is weak with doubtful disputations. The following are translations which render the verse with more clarity than the King James Version does.

Living Bible:

Give a warm welcome to any brother who wants to join you, even though his faith is weak. Don't criticize him for having different

ideas from yours about what is right and wrong.

Phillips Modern English:

Welcome a man whose faith is weak, but not with the idea of arguing over his scruples.

Revised Standard Version:

As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions.

How important it is for every Christian to understand and apply this simple truth! We are always going to meet people who do not believe the same way that we do. Some may even have beliefs that are contrary to God's rightly divided Word. If you are more mature in the faith, you are lovingly to receive this person because God has accepted him into His family. You may have opportunity to teach and help the person grow. However, even if you do not have this opportunity, you are still to receive him with the same love.

God has not appointed any of us to scrutinize and pronounce judgment on any of His children. We have been appointed to love! If God Almighty has accepted someone into His family, who is anyone else to do contrariwise? If we have been allowed the privilege to understand God's knowledge, we should be humbly thankful and never look down on those who have been less privileged. Knowledge can cause people to get egotistical and to think that they are better than others. "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth" (I Corinthians 8:1).

Romans 14:2 and 3

For one believeth that he may eat all things:  
another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

The Gentiles had special practices with eating meat offered to idols, and Judeans had certain restrictions to observe according to the Mosaic Law. We know from a number of places in the Church Epistles that neither restrictions nor liberalism regarding diet have anything to do with true worship; however, not everyone knows or believes this. Therefore, God tells us that we should walk lovingly so as not to cause a brother to stumble.

God is tolerant of the immaturity of His children and expects us to be also. When Jesus Christ fulfilled all the requirements of the Mosaic Law, he rendered all its ceremonial aspects (including dietary restrictions, circumcision, etc.) null and void. They were no longer necessary; yet, most of the Judean Christians continued to do according to the Law. On Pentecost, God inspired Peter to announce that the gift of holy spirit was available to all mankind, including the Gentiles. "For the promise is unto you [the Judeans], and to your children, and to all that are afar off [including all the Gentiles], *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

Many years after Pentecost, in Acts 10, we see Peter was still following the dietary restrictions of the Law and had not yet accepted the Gentiles into God's family (although he was the one who had made God's announcement on Pentecost!). God had to give a vision for Peter three times to prepare him to receive the Gentiles. Yet, on Pentecost these things were already true. God had already accepted the Gentiles and loosed people from the Law. God was lovingly patient with Peter, far more so than most Christians are with each other. Usually, if someone

is weak in faith, he is criticized and often made fun of or ostracized. These wrong attitudes and actions are ungodly.

In Acts 15, the apostles and elders met at Jerusalem to discuss whether or not circumcision and adherence to the other ceremonial aspects of the Law were to be required of the Gentiles. This meeting consisted of the leadership of the first-century Church. They still had not accepted God's Word and will regarding these matters! Did God want them to believe rightly? Yes, without a doubt. But the maturing process took time, and God was lovingly tolerant. We are to be the same way with those who are weak in the right way of believing.

At the meeting they decided finally to accept the Gentiles without the requirement of circumcision but still with some dietary restrictions. "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled" (Acts 15:28 and 29). These restrictions were not necessary according to I Corinthians chapter 8. God does not care if we eat meats offered to idols as long as we do not worship the idols. In Corinth the best meat available was set aside to offer to idols. Believers were welcome to eat that meat as long as they did not do so in worship of an idol.

However, the Church elders still wanted the restrictions, so they included them in the epistle to the Gentiles. Nowhere do the Scriptures say that God condemned them for this immature decision. God understands that maturity takes time. If someone eats meat or refuses to eat meat, the world is not going to end! Why make a big deal out of something about which God cares little?

Even after this notable meeting, Peter continued to have problems applying the truth of God's Word regarding the Gentiles.

Galatians 2:11-13

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

God had Paul reprove Peter. However He did not receive Peter to doubtful disputations as is commonly done. God has always been loving, merciful, and compassionate to His people. He understands our weaknesses. "Like as a father pitieth *his* children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust" (Psalms 103:13 and 14). God did not label Peter with a "666" and tell the world that he was evil and should be avoided at all cost. No! No! No! He loved Peter and worked with him as he was. Peter was a great man, but like all of us, he was a man with weaknesses. Peter was one of the primary leaders in the first century and wrote the books of Peter toward the end of his life. God did not give up on Peter. We should follow in kind and not give up on each other.

Do adults poke harsh criticism at a two-year old child because the child is not as smart as the adult? Most adults lovingly accept the immaturity of a two-year old and enjoy the child's naiveté. In the family of God, we are all children at different stages of maturity. Certainly we have no right to be arrogant or self-righteous. When we are tempted to receive a less mature brother or sister to doubtful disputations, we should remember that we too are less mature than some other members in the family of God.

How would we like to be treated? This is how we should treat those less mature than ourselves. Immaturity is not sin; but direct disobedience to God's Word, such as walking outside of love, is sin.

"Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not" (Romans 14:3). To despise someone is to look down on him with contempt or with aversion. Someone having more understanding of God's Word does not have the right to think of the less mature as worthless and to treat him contemptibly. Quite the opposite is true.

The latter part of verse 3 says, "God hath received him." The word "received" is again *proslambano*. God has welcomed this person with open arms into His family. How could any man do otherwise? How could anyone allow himself to become so prideful that he harshly criticizes someone whom God has chosen to be in His family? Who are we to judge another? Does knowledge give a license for cruelty? Such thinking and actions are shameful!

Romans 14:4

Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

We are all servants of God. We all stand approved of God for He is over all. We do not have the right to judge God's servants. God is the One Who has called each of us, and He is the One Who enables each of us to stand.

Have you ever noticed how children are always sticking their noses into each other's business? A group of children can eat together and constantly badger each other. "You are taking too much food!" "Cut your meat!" "How many pieces have you had?" "Give me that, that's mine!" And so on it goes. They feel compelled to police each other, to

scrutinize, and pass judgment. This is all done even as the parents are sitting there with them!

Many adult Christians still have not grown up. They behave as if they were appointed to be the policemen of the Body of Christ. Yet, we all answer to the Father, not to each other. Why not stick our noses in our own business, the business of constantly living for Him? We are to love each other because all of us have been called by the same God and are in the same family.

Romans continues to show how we are to be loving to each other as we grow together in His family. Note how many times the word "Lord" is used in the following verses.

#### Verses 5-9

One man esteemeth one day above another:  
another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every  
man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto  
**the Lord**; and he that regardeth not the day,  
to **the Lord** he doth not regard *it*. He that  
eateth, eateth to **the Lord**, for he giveth God  
thanks; and he that eateth not, to **the Lord**  
he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man  
dieth to himself.

For whether we live, we live unto **the Lord**;  
and whether we die, we die unto **the Lord**:  
whether we live therefore, or die, we are **the  
Lord's**.

For to this end Christ both died, and rose,  
and revived, that he might be **Lord** both of  
the dead and living.

Every day should be a holy day unto God; however,  
some think a weekly Sabbath is the only holy day. Instead  
of criticizing, we can praise God that they have one day,

rather than no day, set aside to the Lord. The Lord is that which is important! We should respect the sovereignty of God and know we all stand before Him.

Verses 10-13

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way.

We should not be concerned about judging others. We must be concerned about conducting our own lives so as not to be a stumbling block to cause the fall of a brother. We should be willing to yield on insignificant matters, so as to help a brother stand. We have the right to eat whatever we want, but if our eating offends a brother, we should forfeit our right while we are with that brother. The more important matters in life are righteousness, peace, and joy in the holy spirit, not meat and drink.

Verses 14-17

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is* nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean.

But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Serving Christ is that which is acceptable to God. We should look for ways to edify one another, not tear each other down. We should walk charitably, looking for ways to help each other believe and be strong in the Lord. Blessing others because we have been blessed is our logical service. When we understand these things and are living this way, we are well pleasing to God and a blessing to other people.

Verses 18-23

For he that in these things serveth Christ *is* acceptable to God, and approved of men.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed *are* pure; but *it is* evil for that man who eateth with offence.

It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

Hast thou faith? have *it* to thyself before God. Happy *is* he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin.

Considering all that chapter 14 communicates, we see that the more mature should help the less mature.

Romans 15:1 and 2

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification.

Lovingly serving others is not optional behavior if we want to walk with God. As Christians, we should be living not to please ourselves, but God. Christ himself is our example.

Verses 3 and 4

For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

When we walk as we have been instructed throughout this section, we will be able with one mind and one mouth to do the most important thing the Church should do — glorify God!

Verses 5 and 6

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

That ye may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Each of us should live to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:6,12,14). The Church should always bring glory to the Father. "Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21).

When the Church is busy "biting and devouring" one another, we are distracted from glorifying God. God gets glorified when His people are like-minded, and that can only happen when we walk according to His Word and in His love towards each other.

Verse 7

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

Both words "receive" are *proslambano*. "Wherefore," relating back to all that proceeded, receive one another with open arms. Welcome one another with kindness, as Christ also received you with open arms, welcoming you to the glory of God.

We are clearly commanded not to have a hypocritical, judgmental attitude or an attitude of superiority over a brother. However we are also clearly taught that judging certain matters is vitally important and indeed our responsibility.

Matthew 7:15

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

We must judge what the prophets are saying to decide if it is right to believe. Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian coordinators is very alarming and must be heeded.

Acts 20:29-31

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

Not every one who speaks in the name of the Lord is speaking on behalf of the Lord. We must judge what we listen to, comparing what is said to the Scriptures.

I John 4:1

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Some people believe everything they read and hear. Unfortunately many things printed and taught are not true. Christians should be meek, but they should not be gullible. Two extremes to avoid are a reckless open-mindedness and a stubborn narrow-mindedness. We have the responsibility to verify every message we receive, even if the person speaking claims it is of God. Each of us is

ultimately responsible for our own beliefs. Therefore we must do what is necessary to prove by examination of the Scriptures what we accept as truth. We must search the Scriptures to see if these things are so.

Acts 17:11

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so.

Fellowship with like-minded believers is set forth in the Scriptures as a wise, godly activity. Believers can teach and exhort one another as we see the day of the Lord approaching. We are told not to fellowship with those who walk in darkness because their darkness will extinguish our light. Paul confronted the Corinthian Church for not judging rightly and not separating one given over to much evil.

I Corinthians 5:1-3

It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed,

Paul was not there but judged what should be done. When the entire church is aware of such evil and is willing to tolerate it, the influence will be devastating.

## Verses 4-6

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

We are to live holy lives and continue faithfully to the end. If we fellowship with those who habitually dwell in darkness, we will fall. We must be able to judge what a person is doing to the degree it will not ill effect us. This is not a hypocritically harsh judgment which tears others down in order to build ourselves up. This judgment is obeying the Scriptures with a godly motivation.

Leaven is often used in the Bible to show how something very small can grow to influence the whole.

## Verses 7-9

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth. I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:

Paul, at one point, wrote to the Corinthians telling them not to associate with unbelievers who were fornicators. Now he writes back saying to avoid also any man called a brother who is given over to habitual sin.

### Verses 10-13

Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

Hypocritical judgments, as described by our Lord in Matthew 7, are always wrong. To be condescending or critical of a less mature brother is equally wrong. However, judging the teaching of prophets and teachers is absolutely mandatory. Because we are commanded to avoid evil, we also must make judgments regarding a brother who willfully and habitually sins and refuses to repent. To make right judgments, we need the help of God. When we honestly evaluate our limitations to discern rightly, then we will seek the wisdom of God. He promises to provide wisdom liberally to those who seek it.

James 1:5

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God,  
that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth  
not; and it shall be given him.



## *Sin and Forgiveness*

**S**trikingly communicated throughout the Bible are the harsh consequences of sin. Adam and Eve were expelled from paradise because of it. All mankind inherit sin and death due to their original sin. Cain murdered his brother on account of sin. The cataclysmic flood in Noah's day completely altered both heaven and earth. Every living thing was destroyed, save those on the ark, and all of this because of sin. The sinful acts at the Tower of Babel are the reason we have a multitude of languages in the world. These devastating ramifications are viewed in just the first eleven chapters of the Bible. As the Scriptures continue to unfold, we see more and more of the same.

Indeed, sin's destruction is obvious everywhere. Its most hellish influence has been on man's relationship with God. Sin ruined the original love relationship that God created in Eden with Adam and Eve. Every person since has been born dead in sin, without a connection with God, and destined for damnation. If God had not made a way out, all mankind would be born dead in sin, live as slaves of sin, and, in the end, stay separated from God eternally.

However, due to God's mercy, grace, and love, He has made a way back to Himself through the merciful sacrifice of His Son, Jesus the Christ. His shed blood provides remission for sins, atonement with God, and a whole new life for those of faith. With Christ as Lord in our lives, we can have a loving eternal relationship with God our Father.

The grace of God, not the works of man, makes redemption available.

The roots of understanding the sacrifice of Jesus are found in the old covenant sacrifice of animals. The offerer laid his hands upon the head of the animal sacrifice signifying the transference of his sins to the animal and of the animal's life back to the man. The animal was then killed which represented the death and therefore elimination of sin so that atonement with God could be realized. The offerer was then to live a new, holy life.

The old sacrificial system provided a temporary atonement for sin and a shadowy type for man's complete substitution for sin — the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. If we confess Jesus the Christ as our Lord, we are to identify with his sacrifice like that of the animal. Our sins were transferred to him, therefore we are now to live dead to sins. His life was transferred to us, therefore we are to walk in newness of life. (For further detail see **Jesus the Christ** Volume II, chapter 10, *High Priest* by this same author.)

Romans 6:3-6

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection:

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be

destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Since we have been connected with him in death, we also will be in resurrection. We now have the responsibility to determine the old man, the old life, to be dead and to live a new life unto God.

Verse 11

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Before Christ is in our lives, we have no option but obedience to sin. With Christ, we can choose to be obedient to God and live free from sin.

Verses 12 and 13

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Sin is a very cruel, unyielding master making excessive demands which are brutal. If we surrender ourselves to it, our end is death. If we are obedient to God, our end is righteousness.

Verse 18

Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Before Christ, we were slaves of sin. Acceptance of Christ is the beginning. We must not forget sin's cruel mastery and must determine to stay obedient to God.

Verses 19-21

I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things *is* death.

The contrast of choices is glaring. If we are slaves to sin, our reward is uncleanness and iniquity which lead to more iniquity with death as our end. If we are slaves to God, our reward is holiness, and the end is everlasting life.

Verses 22 and 23

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Until Christ returns we have the constant struggle of reckoning the old man dead and walking in newness of life. Jesus told us to pray daily for the forgiveness of sins which implies that we still succumb to sin. Forgiveness is a subject of great importance if we want to be faithful in our walk with God.

## Godly Sorrow

The Apostle Paul had sternly reprov'd the Corinthians in his first epistle to them. Eleven specific matters were confronted and reprov'd. The letter was hard for the people to embrace, so he wrote again in II Corinthians to comfort, encourage, and acknowledge their godly response. Titus, having come from Corinth, reported to Paul that they had godly sorrow. This news comforted Paul greatly.

II Corinthians 7:7

And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

Godly sorrow, which is called mourning, should be the heartfelt response when we are confronted with our sins. Again, sin separates us from God and ruins our love relationship with Him. When human relationships are tarnished, we feel sorrow because the fellowship is ruined. When someone we love dies, we mourn because of the loss of sharing life together. In like manner, we should mourn the loss of fellowship with God due to our sin. Genuine godly sorrow will lead to repentance (which means to change).

Verses 9 and 10

Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

Sorrow of the world may include guilt, condemnation, and sin consciousness but no repentance, no change. Feeling bad and not changing only lead to death and not to God.

Verse 11

For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

The Corinthians had the proper response to Paul's reproof, that is they mourned and then changed. In them, we see the righteous reaction of a true, penitent heart. A close scrutiny of these words is warranted since they are the result of their godly sorrow.

**Carefulness** is an earnest effort and serious attention to what we are thinking, saying, and doing. When we walk in darkness, we become careless and do not consider what we are thinking, saying, and doing. We are unconcerned, indifferent, and thoughtless toward God and the things of God.

**Clearing** is a full acceptance of the responsibility of the sin and a strong desire to vindicate oneself for the wrong caused by it. This clearing includes making amends with

others whenever possible. Walking in darkness, we rationalize our sin and blame others, circumstances, or situations. Rather than admitting the error as our own, we shift the blame to others or dismiss it as not being that significant —"no big deal." We live with the sin and do not care enough to change.

**Indignation** is to become very upset at our own sinful living. It is a righteous anger directed at one's own sinful behavior. Walking in darkness, we become very passive and accepting of sin. Life without God becomes normal.

**Fear** is reverence, awe, and respect directed toward Almighty God. Also, we have a fearful concern for what God thinks. Walking in darkness, our thoughts of God diminish because our focus is on things of the world. Without God in mind, our attitude of reverence and worship dissipates because God is forgotten. We develop an irreverent attitude toward Him and no longer care what He thinks of us.

**Vehement Desire** is a craving or longing for God and the things of God. It is to have urgent, passionate hunger. Walking in darkness encourages hunger for and involvement in things of the world. Lust, selfishness, and worldly desires replace desire for God.

**Zeal** is to be hot, fervent, on fire for God. As we walk in darkness, life becomes humdrum and complacent. Time and life slip away with no urgency pertaining to godly living. We have no fire for godly living.

**Revenge** is to make right or just what was wronged while we were sinning. Walking in darkness, we lose interest and do not care that our evil has its way in hurting other people.

When we sin, it should bother us. If it does not bother us, we will continue in it like the Gentiles who walked in the vanity or depravity of their minds.

Ephesians 4:17-20

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

But ye have not so learned Christ;

From the records regarding the Corinthians, we know that followers of Christ can be deceived by sin and that repentance can bring us back into fellowship with our loving God. God described Himself to Moses in a way that we should never forget.

Exodus 34:6 and 7

And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*....

The willingness of God to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin is abundantly apparent throughout the Scriptures. Without His mercy, grace, longsuffering, and forgiveness,

mankind would have ceased to exist centuries ago. We must also acknowledge that His commandments are not to be ignored. He is God Almighty, the One Who judges the world. Only an ignorant fool would tempt God by trivializing the consequences of sin. That God makes provision for His forgiveness is not to be taken for granted or abused. His mercy and forgiveness are not for everyone but for those who fear Him.

Psalms 103:8-13

The LORD *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

He will not always chide: neither will he keep *his anger* for ever.

He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

For as the heaven is high above the earth, *so* great is his mercy toward them that **fear** him.

As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Like as a father pitieth *his* children, *so* the LORD pitieth them that **fear** him.

### **Forgiving Father**

Jesus Christ tells three parables in Luke 15 in response to the murmurings of the Pharisees and scribes who criticized him because he received sinners and ate with them (Luke 15:1 and 2). The third parable is known by most as the prodigal son, but could be better named "the forgiving father." Although the parable was spoken to reprove the critical and unthankful religious leaders, it also shows the willingness of God to forgive His wayward children. The mercy and grace of our Father depicted in

this parable warm our hearts and pull us back to Him when we sin.

The parable has three characters: the father and his two sons. The father represents God. The younger son represents the sinners with whom Jesus Christ ate (and because of whom he was criticized by the religious leaders). The elder son represents the Pharisees and scribes. The elder son disapproved of the father's forgiveness and loving acceptance of his prodigal brother. The elder son acted disparagingly (just as the religious leaders had) when the proper response would have been thankfulness and rejoicing with the father for his penitent brother.

The main point of the parable is realized not only in how the father dealt with the prodigal son, but more so in how he dealt with the elder son's negative reaction. In this study, however, we are going to focus primarily on the forgiving father and the wayward son.

The parables that Jesus Christ told were believable and possible to those who lived in the culture and time in which he did. If this story had been impossible, it would have been considered a fable, not a parable. The father's movable inheritance could be given to his children before he died. In the case that follows, the inheritances of the two sons would be divided so that the oldest son received two thirds, while the younger received one third of the amount the father had to give. Both sons received their inheritances at the same time.

Luke 15:11 and 12

And he said, A certain man had two sons:  
And the younger of them said to *his* father,  
Father, give me the portion of goods that  
falleth *to me*. And he divided unto them *his*  
living.

The younger son wanted his inheritance, and his father obliged him. Significantly, the sons' inheritances were referred to as the father's living. The father labored his lifetime to earn and accumulate the wealth which became his sons' inheritances. The sons did not earn or deserve the inheritances; they received them freely because of the loving generosity of their father.

The younger son took his father's hard-earned living, which was now his inheritance, and quickly wasted it on riotous living.

#### Verse 13

And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

Things are ruined much more quickly than they are put together. Trees take decades to grow and minutes to cut down. The father's lifetime wealth was quickly wasted on the son's selfish and foolish behavior. This son had little regard for his father's loving generosity.

When this son was home with his father, he was well cared for. Now, out on his own, away from home and his father, he began to be in want.

#### Verses 14 and 15

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

Things deteriorated to the point that the son was reduced to doing something no respectful Judean would ever consider — feeding swine. Swine were cursed animals according to Judean religion. They would never eat, care for, or even touch a swine. Only the "unclean" Gentile would associate with swine. To the Judean, a pig feeder was a pig himself, and pigs were cursed. In their culture this was the lowest an individual could go. Yet, this son went lower because he desired to eat the same food the swine ate, and no one would give him even that much.

Verse 16

And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

The son went from the love and safety of his father's home to hog country. The son thought he could make it on his own, only to realize utter failure and total humiliation. He went from the loving care of his father to a situation where no one cared enough to give him even pig food.

Finally this son woke up: "he came to himself."

Verses 17-19

And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

We see a progression in the son's deliverance: (a) coming to himself, (b) arising and going to his father, and (c) admitting he had sinned against his father. His deliverance took both awakening and action.

#### Verse 20

And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

The love of this father was overwhelming! He must have been waiting and watching for his son; for when the son was yet a great way off, the father ran to meet him. The father was not harsh, critical, or condemning; he was compassionate. Look at the mercy and love of this father.

#### Verses 21-24

And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it*; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

The son had prepared an apology which he planned to share with his father (verses 18 and 19). The father was so happy his son was finally home that he did not even allow him time to finish this apologetic speech. The father

wanted quickly to change the focus away from the separation to enjoying their fellowship together.

The ring on his hand gave the son authority, and the shoes (sandals) on his feet restored his fellowship in the family. No servant would ordinarily have the ring or the sandals, only sons. The son would have been happy to have been treated as the lowest servant in his father's house; but, instead, the father completely reinstated him to his position as his son. The loving father forgave all and wanted to hasten to reestablish their relationship. This son went from hog country to being merry again in his father's house.

This parable is applicable to our lives. God is the loving, forgiving Father. Many of us are like the prodigal son; some are like the complaining and unthankful elder son. But all of us tend to look at our lives from our own perspective, instead of from the Father's perspective.

In the parable, the father's desire to fellowship with his son is very evident. His desire exemplifies God's desire for all mankind. He wants all men to come into a loving relationship with Him. When we receive Christ, fellowship with God begins, but it must also be maintained by obedience to God's Word. God loves us and yearns to fellowship with us. Our Father is love, and we are children of His love. Oh, how we should praise Him and love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength!

Our lives can be crowded with many things which seem so very important that we neglect the main thing — loving the Father. All of the things of this world will fade away, but the love of God will not fail. Life presents us with many distractions because evil still exists. Although the old, sinful man died with Christ, its influences are still harassing us (Romans 7:20 and 21). Satan is the god of this world; therefore, evil is around us (II Corinthians 4:4). We yearn for the great and glorious day when Christ will return and

when evil can no longer hinder fellowship with our loving Father. In the meantime, we continually strive to maintain unity with Him.

### **Fellowship with God**

The father of the prodigal son could not force his son to stay home, nor would our heavenly Father force His children. If He were to force us to stay with Him, our love relationship would be ruined. He gave us free will so that we can choose to walk with Him. We have the freedom to decide to walk away. Obviously, our Father is not pleased by this choice, especially considering the price He paid so that we could have unity with Him.

If we choose to forsake our Father and try to live on our own, we, too, will end up in hog country. Fellowship is dependent on our behavior. According to God's Word, we have the responsibility to renew our minds and live godly lives. When we fail to do so, we break fellowship with Father and suffer sins' consequences. We have been given the freewill choice to live in light of our godly inheritance or to disregard it. Sometimes we may allow ourselves to be deceived into "wasting our substance with riotous living," only to find ourselves in a distant land living with the swine. Like the prodigal son, we must come to ourselves and realize the error of our ways. He had a realization of his pathetic situation, the memory of his father's home, and a deliberate plan of action.

I John gives insight regarding the restoration of broken fellowship.

I John 1:5 and 6

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

Sin can be very deceptive. We can be walking or living in darkness, while thinking and saying that we have fellowship with God. When this happens, we lie and do not the truth. To walk in fellowship with God, we must walk in the light.

Verse 7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

If we walk in darkness and say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.

Verse 8

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

The prodigal son came to the realization that he was "in darkness," out of fellowship with his father. Likewise, we must realize when we are in darkness, out of fellowship with God. If, while we are in sin, we think we are in the light, we are deceived and remain in darkness. To reestablish our fellowship with God, we must humbly admit our sin. We must confess (surrender to) the reality that we are in darkness, before God can bring us back to the light.

Verse 9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Remember the attitude of the forgiving father in the parable? His will, like the will of our Father, was to enjoy the presence of his son. He was waiting and watching and very willing to accept the son back into his ever-loving arms; so is our Father when we drift from Him. The forgiving father totally forgave his son's sin and completely reinstated him to the household. The son had to turn towards the father, but once he did, the father ran to the son, had compassion, fell on his neck, and kissed him. This is the example given of our Father.

He is more willing and faithful to forgive our sins, than we are to ask. Consider the magnitude of this verse again. We confess (admit we sin, surrender); He does all the rest. He forgives, and He cleanses us.

God knows we live in the midst of evil and at times will sin; thus He made provision for forgiveness. If when we sin, we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar.

#### Verse 10

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Notice how that the word "if" is used five times in verses 6-10. Our fellowship with God is conditional upon our walking in the light and, when we fail to do so, confessing our sin.

We are very honored, privileged, and blessed to have a loving relationship with God. When we walk in fellowship with Him, we have fullness of joy (I John 1:4) and pleasures for evermore.

Psalms 16:11

Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

God has been so very kind in allowing us to walk with Him and in making provision for us to regain oneness with Him when we sin. We would be absolutely foolish to sin deliberately just because we know He will forgive. We should not want to sin, but if we do sin, we have the comfort of knowing we have an advocate.

I John 2:1 and 2

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

When we keep His commandments, we walk with Him, and His love is perfected in us.

Verses 3-5

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

When we are in fellowship with God, we walk as Jesus Christ walked.

## Verse 6

He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

Jesus Christ knew how to walk with God faithfully because he never sinned. His choice to suppress his own will and be obedient to God's is the reason he walked with God perfectly.

## Philippians 2:5-8

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Because he chose to be obedient, God exalted him in a very great way.

## Verses 9-11

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth;

And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

As we obey God and walk according to His Word, we too can enjoy fellowship with Him, and, like Jesus, we will be exalted when God's Kingdom comes.





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SPIRITUAL  
MATTERS

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## ***Unity and Diversity***

I CORINTHIANS 12

**G**od has given the holy spirit to help us live a holy and godly life.

The most succinct and comprehensive teaching on spiritual matters is contained in I Corinthians 12 through 14.

I Corinthians 12:1

Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

"Now concerning" is the introduction of a new topic within this epistle which runs to the end of chapter 14.<sup>4</sup> "Spiritual" is translated from the Greek word *pneumatikos*, but the italicized word "gifts" has no corresponding Greek word. Words that are italicized in the King James Version of the Bible were added in translation to help the reader's comprehension. However, at times these words wrongly influence the meaning and mislead the reader. Such is the case with the word "gifts." *Pneumatikos* means spiritual matters or spiritual things as translated in Romans 15:27 and I Corinthians 9:11. The introductory statement of I Corinthians 12-14 is more correctly translated "now concerning spiritual matters" which includes spiritual gifts but also much more.

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<sup>4</sup> The words "now concerning" are used to introduce new topics in this epistle. See I Corinthians 7:1,25; 16:1.

God does not want us ignorant concerning spiritual matters, but He does acknowledge that man has the freewill choice to remain ignorant. The section ends in I Corinthians 14:38 by saying: "If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." If, after reading the spiritual matters being communicated, a man still chooses to be ignorant, God will honor his freewill decision however foolish and stubborn. Shamefully, we in the Church today have great ignorance regarding spiritual matters. Equally qualified researchers and teachers hold completely opposite viewpoints. Denominational differences are vast; and behavior in the Church, while giving the air of spirituality, is often unseemly and even embarrassing. Worst of all is that we are divided and contentious over these things.

Much of the confusion and contention is due to not reading that which is written with humility and meekness. Far too often, assumptions and guessing take the place of firm adherence to that which is written. Emotionalism and sensationalism are preferred to the meekness and discipline that the Scriptures demand.

If we are ever to understand these very important spiritual matters, we must stay within the boundaries God included in the Scriptures. Experience, personal opinion, and one's own knowledge must be surrendered and replaced with meekness to the Scriptures. God will teach us if we hunger after His truth.

The church at Corinth struggled with the same problems we face today. Their previous religious experience had wrongly influenced their Christian walk. Before Christ, they had been led to worship dumb idols.

## Verse 2

Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away  
unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

Most of us have been led to some religious belief. Regardless of the specific teaching, all stress the importance of staying loyal to their own doctrines and beliefs. Therefore, many find abandoning previous religious teaching to be extremely difficult, even if they clearly differ from God's Word. However, if we want to grow with God, we must have the courage to change when confronted with truth. The Corinthians were reminded how foolish their previous beliefs were; thus, they were helped to be humble and to remain open to the lessons communicated in this epistle.

When Paul first went to Corinth (recorded in Acts 18), he taught that Jesus was the Christ. There were some who blasphemed saying either Jesus was cursed or Paul was cursing Jesus when he spoke by the spirit.

## Verse 3

Wherefore I give you to understand, that no  
man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth  
Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say  
that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

When Jesus taught the disciples about the spirit, he had clearly refuted the nonsense later propounded at Corinth.

## John 16:13 and 14

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come,  
he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not  
speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall  
hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show  
you things to come.

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show *it* unto you.

If someone is speaking by holy spirit, he cannot curse Jesus, rather he glorifies him. If someone is claiming to speak by the spirit and is cursing Jesus, we know he is a counterfeit. The Living Bible offers an interesting translation of verse 3.

I Corinthians 12:3 (Living Bible)

But now you are meeting people who claim to speak messages from the Spirit of God. How can you know whether they are really inspired by God or whether they are fakes? Here is the test: no one speaking by the power of the Spirit of God can curse Jesus, and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," and really mean it, unless the Holy Spirit is helping him.

Speaking by the spirit can include revelation, teaching, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy. All speaking inspired by the spirit will glorify, not curse. Contrary to cursing, we have holy spirit which gives us the ability to say truly that Jesus is Lord.

Before we move further into our study, we should acknowledge the overall subject of I Corinthians. To understand correctly a chapter in any epistle, the context of the entire epistle must be held in mind.

Eleven major concerns are confronted, ten of which are behavioral and one doctrinal (chapter 15, the resurrection). Therefore, the overall scope deals with correct Christian behavior in the Church.

The first issue, met head-on and addressed continually throughout the epistle, is internal division and contention.

## I Corinthians 1:10-12

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

The nature of man is such that strife and contention are common, and unity is rare. To find continual harmony in families, friendships at school or work is very unusual. The Church does not do much better even though God designed the spiritual unity, and Christ died for it.

The Corinthian believers, like many today, behaved as babies. They quarreled as carnal children do. Immature Christians are controlled by their own desires and emotions, while mature believers choose to obey God's desires.

## I Corinthians 3:1-4

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ.

I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able.

For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I *am* of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

An indication of human maturity is a growing understanding of and appreciation for one's own body. In like manner, mature Christians are also to have a growing understanding of the Church, which is the Body of Christ.

God gives emphasis to the Church as the one Body in three epistles. In each the structure is the same, and three important truths are stressed: unity, diversity, and loving maturity.

	<b>Unity</b>	<b>Diversity</b>	<b>Loving Maturity</b>
Romans	12:1-5	12:6-8	12:9-21
I Corinthians	12:1-13	12:14-31	13:1-13
Ephesians	4:1-6	4:7-12	4:13-16

The main spiritual matter covered in I Corinthians 12 through 14 follows along the scope of the entire epistle — walking harmoniously and lovingly within the one Body of Christ.

I Corinthians 12:4-6

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

These three verses show us that believers have differences, but we are to magnify the sameness (same

spirit, same Lord, same God). Diversity is neither a threat to us, nor is it to be an impetus for envy. None of us have identical abilities, but we all have the same spirit, Lord, and God.

The word "gifts" in verse 4 is translated from the Greek word *charismata*. The root word is *charis* in Greek, "grace" in English. *Charismata* means gracious gifts or gifts by God's grace and benevolence. It is translated "free gift" in Romans 5:15 and 16.

Every Christian has been given the gift of holy spirit, and each has been given the gift of grace to serve in the Church. We all have a God-given ability to do certain things well to serve in the Body.

I Peter 4:10 and 11

As every man hath received the gift [*charismata*], *even so* minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Through the grace of God, we all have a gift to serve in the Body. Each of us is unique with a God-given ability to serve as only we can. No one needs to envy another because we all have a special free gift of service to render. True service is going to bring glory to God and not to the individual himself. We need to get busy serving!

Romans 12:4-8 (Revised Standard Version)

For as in one body we have many members,  
and all the members do not have the same  
function,  
so we, though many, are one body in Christ,  
and individually members one of another.  
Having gifts that differ according to the grace  
given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in  
proportion to our faith;  
if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in  
his teaching;  
he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who  
contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid,  
with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with  
cheerfulness.

Looking back at I Corinthians 12:4, we note: "now there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit." We see that there are great diversities of gifts in the Body of Christ, but all have the very same spirit. We are to appreciate the diversity and yet revel in the sameness, the spirit.

The word "differences" in verse 5 is from the identical Greek word *diairesis* translated diversities in verses 4 and 6. Therefore "differences" and "diversities" have the same meaning.

I Corinthians 12:5

And there are differences [diversities] of  
administrations, but the same Lord.

"Administrations" is from the Greek word *diakonia* better translated as ministry or service as it is most every place else it is used. Many are the ways of helping, supporting, doing, but all who serve have exactly the same Lord. No competition, envy, strife, etc. are appropriate. We should

just be thankful for everyone's service and realize that the Lord is the head of the Body, not us.

Verse 6

And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

The word "operations" is translated from the Greek word *energemata* which means workings. It describes the ways in which each service is done and refers to the effects produced as each believer fulfills his ministry. Therefore there are many different works produced. Yet, again one element of unity should be held in mind — the same God works all in all. No one could produce anything of value without God at work within him.

Considering these three verses, we can conclude: no one is above or below another, no one is to be exalted or subdued, no one is of greater or lesser value. All Christians have received the same spirit as a gift from God. All have the same Lord Jesus Christ and the same God Who is the Father of all and Who works all in all. Even though we have diversities of gifts, ministries, and respective ways of service, no reason for any division or separation exists. In Corinth some with certain ministries had either exalted themselves or had been exalted by others, and the result was confusion and division.

Our Lord taught in Luke 24:49 that this spirit would endue or transfuse us with power from on high and thus give us supernatural abilities. The spirit enables us to serve in the Church as God wants. As we utilize our grace-given abilities to serve, God produces the results which will always be for profit to the individual as well as the Church.

Verse 7

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

The word, "but" most often means in contrast. However in verse 7 the word "but" is the Greek word *de* which can also be translated and, thus, or now. Since God is the One working within all, the verse would be more properly translated, "Thus the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

When we endeavor to function in the Church using our own human ability, there will be no godly profit. However, as we walk by the spirit, the manifestation or outward showing of the spirit will be for profit, godly profit. The following verses mention nine ways holy spirit is manifested.

#### Verses 8-10

For to one is given by the **Spirit** the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the **same Spirit**;

To another faith by the **same Spirit**; to another the gifts of healing by the **same Spirit**;

To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

This is not to be taken as an all-inclusive list, rather as examples to illustrate a point. The point is the emphasis placed on the same spirit. In verse 10 "same spirit" is to be supplied in our thinking by the figure of speech ellipsis. Verse 11 reiterates this same concept with even more emphasis — "selfsame spirit."

## Verse 11

But all these worketh that one and the **selfsame Spirit**, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Clearly the point is that regardless of how the spirit is manifested forth in our lives, we all have the same spirit. Once again, so we have no misunderstanding:

- 12:4 the same spirit
- 12:7 the spirit is given to every man
- 12:8 same spirit
- 12:9 same spirit, same spirit
- 12:11 selfsame spirit
- 12:13 one spirit, one spirit

Many teachers have taken the liberty to make countless inferences from this section of Scripture. One of the most common is that God gives certain manifestations (often miscalled gifts) to certain people only. They teach: this one can speak in tongues, while that one can heal, and some very gifted can operate three or four, while the rest of us cannot manifest anything. The context of I Corinthians, and especially of chapter 12, refutes this erroneous thinking for it cultivates envy, strife, and division, not godly profit. The effects produced by such teaching are the opposite of the unity which is being strongly emphasized.

The overall teaching regarding the power of the holy spirit communicated in the Gospels, the book of Acts, and the seven Church Epistles is that we are equally equipped to manifest everything listed in verses 8-10. For example, review the following: word of wisdom (Ephesians 1:8; James 1:5); word of knowledge (Ephesians 1:17-19); faith

(Romans 12:3; II Peter 1:1); gifts of healing, working of miracles, discerning of spirits (Mark 16:17 and 18); prophecy, kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues (I Corinthians 14).

The main point is restated in verse 11. The one gift of holy spirit is the power source for all these manifestations.

I Corinthians 12:11

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

The essential idea of I Corinthians 12:11 is that the same spirit is the origin of all the manifestations. Again, oneness is being stressed which eliminates any cause for envy or division. The human body has many parts which together make one body, likewise the Body of Christ. We have many members but only one Body.

Verse 12

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ.

Regardless of our backgrounds before Christ, we all now have the same spirit. God makes each of us to be equal members of the Body and vitally important to Him and His Church.

Verse 13

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Unity is God's design for the Church. He made: one body, one spirit, one Hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. And, of course, He is one God.

Ephesians 4:3-6

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

*There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;  
One Lord, one faith, one baptism,  
One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

The human body provides an excellent illustration of the relationship and dependency we have on each other.

I Corinthians 12:14-17

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling?

We are very dependent on the individual functioning of the foot, ear, eye, and nose. These parts in a human body do not envy and fight each other, but rather they work harmoniously together. God has made the spiritual Body to function in like manner as it pleased Him.

Verse 18

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

We need each other in order to have a complete whole.

Verses 19-25

And if they were all one member, where *were* the body?

But now *are they* many members, yet but one body.

And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble [weak, frail], are necessary:

And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely [unbecoming, unsuitable] *parts* have more abundant comeliness.

For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked:

That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.

The Body of Christ is one. For it to function harmoniously requires our focusing on oneness, not on diversity. Harmony does not require everyone to believe just as everyone else does. There is a difference between having opposing viewpoints and being divisive. A group of

people will not completely agree on every issue, but they can work together harmoniously if they agree on the oneness that God created. We should be compassionate and understanding of each other.

#### Verse 26

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

Many are the ways of serving, and all are needed. We need each other.

#### Verses 27-30

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Are all apostles? *are* all prophets? *are* all teachers? *are* all workers of miracles?

Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

Due to our individual personalities, our God-given abilities to serve, our personal desires, and God's working in each of us individually, we all function differently. This diversity is why we need each other. Some gravitate toward teaching, some to miracles, while others serve best with gifts of healings, helps, and governments. No one does all. Everyone in the Body of Christ has a function, and all of us are dependent on each other. No one can do exactly what you can do!

This list of grace-given services is not all inclusive, nor is it referring to whether we have the ability to do all these things. The point is that because of diversity we should have unity and certainly not envy, strife, and contention. Each of us should desire to use the best grace gifts to serve as the need requires.

Verse 31

But covet [desire] earnestly the best gifts:  
and yet show I unto you a more excellent  
way.

God shifts our thinking to a higher level with verse 31. Be zealous to serve, but be more zealous to love. The Corinthians were very zealous to operate spiritual matters and not as concerned with the most important matter of all. Love is the more excellent way!





## ***More Excellent Way***

I CORINTHIANS 13

**J**esus brought great insight to that which is most important to God. When asked what was the great commandment in the Law, he said that the first and great commandment was to love God with all the heart, soul, and mind. The second commandment, he declared, was to love your neighbor as yourself. Adding great emphasis, he declared that upon these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets. The Law and prophets are everything included in the entire Hebrew scriptures which is called the Old Testament.

The lawyer asked him the all-important question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Indeed, this was a question of vital interest to all. The answer, again, was love.

Luke 10:27 and 28

...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

Our Lord clearly understood God's top priority and taught his followers accordingly.

Matthew 5:43 and 44

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine 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;

Under the heading of spiritual matters which started in I Corinthians 12:1, God wants us to be knowledgeable of love's "more excellent way" as is taught in I Corinthians 13. The first three verses of chapter 13 have a very pointed meaning with a powerful impact. The word "charity" is the Greek word *agape* which in this context refers to the love of God that a believer directs towards others.<sup>5</sup> This love is based upon obedience to the Scriptures. It should not be confused with human love which is conditioned upon the relationship held with others.

I Corinthians 13:1

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

As our study continues into chapter 14, we see clearly that God wants all to speak in tongues. However, if we speak in tongues without love, we are like a sounding gong or a crashing cymbal — just noise. The point is not to cast a disparaging view on tongues, but to magnify dynamically the importance of utilizing this manifestation with God's love.

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<sup>5</sup> *Agape* is translated as love 86 times and as charity 27 times in the Greek scriptures.

When we operate prophecy in the Church, the believers listening will receive edification, exhortation, and comfort. With wisdom, knowledge, and faith, we can do mighty works which may bring great benefit to members of the Church. However, if we do these things without God's love, we will receive no personal benefit.

Verse 2

And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity [love], I am nothing.

If without love I am nothing, then with love I am something. Everybody has some ability in something and many limitations in many things. But with a knowledge of God's Word in application, we can all be successful at that which God considers to be most important — love.

Some look at the diversity of functions like apostles, prophets, pastors, helps, governments, etc. and wonder what their own function in the Body may be. This wondering may lead to envy and inactivity. The better way is to get busy loving. As we walk lovingly, our function in the Body will be evident. No one can love just like you because no one is just like you.

God wants us to be generous in our giving to the needy and diligent in our service. Again, those who are recipients of our giving and service will enjoy the benefit of our efforts, but without love we ourselves will not profit.

Verse 3

And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity [love], it profiteth me nothing.

These first three verses emphatically communicate the importance of doing all with the love of God. "I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal;" "I am nothing;" "it profiteth me nothing" are three powerful statements to stress the importance that God places on love. God desires for His children to do all these things but not outside of love. Love is that which God wants first and foremost from us.

Remaining in the context of spiritual matters, chapter 13 helps us to maintain the right perspective as to that which God deems to be most important. The more excellent way is always love's way.

*Agape* is not an emotion or a feeling; rather it is a deliberate choice to obey God's Word above our own thoughts, feelings, emotions, or desires. God Himself is the standard of this love because, according to I John 4:8 and 16, "God is love." *Agape* therefore is supernatural love. It is doing that which is not natural to do. The following verses succinctly state that which love is and is not.

I Corinthians 13:4-8

Charity [love] suffereth long, *and* is kind;  
charity [love] envieth not; charity [love]  
vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,  
Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not  
her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no  
evil;  
Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the  
truth;

Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth  
all things, endureth all things.  
Charity [love] never faileth....

All the behavior listed to describe what love is "not" comes to us naturally without any disciplined effort. We are born with the natural propensity to envy, vaunt ourselves, be puffed up, behave unseemly, seek our own, be easily provoked, think evil, and rejoice in iniquity. This behavior is common to all mankind and begins with our first action as babies. Have you ever watched two infants playing in the same room? Both will have their own toys, but within minutes envy will provoke one to steal the other's toy, and fighting will erupt. Then come the horrendous, self-seeking screams and crying. No one teaches babies to behave in this manner. They come by it naturally. It is human nature to be unloving.

To love God's way is not natural. To suffer long, be kind, rejoice in truth, bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things are SUPERNATURAL BEHAVIOR.

This section provides a comparison of that which love is and is not and demonstrates the enormous contrast of God's loving ways to man's selfish nature. As we examine these verses, hold in mind that God is love.

### **Love is Longsuffering**

In Noah's time, the wickedness of man was so great that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). God was grieved in His heart, but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Because of Noah, God patiently endured everyone else until the ark was prepared. God's patient endurance is called longsuffering.

I Peter 3:20

Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

When God revealed His proper name, YAHWEH, to Moses, part of His description of Himself was that He was longsuffering.

Exodus 34:6

And the LORD [YAHWEH] passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD [YAHWEH], The LORD [YAHWEH] God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

Longsuffering, or suffering long, is having forbearance and self-restraint, before proceeding to action. It is to be long on patience with others even if their actions are evil.

God's longsuffering for all of mankind from the beginning is mind-boggling and heart-warming. He is so indescribably good! When we consider the rebellious evil actions of humanity throughout the ages, it is unimaginable that God has allowed it to continue. However, He has done so because of His longsuffering.

II Peter 3:9 and 10

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night....

Longsuffering is part of His great love, and God wants His children to behave as He does. He has given us the ability to have the same longsuffering towards others. As we are mindful of His longsuffering for us, then we, too, can be longsuffering with others. Much fighting, anger, and division in the Church can be eliminated when we manifest longsuffering for one another.

Ephesians 4:1-3

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,  
With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;  
Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

All of us at times have difficulty in our walks with God. During these times, to be with us is not always pleasant. When others go through the same things, longsuffering helps us to endure those unpleasant times.

I Thessalonians 5:14 and 15

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient [longsuffering] toward all *men*.

See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*.

God's Kingdom is coming. Jesus the Christ is coming back to rule here on earth. Today is an evil day with many trials and tribulations, but we can be longsuffering because his coming is drawing near.

James 5:7-9

Be patient [longsuffering] therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience [longsuffering] for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

Be ye also patient [longsuffering]; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

### **Love is Kind**

When God brought the children of Israel to the border of the promised land, they refused to obey Him and go into the land. Nehemiah reflected back on God's attitude towards this hardened, rebellious people.

Nehemiah 9:17

And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou *art* a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.

That God did not utterly forsake them was indeed great kindness. Once again, God is our model to follow regarding this aspect of love. His kindness is that which leads men to repentance, to changing.

Romans 2:4

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

The Greek word translated "kindness" is also translated "goodness" four times and "gentleness" once. All these words aid our understanding as they are synonyms expressing a generous, sympathetic, considerate attitude towards others which is transposed into actions. God manifested forth His kindness to us when we were hateful and totally undeserving of it.

Titus 3:3-5

For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another.

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Kindness is contrasted with the hardhearted attitudes of bitterness, wrath, anger, etc.

Ephesians 4:31 and 32

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Rather than being harsh, rough, severe, or violent, kindness is being tender with people. As a file bears down on its object, wearing and tearing until it eventually grinds down the surface, so is the harshness of this world on the hearts of humanity. Kindness is the opposite of harshness. So rarely is this quality manifested that when someone is truly kind, it shines out just as a halogen light in darkness.

No man of himself has this quality of life. Kindness comes from God and is manifested in the life of one who is walking by the spirit.

God's extraordinary kindness is evidenced all around us in that we have life, food, air, water, etc. His promises about the return of our Lord Jesus Christ and eternal life are an incomprehensible kindness, yet His Word declares that they will come to pass.

Ephesians 2:7

That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

In view of His kindness, how could we be anything but kind to all with whom we come in contact? Our kindness to others is to be unconditional. We are kind not because people deserve it, but because God commands it.

Luke 6:35 and 36

But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and *to* the evil.

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

### **Love Envies Not**

The ugliness of envy stands out clearly in contrast to longsuffering and kindness. Envy is a painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage. Envy was the reason the brothers of Joseph plotted to murder him and eventually sold him into slavery. It was also the motive of those who crucified our Lord Jesus Christ.

Since everyone in the Church is blessed with God's gracious gifts, there should never be reason for envy. We have all been blessed with "all spiritual blessings!" Yet many Christians and whole churches are choked with the unloving, sinful emotion of envy. The Corinthian Church is an example. Chapters 1 and 3 show us that they were envious over which man to follow. Chapters 12-14 communicate their extreme envy over spiritual matters. We too today, as did the Corinthians, often become overwhelmed with envy which also leads to strife and contention. In place of edifying each other and reconciling the unsaved, we waste our lives with the criticism, judgment, and fighting spawned from envy. **LOVE ENVIES NOT!**

Envy should not be confused with jealousy. Jealousy is an intolerance to the unfaithfulness of a loved one. Jealousy can have a positive effect in safeguarding a

relationship such as marriage. However, jealousy can grow out of bounds and become the "green-eyed monster."

God is called a jealous God because He desires our undivided, loyal love. He is not envious because no one enjoys an advantage which He would desire.

### **Love Vaunts Not Itself; Love Is Not Puffed up**

Vaunting is bragging or boasting. The braggarts at Corinth were on their soapboxes regarding which man they followed and how his ministry was more significant than another's. Apparently there was also boasting about certain ones' functions in the Body and their ability to manifest forth spiritual power. All such behavior is unloving, self-centered, and carnal.

"Puffed up" is to be inflated with pride or conceit. When we start thinking of ourselves as better than another person, we are puffed up. God made all His children to be equally significant. We are all of great worth because of God's gracious, loving gifts.

I Corinthians 4:6 and 7

And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and *to* Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think *of men* above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who maketh thee to differ *from another?* and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it?*

Knowledge can cause people to get puffed up. However, when knowledge is used properly, love and edification result.

I Corinthians 8:1

Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

### **Love Is Not Unseemly or Self-Seeking**

A person walking with God's love will not behave in an unseemly manner. Ugly, indecent, unbecoming behavior was common in Corinth as it is today. Their prideful acceptance of one who was having a sexual affair with his father's wife was unseemly behavior (I Corinthians 5). Their selfish, lustful eating and drinking while participating in the Lord's supper were unbecoming (I Corinthians 11). In the context of spiritual matters (12-14), their zeal provoked much inappropriate behavior in the fellowship meeting. Some were speaking in tongues out loud without interpretation; far too many were interpreting and prophesying; they interrupted those prophesying to give their opinions. When we study chapter 14, we will see much unseemly behavior. All things are to be done decently and in order with the aim of edifying everyone present.

Love does not seek her own.

Philippians 2:2 and 3

Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.

Let nothing *be done* through strife [a desire to put oneself forward] or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Self-centeredness, selfishness, and striving for self-gain may be natural but are contrary to walking love's way.

### **Love Is Not Provoked**

The normal course of action if someone insults us, is we insult him. If someone curses at us, we curse at him. If someone yells at us, we yell at him. When this is our response, we are not walking in love because we allow ourselves to be provoked. In that Satan is the god of this age (II Corinthians 4:4), we are surrounded with evil. The self-centered behavior we discussed regarding children does not go away when we become adults. We may develop skills to mask our sinful nature, unlike children, but nonetheless it still remains and influences our behavior. For those who do not accept Christ and live according to the scriptures, ungodly behavior is natural. Since we are constantly confronted with naturally minded people, we will often be provoked.

Jesus taught regarding this subject in the Sermon on the Mount.

#### **Matthew 5:38 and 39**

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

We must accept full responsibility for our own behavior. Regardless of the evil that others may direct our way, we must learn not to respond in an ungodly fashion. If we

resist evil, we will be pulled into the evil. Instead of resisting, we are to love. To live love is a superior way of living, far above the evil with which most are overcome. We cannot determine the behavior of others, but we can always determine our own behavior. We must make the deliberate choice to obey God and live lovingly.

### **Love Does Not Think Evil**

#### **Love rejoices not in iniquity; Love rejoices in truth**

Love does not think evil. Since we live in an evil world, not thinking evil is challenging. Much evil thinking is the result of our judgmental opinions of others. If our thinking is focused on God and His Word, we will have little time for evil thinking.

God is never glad about injustice but rejoices when truth wins out. As we walk lovingly and follow God, we too will rejoice in truth and abhor evil.

Romans 12:9

*Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

We cannot eliminate the evil in the world, but we can determine how it affects our behavior. Evil is a temptation for us to respond in kind. As we walk by the spirit, love will win out, and God will bless us.

I Peter 3:8-12

Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, *be pitiful, be courteous*:

Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

Let him eschew [avoid habitually] evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil.

### **Love Always**

When we walk in love, we always forbear, always believe, always hope, and always endure in all things.

I Corinthians 13:7

Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

The words "all things" can be translated always. The New International Version provides a translation which has more clarity than the King James Version: "It always protects, always trust, always hopes, always perseveres."

"Beareth" means to cover over in silence. Rather than drawing undue attention to the faults of others, love urges silence.

I Peter 4:8

And above all things have fervent charity [love] among yourselves: for charity [love] shall cover the multitude of sins.

When we are walking with God's love, we believe and hope in those things His Word teaches. Love gives us the strength to endure regardless of the circumstances we face. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave us the sterling example of enduring.

Hebrews 12:2 and 3

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Living love's way does not come naturally to us. It can only be possible if God helps us to set aside our own desires and instincts so we can give love while expecting nothing in return.

God's supernatural, pure love will live on throughout eternity. The God-given spiritual abilities with which we are now blessed will no longer be needed when Christ returns for then we will be perfect.

I Corinthians 13:8-10

Charity [love] never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

The spiritual abilities we now have are like children's toys compared to that which will be ours when Christ returns. All that we can know is limited and dim compared to the understanding we will gain then.

Verses 11 and 12

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

Faith is to be man's response to God's Word. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Faith is our contact point with God. Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

Hope is something not yet seen, but it is a confident assurance that it will be evident in the future. Our ultimate Hope begins with the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. This Hope is the anchor of our souls and the polestar by which we guide our lives. Faith, hope, and love are the three most significant realities in life. I would never dare to say this one is greater than that one, but God did.

Verse 13

And now abideth faith, hope, charity [love], these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity [love].

THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE!



## ***Edification***

I CORINTHIANS 14

**S**piritual matters continue to be the overall subject of this chapter with a special focus on how speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy are to be used in the Church. For the Corinthians, as well as the Church today, that which was written is confronting and reproof because these manifestations were and are so often used wrongly. The specific concern is how these three are to be utilized when the Church is gathered for a meeting.

The impression given of the meetings at Corinth is one of zealous, self-centered people causing disorder and confusion. Many were speaking in tongues aloud without interpreting. Over-zealousness prompted far too many to interpret and prophesy. One person spoke in tongues, and another person interpreted. Those prophesying interrupted each other. Wives were showing disrespect to their husbands. This does not sound like a service aimed at worshipping God and at edifying the Church! God addresses all these matters and empathically stresses the importance of everything in the fellowship being done for the edification of the whole as well as decently and in order. He does not discourage zeal for spiritual matters but does provide boundaries of love to ensure that everyone is edified.

Chapter 13 forcefully underscores the importance of doing all with the love of God, and 14:1 continues the same.



I Corinthians 14:1

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual [*pneumatikos* - spiritual matters] ~~gifts~~ [omit italicized word], but rather that ye may prophesy.

The word "rather" is *mallon* in Greek and can be translated more, as it often is. The phrase, "but more that ye may prophesy," begins a dialogue comparing speaking in tongues with prophecy and showing that prophecy is proper in a church meeting. Speaking in tongues is to be done in private unless interpreted.

Remember that italicized words were added in translation.

Verse 2

For he that speaketh in an ~~unknown~~ tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth *him*; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

When we speak in tongues, God provides the utterance which is directed to Him, not men. The person who speaks cannot understand that which he is speaking nor do those who may hear him; therefore, it is a mystery.

The first time anyone spoke in tongues was at the Feast of Pentecost ten days after the ascension of Jesus Christ. This special event is recorded in the second chapter of Acts. Two distinctive miracles marked this original outpouring of the holy spirit. Cloven tongues like as of fire sat upon each of the apostles, and the tongues they spoke were understood by those who heard them. Speaking in tongues was repeated often in the book of Acts, but neither of these miracles was mentioned again. A major subject of I Corinthians 14 is that uninterpreted tongues is inappropriate in the assembly of the Church because no

one can understand. Hence we may conclude that what took place on Pentecost was indeed a unique, one-time situation and not precedent setting.

When we prophesy, God provides the utterance which is directed to the Church, not Him.

Verses 3 and 4

But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men  
to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.  
He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue  
edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth  
edifieth the church.

Speaking in tongues edifies us for a number of reasons. It is proof in the senses' realm of the internal presence of holy spirit. It is communication with God. Later in the chapter, we will see that it is prayer and giving thanks well. Every time we speak in tongues, we are reminded that Christ is within and that God is present with us. These are some of the ways in which tongues edify or build us up.

When we prophesy, the words that God inspires will be a message for the Church which is for edification, exhortation, and comfort. Again, speaking in tongues edifies the individual, while prophecy's design is to edify the Church. Therefore, prophecy is more appropriate in the Church.

The Word of God is clear and emphatic in stating that God wants us to speak in tongues.

Verse 5

I would that ye all spoke with tongues....

The book of Acts gives testimony of God's will for all to speak in tongues. The first time in history when people were filled with the gift of holy spirit, **THEY SPOKE IN TONGUES.**

Acts 2:4

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,  
and began to speak with other tongues, as  
the Spirit gave them utterance.

This was the first time but absolutely not the last. The original outpouring given on Pentecost set a precedent for that which God wants every time someone believes. When Peter held forth the message of salvation to Cornelius' household, they received holy spirit and immediately spoke in tongues. The undeniable proof that they had received holy spirit was this manifestation of speaking in tongues.

Acts 10:44-46

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God....

When Paul arrived at Ephesus, he asked the disciples if they had manifested holy spirit. They told him that they had known only John's baptism. He then told them about Christ in whose name they were baptized. They received the holy spirit and spoke in tongues.

Acts 19:5 and 6

When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

Speaking in tongues was so common in the first century that when someone did not manifest tongues, it stood out as odd. In Acts chapter 8, Philip led the Samaritans to Christ, but they did not immediately speak in tongues. Peter and John came all the way from Jerusalem because of this unusual occurrence. When they arrived, they prayed for the Samaritans that they might receive holy spirit into manifestation. Then they, too, spoke in tongues.

Unequivocally God wants all to speak in tongues, but the proper venue is in our private lives. Speaking in tongues is not to be spoken out loud in the church meeting. If we want to speak in tongues in the church, we must interpret because tongues are not understood. The more proper manifestation to be used in the church meeting is prophecy because it is in the language of those present and, therefore, will be edifying. The most important concern for our behavior in the church is to edify the others present. How can one be edified by a language not understood?

I Corinthians 14:5

I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater *is* he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

The following verses stress that we are not to speak in tongues out loud in the church. There are many ways of speaking in the church which will edify God's people; however, speaking in tongues is not one of them.

Verse 6

Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by

knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

Revelation is information that God imparts unto us via His spirit. When we speak by revelation, people will be edified. The knowledge we have of the Scriptures when shared with another will edify. Verse 3 tells us that prophecy edifies. "Doctrine" is the Greek word *didache* meaning teaching. Whenever someone teaches the Scriptures, those with meek ears will be built up. Revelation, knowledge, prophecy, and teaching are all understood by the hearers, whereas tongues are not understood. Therefore the former ones edify the Church, and the latter does not. Again, God elaborates with the next verse.

Verse 7

And even things without life giving sound,  
whether pipe or harp, except they give a  
distinction in the sounds, how shall it be  
known what is piped or harped?

When our children first started playing instruments in grade school, the orchestra concerts were quite an experience. The sound that comes forth from a group of young, aspiring musicians is one that only proud parents with abundantly biased hearing can enjoy. Any adults, other than parents and grandparents, would not be eager to endure this cultural event. As the years pass, the children develop their individual skills, and, therefore, collectively the harmony improves. In high school, the orchestra has progressed so much so that the symphonic sound itself in addition to parental loyalty is that which makes the concerts very enjoyable. God bless music teachers!

Musical instruments that are not played correctly produce unclear noise, in like manner tongues because they are not understood. Speaking in tongues is speaking the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11); it will magnify God (Acts 10:46) and as such is perfect. However, the proper format is in private — just you and God. In the church we must speak words that are distinctly understandable so that people are edified.

A trumpet is an instrument which has been used by the military for centuries. Soldiers are trained to respond to the different sounds. With one sound, the soldiers know it is time to wake up; another, lights out; another, time to eat; another, attack; another, retreat. What would it be like if the trumpet player was lousy and not making a clear distinction in sounds? "Should we get up or attack?" "Is it time for bed or retreat?" In like manner, tongues have the same effect because they are not understood.

Verses 8 and 9

For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound,  
who shall prepare himself to the battle?

So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue  
words easy to be understood, how shall it be  
known what is spoken? for ye shall speak  
into the air.

Every language has a significance to it that is made known by the different sounds spoken. However, if the listener does not understand the language spoken, it is foreign or strange and has no impact. Tongues also have a significance to them, but they are not for men to understand, but rather God.

Verses 10 and 11

There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them *is* without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh *shall be* a barbarian unto me.

All these illustrations are given so we clearly understand that speaking in tongues out loud in the church without interpretation is wrong because it does not edify the Body. Indeed God wants us to be zealous of spiritual matters, but He also wants us to use the manifestations within the boundaries of love. Edifying must remain our top priority with all that we do in the church. Edification is a recurring principle of truth throughout this chapter.

Verse 12

Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

Speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy are all manifestations of the same spirit. Everyone who has God's gift of holy spirit has the ability to operate these as well as word of wisdom, word of knowledge, gifts of healings, discerning of spirits, etc. God tells us if we want to speak in tongues in the church, then we need to use the ability we have been given to interpret. If one can speak in tongues, he can interpret also.

Verse 13

Wherefore let him that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue pray that he may interpret.

The preferred manifestation at church gatherings is obviously prophecy, then interpretation of tongues. Also it

is clear that uninterpreted tongues are not proper in public meetings. However, tongues have some very significant profit, such as praying.

Verse 14

For if I pray in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

We have the choice to pray with the spirit by speaking in tongues or to pray with our understanding. We can sing with the spirit, or we can sing with our understanding. The choice is ours. If we choose to pray or sing in tongues, we must do it in private.

Verse 15

What is it then? **I will** pray with the spirit, and **I will** pray with the understanding also: **I will** sing with the spirit, and **I will** sing with the understanding also.

"I will" is repeated four times in verse 15. We decide, not God or the spirit. The spirit does not control us (as some say). All the manifestations are utilized as the man wills. Remember I Corinthians 12:11: "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

Speaking in tongues can also be utilized to praise God by giving Him thanks. The goodness of God to man is unfathomable. His grace, mercy, and kindness are unspeakable. If with every breath we utter thanks to Him, our words would still fall so very short of that which He deserves. So many of the psalms were written to praise God. Consider the last Psalm.

Psalm 150

Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.

Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.

Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.

Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

How the psalmists would have been blessed to have the God-given ability to praise God with speaking in tongues! With our limited vocabulary, we are hindered from properly articulating thanks and praise; however, God has assisted us in that speaking in tongues is giving thanks well.

I Corinthians 14:16 and 17

Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

Our speaking in tongues does indeed give thanks well, but the other members of the Church are not edified because they do not understand.

Paul the apostle spoke in tongues more than the entire Corinthian Church but never aloud in public meetings. He

knew it was prayer or praise, and therefore he spoke diligently — all the time.

Verses 18 and 19

I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that *by my voice* I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an *unknown* tongue.

This comment is not given to degrade tongues but to elevate the importance of edifying the Church with words which are understood. After all this, God plainly tells us to grow up.

Verse 20

Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

This is a pointed statement when we remember that the Corinthians very much cherished wisdom and understanding. Some even accused Paul of lacking these in his preaching. They were aged in malice and children in understanding. These "wise" ones thought that speaking in tongues was of great significance in the church; whereas Paul refuted human wisdom and preferred the "foolishness" of preaching the Gospel with five words in his understanding rather than with 10,000 words in tongues.

The Corinthians apparently assumed that speaking in tongues in the church was a positive spiritual sign. Today, many churches encourage people to speak in tongues aloud "as the spirit moves them." They think that such behavior is a sign of great spirituality. Again, those doing

this are not moved by the spirit but by their own thinking and emotion which are based on experiences.

The assumption that tongues is to be used as a positive sign is the opposite of that which the Scriptures teach.

#### Verses 21 and 22

In the law it is written, With *men of* other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying *serveth* not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

Tongues are a sign to unbelievers regarding their unbelief. The quotation in the Law is from Isaiah 28 in which another or foreign tongue played an important role. Israel had rejected all the teaching that God gave them by His prophets in understandable language. Their consistent rejection of God's Word spoken to them in their own language resulted in God's judgment upon them. The Assyrians conquered Israel and spoke to them a foreign and not understood language which God said was a sign of their unbelief.

With Israel, the "other tongues" (the Assyrian language) still did not motivate them to believe. They refused to believe, even though God told them that which would happen beforehand. So the "other tongues" was a sign of their unbelief. In like manner, speaking in tongues is a sign to those who do not believe.

Signs have different functions — sometimes to help people believe, other times to signify unbelief. Often a sign serves as an expression of God's attitude and indicates His disapproval or pleasure. They are not always intended to

get people to change. Sometimes, as is true here, they are a sign against people.

Part of the wrong logic for tongues' being spoken aloud is to get the attention of the unsaved so that they will become saved. However, Jesus taught that our love one for another shows the unbelievers that we are his disciples. Also, we are clearly and often instructed that preaching the Word of God is how to lead the unsaved to repentance. The ministry of reconciliation is carried out with the word of reconciliation, not with speaking in tongues. The unsaved will think that the believers are mad or insane when they hear speaking in tongues, especially so if all do it simultaneously.

#### Verse 23

If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those that are* unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

The divine intent for tongues was not to have unbelievers think disparagingly of believers. Hence we are given the exhortation to cease thinking like children and stop the public use of tongues since it will drive the unsaved away rather than lead them to God.

The case has been stated over and over again: uninterpreted tongues when believers are gathered is a completely wrong application of this wonderful manifestation. However, we have been taught just as emphatically that prophecy is to be used.

Verses 24 and 25

But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or *one* unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on *his* face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

Every manifestation of the spirit has its own profit. Speaking in tongues edifies the individual speaking; it is for prayer or praise; it is giving thanks well. It is to be used in our private lives, not at a church meeting. It is not a favorable sign to win the unbeliever. Interpretation of tongues is a message for men which will edify. It is not for use in our private lives, but rather in a church meeting. Prophecy is a message for men which will edify, exhort, and comfort.

The prophecy which is to be spoken at the public worship of the Church is specifically for the group of people present. Not one example of prophecy at a public worship is provided in the Scriptures; nor is there one example of interpretation of tongues. Therefore, those who manifest cannot copy or mimic something given years before which was intended only for the people present then. Prophecy as well as interpretation are not to be imitated, memorized, or thought up by human reason. The person who speaks must have faith that God will inspire the words to be spoken. When the manifester has this faith and maintains the right motivation, that of edifying the Body, the message will always have great impact — the impact God wants. If a person uses his own ability or is self-concerned, the message will not have an edifying effect.

Prophecy is a message for men, inspired by God, which will edify, exhort, and comfort. The interpretation of tongues is different than prophecy. Tongues are not unto

men but unto God. Therefore the interpretation will be directed to God, not men. Tongues is speaking the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11). It magnifies God (Acts 10:46), therefore the interpretation will do likewise. Tongues is also prayer, praise, and giving thanks well (I Corinthians 14:14-17), so then will be the interpretation also.

The believers at Corinth were a very zealous bunch, but they were falling all over each other. Their self-centered concern was more to share at the meeting than to edify the Body.

#### Verse 26

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

The mind picture of the meeting at Corinth was that of people who were deeply concerned about their own speaking and who had very little concern about others' hearing. Have you ever seen a group of people all talking at the same time?

To eliminate confusion, God gives us very specific direction. He has already emphatically communicated that uninterpreted tongues are improper. Interpretation should be done by two, or at most three, and in order, not simultaneously.

#### Verses 27 and 28

If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

The person who speaks in tongues is also to give the interpretation. The phrase, "and let one interpret," should be understood as "and let the same one interpret." We know this from the context. In verse 5 we are told that the one who speaks in tongues should interpret.

Verse 5

I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he [the one speaking in tongues] interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

Again, in verse 13 we are told that the one speaking is to be the one to interpret.

Verse 13

Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.

If we do not believe to operate the interpretation of tongues, we should keep quiet in the church. We can, and should, speak in tongues silently. We know it is prayer and praise to God.

The footprints of God's prophets can be traced throughout the Scriptures. The ministry of a prophet has always been important for God's people as is true in the Church age today. Certain individuals are given the responsibility of the ministry of a prophet, while others are given the ministry of a teacher, pastor, evangelist, or apostle.

## Ephesians 4:11

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

We have seen that all have the same spirit, Lord, and God but have a diversity of gifts, ministries, and operations.

Each believer is given the ability to operate the manifestations of the spirit, one of which is prophecy. Every believer can prophesy, but not everyone has the ministry of a prophet. Thus far, the chapter has been dealing with manifestations, not ministries. Prophecy, tongues, and interpretation have been the subject and continue to be as we read on. In verse 28, the one who speaks in tongues and interprets is called an interpreter. In verse 29, the one operating the manifestation of prophecy is called a prophet. However, this does not imply the person has the ministry of a prophet.

Prophecy can be an important part of a meeting. However, there must be order in the church. If people want to prophesy, it should be by two or three just as with interpretation. Everyone else should listen and evaluate that which is being said in relationship to himself so that he can receive edification, exhortation, and comfort. God provides boundaries so that meetings are conducted in an orderly fashion and all may be edified.

## I Corinthians 14:29

Let the prophets [those operating the manifestation of prophecy] speak two or three, and let the other judge.

Another problem was that some listening to the prophecy felt inspired to communicate and were interrupting those speaking. God does not inspire us to be inconsiderate, so He gives instruction to wait patiently until

our turn. If more than one speaks at the same time, no one gets heard. This instruction does not void the previous — that only two or three should prophesy.

Verses 30 and 31

If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.  
For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

Each person who manifests the spirit does so as he wills. No one is controlled by the spirit, rather the spirit is subject to the individual.

Verses 32 and 33

And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.  
For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

The confusion at Corinth was so rampant that God provided clear order:

- Do not speak in tongues aloud in the church unless you interpret.
- Do not speak in tongues aloud with others simultaneously.
- Speaking in tongues is not to be used as a sign for unbelievers.
- Only two, or at most three, should interpret and in order.
- The same person who speaks in tongues gives the interpretation.
- Everyone is not to prophesy simultaneously.
- Only two, or at most three, should prophesy and in order.

- Do not interrupt when someone is prophesying, rather be still and listen.
- Let all things be done unto edifying.

The written Word of God is the believers' standard for faith and practice. Therefore all genuine prophecy and interpretation must flow with God's Word. It will never contradict the Scriptures.

After all of this, God addresses one more area of concern, that is the right behavior of wives in the church.

Emphatically communicated throughout this section on spiritual matters is the unity of the one Body because of the sameness we all share. We have the same spirit, Lord, and God. Therefore, no one is above or below another; no one is to be exalted or subdued; no one is of greater or lesser value. For anyone to conclude from the following verses that Christian women are inferior to men is obviously a wrong interpretation of the Scriptures.

#### Verses 34-36

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

What? came the word of God out from you?  
or came it unto you only?

Some believe women should not minister or prophesy, and others think women should not be allowed to talk at all in church meetings. The whole Word of God does not support this thinking. Aquila and Priscilla were a prominent married couple who ministered together. The mentioning

of them both as "Aquila and Priscilla" and as "Priscilla and Aquila" shows the equality in their work together to minister in the Church. Philippians 4 speaks of Euodias and Syntyche, two women who labored with Paul. The four daughters of Philip the evangelist all prophesied in Acts 21. I Corinthians 11 tells us clearly that wives may prophesy.

This section is not referring to all women, but specifically to wives and their behavior at a public meeting. Everything in this chapter has dealt with behavior when the Church is gathered together. To understand, we must acknowledge the fundamental set up of the marriage relationship. To function properly, everything (governments, businesses, organizations, etc.) needs a person in the position of leadership, and a family does as well. The marriage unit consists of two people who have two distinct personalities and responsibilities. They require a leader, which is the man according to Scripture. This is not because he is better, more intelligent, or more worthy than she; rather it is the order determined by God. Both husband and wife are to respect God's order in marriage.

Apparently, in Corinth the wives were usurping authority over their husbands and doing so publically. This disrespectful act was undermining the husbands. The word "obedience" in verse 34 is from the Greek word *hupotasso* most often translated as subject or subjection. Wives are to be in subjection to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22-24). When a wife disagrees and argues with her husband openly in front of the church, the other believers feel extremely uncomfortable and become doubtful of the husband's ability to serve in the fellowship. Hence, she undermines him.

Also since the custom at the time was for women to sit on one side and men on the other, wives shouting

questions across to their husbands would be very disrupting. God says to be quiet and talk at home.

All that we have read in chapters 12 through 14 on spiritual matters have not merely been suggestions but commandments.

Verses 37 and 38

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

To end this section, God reiterates that we should desire to prophesy, which is another reason it is incorrect to assume that verses 29-32 are talking about the ministry of a prophet. The context remains the manifestations of the spirit.

Verse 39

Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

The final direction is most powerful after considering all the reproof and correction God has provided regarding spiritual matters.

Verse 40

Let all things be done decently and in order.



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# MAN'S HOPE

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## ***The Resurrections***

I CORINTHIANS 15

**F**irst Corinthians 15 is the most comprehensive teaching in the Church Epistles about the resurrections. Three major topics are handled in this chapter: the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the resurrection from the dead of the just, and that which happens to those who are alive at the time of the resurrection.

I Corinthians 15:1 and 2

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;  
By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

The Corinthian Church was giving heed to wrong doctrine about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Some were saying that there was no resurrection. This chapter logically and forcefully reproveth this error. Later in the first century, the resurrection again is wrongly understood. We are told in II Timothy 2:18 that some were teaching that the resurrection had passed already. This subject is under constant attack because the resurrection is the proof that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Man's salvation and the believer's Hope are based upon the resurrection.

Verses 3 and 4

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;  
And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

According to the Scriptures, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the sea monster's belly, Jesus Christ would also be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. He died at approximately three in the afternoon. After three nights and sometime after 3 pm on the third day, he arose. There were many eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ. The following verses elaborate.

Verses 5-8

And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

Here are recorded six post-resurrection appearances, some of which are also noted in the Gospels. Other post-resurrection appearances are recorded in the Gospels that are not stated here, such as Mary Magdalene, the two men on the road to Emmaeus, and the eleven when Thomas was not present. The point is that many people saw Jesus Christ after he was raised from the dead. Since these people were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ, how

could anyone say that he was not raised? Paul makes a logical argument pertaining to the resurrection of Christ.

Verses 12-20

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

The word "resurrection" is the Greek word *anastasis* from the noun *anístemi*, meaning stand up. Therefore, the word "resurrection" means a standing up, a rising from the dead. This *anastasis* is used twice in Hebrews 11 which is speaking about a time before Jesus Christ was alive.

Hebrews 11:35

Women received their dead raised to life again [*anastasis*]: and others were tortured,

not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection [*anastasis*]:

As we can see from this verse, the terms "raised to life again" and "resurrection" were both translated from the same word *anastasis*. A number of people in the Old Testament were resurrected from the dead before Jesus Christ. The great distinction between these people and Jesus Christ is that once he was resurrected, he never died again. Everyone else, who had been raised from the dead, died again. Jesus Christ is called the firstfruits for two reasons: he was the first one to get up from the dead and stay up, and he is the prototype of all those who will be resurrected from the dead at the resurrection of the just.

Colossians 1:18

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Everyone in the Scriptures who has been raised from the dead, with the exception of Jesus Christ, has died again and remains in the grave until Christ returns.

The words "raise," "risen," "raised," and "rise" are all from one Greek word *egeiro* that is used nineteen times in I Corinthians 15. *Egeiro* and *anastasis* (resurrection) are used to describe the same thing: the resurrection from the dead, first of Christ, then of those who are his at his coming. Note how *egeiro* and *anastasis* are used interchangeably in the following verse.

I Corinthians 15:12

Now if Christ be preached that he rose [egeiro] from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection [anastasis] of the dead?

Whether the scripture says Christ rose from the dead or was resurrected, the truth is the same. He got up and will stay up forever.

In I Corinthians 15:20, the dead are referred to as "them that slept," as is true in I Thessalonians.

I Thessalonians 4:13

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

Sleep is a natural, temporary, and periodic state of diminished activity of body and mind. In the state of sleep, rest results from the suspension of activity, consciousness, and sensation.

Death is referred to as sleep because it is also a temporary state. In this state all consciousness and activity are completely suspended. There is no remembrance (Psalms 6:5); all thoughts perish (Psalms 146:4); no work, device, knowledge, nor wisdom is in the grave (Ecclesiastes 9:10). The person also has no realization of time. Therefore, the last thought in his awareness before death is followed immediately by his first thought in the resurrection when he sees the face of Jesus Christ. Thousands of years may have passed in actual time between a person's last thought before death and his first thought after being made alive. But to that person, it will seem as a moment in time because his consciousness was totally suspended in death.

Most Christians think that upon death those who had believed in Christ are immediately received up into heaven. However, this way of thinking is not substantiated by Scripture and causes much wrong reasoning and actions. The Bible clearly teaches that the dead remain in the grave until the return of Christ. If the dead were alive now, why would Christ have to return to gather his people? What would be the reason for a resurrection if the dead were already alive? The dead remain in the grave which is one reason we long for the return of Christ. As we continue to study I Corinthians 15, we will learn exactly what happens to those who are dead when Christ returns. Now they sleep.

I Corinthians 15:21-23

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

All mankind is associated with Adam because he is the head of the human race. As his descendants, we all inherit sin and death. Those who are associated with Christ will inherit righteousness and everlasting life.<sup>6</sup> Verse 21 tells us that by Adam came death and by Jesus Christ came the resurrection of the dead. Verse 22 tells us that in Adam all die and in Christ all shall be made alive. The parallelism of these two verses shows that the resurrection is how all are made alive. Verse 23 clarifies who will be made alive — "they that are Christ's at his coming."

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 5:12-21 gives detail on that which is summarized in I Corinthians 15:21 and 22.

When Jesus Christ returns, all the dead who are Christ's will be resurrected.<sup>7</sup> This event is called "the resurrection of the just" (Acts 24:15; Luke 14:14). Those who partake are called "the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36). This resurrection is also called "the first resurrection" (Revelation 20:5 and 6), "the better resurrection" (Hebrews 11:35), the resurrection "to everlasting life" (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29).

The Scriptures speak of another resurrection not mentioned in I Corinthians 15 which is called: "the resurrection of the unjust" (Acts 24:15), "the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29), resurrection "to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). This resurrection is for all who are not in the resurrection of the just. Revelation 20:5 refers to them as "the rest of the dead."

Three resurrections to acknowledge are: the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the just (they that are Christ's), and the final resurrection, that of the unjust (all those who do not participate in the resurrection of the just).

The books of Daniel and Revelation, among others, speak of many things that will come to pass shortly before and after Christ's return.

I Corinthians 15 rushes right to the end without elaborating because the chapter's discussion is the resurrection.

#### Verses 24-28

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

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<sup>7</sup> Christians are considered to be Christ's. Those in the Old Testament who believed in the coming of Christ are also considered to be Christ's and will be included in the resurrection.

For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

For he [God] hath put all things under his [Jesus Christ's] feet. But when he [God] saith all things are put under him [Jesus Christ], it is manifest that he [God] is excepted, which did put all things under him [Jesus Christ].

And when all things shall be subdued unto him [Jesus Christ], then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him [God] that put all things under him [Jesus Christ], that God may be all in all.

After stating what will happen at the end, the record comes back to the logical reasoning about the resurrections. If death ended it all, then living a Christian life makes no sense, and from Paul's point of view, neither did continually risking his life. If, when we die, there is only death and no resurrection, let us pursue the Epicurean philosophy of "eat and drink; for to morrow we die." This fatalistic attitude is not ours for we absolutely know that Christ is coming back!

Verses 29-32

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

This wrong understanding and communication about the resurrection had deceived believers in Corinth, as they still do today. God tells us that evil communications will corrupt us.

Verse 33

Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

The New English Bible has an interesting translation of this verse, "make no mistake: bad company is the ruin of a good character!" Keeping company with those who communicate evil about the resurrection will ruin our own good character. This disbelief in the resurrection is sharply reproofed because the very basis of our faith rests upon the resurrection of Christ. Man's entire Hope rests upon Christ's resurrection and second coming.

Verse 34

Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

From this stern reproof, God then describes our resurrected bodies. Some may ask, "How will the dead be brought back to life? What kind of bodies will they have?" Apparently these questions are foolish!

Verses 35 and 36

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

God provides two illustrations to help us understand the supernatural changes which will take place in our earthly bodies. The first analogy is regarding agriculture; the second celestial and terrestrial bodies.

When a grain of wheat is planted, it dies so that the wheat plant may flourish, likewise with the dead at the resurrection.<sup>8</sup>

Verses 37 and 38

And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:  
But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

Just as there are different kinds of seeds and plants, there are different kinds of flesh.

Verse 39

All flesh *is* not the same flesh: but *there is* one *kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, *and* another of birds.

The sun, moon, planets, and stars are celestial bodies. The beauty and glory of each celestial body differ from the others and also from the terrestrial. The terrestrial is of the earth. The sun has one kind of glory, the moon another, and each star has its own unique glory.

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<sup>8</sup> I Corinthians 15:36-38: "What a foolish question! You will find the answer in your own garden! When you put a seed into the ground it doesn't grow into a plant unless it 'dies first.' And when the green shoot comes up out of the seed, it is very different from the seed you first planted. For all you put into the ground is a dry little seed of wheat, or whatever it is you are planting, then God gives it a beautiful new body — just the kind he wants it to have; a different kind of plant grows from each kind of seed" (from the Life Application Bible).

## Verses 40 and 41

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

God communicates all these differences to help us understand the great difference of the resurrected bodies from the dead bodies.

## Verses 42-44

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; 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.

The one has such a tremendous contrast with the other. We should slow down and consider the great blessing which we are to have.

<b>Sown in:</b>	<b>Raised in:</b>
corruption	incorruption
dishonor	glory
weakness	power
natural body	spiritual body

Because all mankind are descendants of Adam, we have the effects of sin in our natural bodies. Those of us who believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and remain faithful unto the end will receive new spiritual bodies.

Verses 45-48

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening [life-making] spirit.

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

We were all born earthly, and those of faith will be born again of the heavenly. God promises us that in the resurrection we shall bear the image of the heavenly. Praise God!

Verse 49

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Our current earthly bodies of flesh and blood cannot live forever. We must have a major change like that which happened to Jesus Christ's body when he was resurrected.

Verse 50

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

When Christ returns, many believers will have already died, and some believers will be alive. Those who are dead will be resurrected. Those who are alive will not need to be resurrected because they are not dead, but they will still need to be changed. One of the great mysteries is how God will make these miraculous transformations.

Verses 51 and 52

Behold, I show 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

The dead are referred to as corruptible. Those alive at his return are referred to as mortal. The corruptible must put on incorruption which will happen with the resurrection. Those alive, the mortals, must be changed to put on immortality.

Verse 53

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Thessalonians tells us when these things will happen. God does not want us to be ignorant regarding these matters.

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

This is great comfort for us in knowing that Christ is coming back and at that time the corruptible will put on incorruption, and the mortal immortality. When a loved one falls asleep, we mourn the great loss of that person's fellowship. With the Hope, we can find comfort at this very challenging time.

Death is our enemy and has a great sting to it. Hebrews 2:14 tells us that the devil has the power of death and that Jesus Christ destroyed him. When Christ returns, the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.<sup>9</sup> Revelation 20:14 records this final victory, the elimination of death: "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire...."

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<sup>9</sup> I Corinthians 15:26: "The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death."

When the future things spoken of in I Corinthians 15 come to pass, death will be swallowed up in victory. What a glorious day that will be!

I Corinthians 15:54-57

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ died for our sins. He was buried and stayed in the ground for three days and three nights after which God raised him from the dead. He was seen in his resurrected body by many eyewitnesses. Even if he had not been seen by anyone, the testimony of God Almighty alone should be enough to convince all.

Since we are certain Christ has been resurrected, we can also be certain that he was the firstfruits. They that are Christ's at his coming shall join him when they are resurrected. Those who are alive at Christ's return shall put on immortality to join the resurrected incorruptible ones. For the guaranteed victory that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished, we should be abundantly thankful to God. This gratitude should be manifested in the following way.

Verse 58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in

the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

### **Christ's Coming**

The resurrection was the Apostle Paul's goal. He knew it meant perfect knowledge and unbroken fellowship with God, the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's defense to Felix regarding the accusation that he was "a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" is very interesting in view of our study of the resurrections.

Acts 24:13-16, 21

Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow [expect or look for], that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men....

Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

The Hope for which Paul looked was the resurrection. He exercised himself to live a Christian life toward God and men in light of the resurrection.

Some believe that Jesus Christ's second coming will begin with a gathering of all the Christian believers, followed by a period of time, and then the resurrection of the just and unjust (which would be for all others except Christians).

However, our study of I Corinthians clearly shows that the resurrection of the just is for all those who believe, the Old Testament believers and Christians. The gathering together is not a separate event, independent from the first resurrection, but rather one and the same.

The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed; while the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. The Church Epistles constantly refer to the Old Testament because many of the truths revealed in the Epistles were prophesied of previously, but veiled to the people's understanding.<sup>10</sup> Although information is given about the resurrections, not one mention or any hint at all of a gathering of the Christian Church apart from the resurrection is given. The information of a separate gathering is absent because there will be no separate gathering.

Something is a mystery not because information is hidden, but because the understanding of information is hidden until it is revealed. After the conclusion of a mystery that is well done, one can look back at the clues and see how they relate and fit with the solution. Similarly in the Scriptures, God reveals the solution to the mystery which had previously been seen only as hints and clues.

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<sup>10</sup> The great mystery, which was revealed in the seven Church Epistles and spoken of in the Old Testament, was not understood until God unveiled it to Paul.

Jesus Christ taught many things preparing people for that which would come after his ascension. The truths pertaining to the mystery were clearly understood by him, and he often taught them (as is recorded in the Gospels). He frequently spoke prophetically concerning many things that were not applicable at the time he spoke and would not become available until after Pentecost. These things include worshipping God in spirit and in truth, speaking in tongues, the new commandment of love, Christ in, the Comforter, and access to God through the name of Jesus Christ.

In one way or another, he seemed to communicate all the truths written in the Church Epistles; however he never spoke of a doctrine of a gathering of the Christians apart from the resurrection! This exclusion is not due to ignorance, but because it does not exist. When asked about the end times, he clearly communicated all that will happen and never mentioned such a gathering!

His disciples asked specific questions that we all have about the end.

Matthew 24:3

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

We do not need to guess about these matters because Jesus Christ clearly communicated that which may be known.

Verses 4 and 5

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

The word "Christ" in Greek is *christos* which literally means anointed and can be translated as such. Here, it would be more accurately translated anointed rather than Christ. Some have come since Jesus Christ ascended saying that they were anointed and have deceived many.

#### Verses 6-8

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

All these are the beginning of sorrows.

"Nation" is the Greek word *ethnos* here referring to ethnic groups or races. Ethnic groups will rise against ethnic groups, and kingdom or nation against nation. Everything we have just read has been happening since Christ left, a time which is referred to as "the beginning of sorrows." After these things occur (we are not told how long), the progression toward the end continues.

#### Verses 9-13

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.  
And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.  
But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

All these things have happened in the past and are currently happening.

Verse 14

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Verse 14 should be compared to Romans 11:25: "...that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."

"Nations" and "Gentiles" are used interchangeably in the Scriptures. When the Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all nations, the fulness of the Gentiles will be complete.

Verse 15

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

The city of Jerusalem and the temple in Jerusalem are both referred to as the holy place. Daniel speaks about a week of years at the end times. In the middle of the week, after three and a half years, the abomination of desolation will be set up. Many interpretations and theories have been written regarding the prophecy in Daniel and the abomination of desolation. Jesus stated, "whoso readeth,

let him understand." Understanding is given by God at the time He chooses to those who have faith.

All these things happen before Jesus Christ comes back. Verse 16 begins by describing time with the word "then." This great tribulation is focused in Judea and is regarding Israel.

There is a difference between the great tribulation and God's wrath. The great tribulation is orchestrated by the devil against Israel in Judea. The wrath of God is against the devil and those who are his. We, as Christians, are promised that we have been saved from wrath.<sup>11</sup>

#### Verses 16-30

Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

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<sup>11</sup> Romans 5:9 "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

I Thessalonians 5:9 "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,"

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Behold, I have told you before.

Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

After all we have just read has happened, Christ will come back, and the just will be resurrected.

Verse 31

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The disciples had asked when the end would come. Jesus Christ responded with all we have just read. So these signs will be seen before the end, but he also told us that no man knows the specific day and hour.

Verse 36

But of that day and hour knoweth no man,  
no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father  
only.

Those who are faithful unto the end are promised eternal life. They will be spared from wrath and gathered in the resurrection of the just. His return is not something we should fear, but rejoice in. Then we will have uninterrupted, eternal, sinless, fellowship with God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

During the first century, believers were apparently faced with people who were prophesying about the end times, just as we are today. Some were even saying Christ had already come back. II Thessalonians clears this up.

II Thessalonians 2:1-3

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,  
That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

God again reveals the sequence of events so we will not be deceived. The Greek word *apostasia* occurs in Acts 21:21 translated forsake and here translated a falling away. The forsaking or falling away is like that which Jesus foretold in Matthew 24. In the end times, many will fall away from God and forsake His ways.

Matthew 24:11 and 12

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

First, this falling away will come, and then the son of perdition must rise to prominence. This individual is associated with the abomination of desolation which will be set up in Jerusalem. He will present himself to be Christ. All these things must come to pass before the resurrection.

### **Hope, the Anchor of the Soul**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead made available the resurrection of the just. Because of his resurrection, we have a lively Hope which is incorruptible, undefiled, reserved in heaven for us.

I Peter 1:3 and 4

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

Jesus Christ is "the firstborn among many brethren" and "the firstfruits of them that slept." He is the type or pattern for our sonship and eternal life. Those who have faith have received the spirit of adoption.

Romans 8:15

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The spirit of bondage or slavery results in the attitude of fear toward God. The spirit of adoption results in the attitude of passionate love for the Father. In that we are the children of God, we are heirs of God.

Verses 16 and 17

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

God, Who cannot lie (Titus 1:2), has promised eternal life. Those who are faithful are guaranteed that in the future they will be glorified. Glorification is the act of God which transforms one into the likeness of the resurrected Christ. Today, we must endure suffering, but as we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together with him. Compared with the glory, the suffering is miniscule. The contrast of a grain of sand to Mount Everest is not extreme enough to compare our present suffering to eternity. We need to reason out our present suffering with the glory to come if we want to endure until the end.

Verse 18

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

All of creation, not just humans, suffered when sin came into the world. All of creation "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans 8:22), yet we are not in utter despair because we are saved by Hope.

Verses 23-25

And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*.

With patience we wait for that glorious day when our bodies shall be changed. The knowledge of his return is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, and we have troubles in the world, we reason them to be light in comparison to the eternal weight of glory that is ours.

II Corinthians 4:16-18

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

God Almighty has promised eternal life. He has made provision for us to have our bodies changed so that we can live together in glory.

II Corinthians 5:1

For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle [earthly body] were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

God has also given us the earnest of the spirit which is His guarantee that He will fulfill His promises. However, now we groan greatly, desiring to put on our new bodies.

Verses 2-6

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

Our desire is not to die but to be clothed with our new bodies. This great Hope is what we are to look at and have faith in. If we look at the sinful, dying world around us, at the suffering and pain we endure and not at the Hope, we

will faint. We do not walk by what we see but by faith in the promise of eternal life.

Verse 7

(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

When he comes back, our dying, vile bodies will be changed to be like his glorious body. We are going to have bodies like Christ's resurrected body.

Philippians 3:20 and 21

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

In light of this knowledge, we are to stand fast.

Philippians 4:1

Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, *my* dearly beloved.

The great patriarchs of the Old Testament stayed on course because they were persuaded by the promises and embraced them. Moses, for example, deemed the reward of eternal life to be much greater than the power, prestige, and wealth he could have had as Pharaoh's adopted grandson.

Hebrews 11:24-26

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

Today, we are blessed with so much more than Moses and the Old Testament believers. We have the holy spirit and a more complete knowledge of God's Word available to us. We have Christ in us making us able to love just as he loved. Although we have so much more, we still have much, much more to come. The knowledge and power we now have shall vanish away because when we see him face to face, we will know even as we are known.

I Corinthians 13:8-12

Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

The Church today is one Body with Christ as the head. We have one Body, one spirit, one Hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God. Yet with all the oneness we have, the Church still does not live in unity. Much contention and strife are within the Church. However, a time is coming when we will completely manifest the oneness. When we are gathered together, we will enjoy oneness and unity with God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and each other. This unity will be in love and forever.

Ephesians 1:10

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

Ephesians 4:13

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

We are going to be just like Jesus Christ. We do not understand the greatness of this reality, but when he comes, we will. In the meantime, we endeavor to live holy lives.

I John 3:2 and 3

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Our Hope is the anchor of the soul. When life becomes difficult, we pull closer to God because we know we have Hope.

Hebrews 6:19

Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

We know God is faithful, so we hold fast.

Hebrews 10:23

Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith [Hope] without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;)

Our responsibility is to remain faithful because we have the complete assurance that He is faithful. We can be confident and patient knowing that in a little while Christ will come.

Verses 35-39

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead. He shall return to gather his beloved. The faithful shall be with him and God in uninterrupted, perfect fellowship for eternity. His resurrection is the guarantee for eternal life. Now we patiently wait, living each day to the praise of God's glory.

### When Man Has Hope

When man has Hope,  
he has an ocean of endurance to handle life's tribulations.

When man has Hope,  
he has a firm anchor to withstand all the storms.

When man has Hope,  
he has a fountain of joy to drown his sorrows.

When man has Hope,  
he has vision and purpose to journey through life.

When man has Hope,  
he has a lighthouse to guide his life.

When man has Hope,  
he has a map and compass to guide him with life's decisions.

When man has Hope,  
he has quiet seas to receive life's greatest cargoes.

When man has Hope,  
he is fully equipped to love and believe.

When man has Hope,  
he has Jesus Christ, the Hope of glory.





## *Heaven and Hell*

**C**ommon expressions regarding someone who has just died are: "He passed on," "He is in a better place," and "God called him home." However commonplace and well-intended their platitudes may be, nonetheless all are unbiblical. No such utterances are found in the Bible because the dead are dead and will remain so until Christ returns and the resurrections occur.

The universal assumption that the dead immediately go on to another life is due to a common belief embraced in Christianity, Roman Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The belief is that all humans are made up of at least two parts: body and soul, or body and spirit. When the body dies, the soul or spirit lives on eternally either in heaven or hell. This doctrine is not based on the accuracy of the Scriptures but rather on Greek philosophy and mythology.

The false belief is that something within a person gives him the ability to live on eternally. However, the Scriptures quickly refute this in the beginning of the Bible. God gave man the breath of life, making him a living soul.

Genesis 2:7

And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

A living soul does not mean an immortal soul. That which provided immortality for Adam and Eve was not something inside them, but rather separate from them. It was referred to as "the tree of life."

Verse 9

And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden....

When they were expelled from the Garden, God kept them from the tree of life so that they would not live forever in their fallen state.

Genesis 3:24

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Nothing is said or implied that they would live on after their bodies were dead. Quite the contrary, God specifically and clearly stated, "...Thou shalt surely die." "Thou" is the person. The whole person would die.

Genesis 2:17

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

According to the Hebrew text, "thou shalt surely die" reads "dying you shalt die." From the day they ate, they began to die and, in the end, did die. Their spirit or soul did not go to heaven or hell. God told Adam plainly what would happen to him.

Genesis 3:19

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Man was formed from the dust of the ground and when he died he returned to dust. The biological, medical, and legal definition of death is the irreversible loss of all functions of the brain, along with the loss of all involuntary mechanisms such as spontaneous breathing, blood pressure, body temperature, and the movement of the heart. When a person takes his last breath, life is gone; he is dead.

Following are some verses which clearly state the destiny of man after death:

Psalms 104:29

Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

Psalms 146:4

His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

Job 10:9

Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again?

Men are just like beasts in that after life is gone, they return to dust. The very day that a person dies, his thoughts perish; and therefore memory ceases to exist.

Psalms 6:5

For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

The ability to praise God, to celebrate His goodness and grace, is completely eradicated. To think that the dead are in heaven praising God with the angels is a bold-faced contradiction to the divinely inspired Scriptures.

Psalms 115:17

The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.

Isaiah 38:18

For the grave cannot praise thee, death can *not* celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.

Perhaps, because the surviving loved ones are so pained by their loss, embracing the lie that the dead are alive seems easier than accepting the obvious. Nonetheless, the Scriptures present confronting truth which causes us to face reality. In the grave there is no work, device, knowledge, or wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 9:10

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for *there is* no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

The "life immediately after death" doctrine makes death seem like a promotion from this hard life to a much better one. "He goes to a better place" is often echoed at funeral homes and gravesides. This false belief makes death

seem like a welcome friend; however, the Scriptures say it is an enemy.

I Corinthians 15:26

The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death.

When Jesus spoke with Nicodemus, he said, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven..." (John 3:13). Since then, only Jesus has ascended. Since the Bible provides such irrefutable, compelling evidence that the dead are indeed dead, why do so many believe contrariwise? Warren Prestidge in his book *Life, Death and Destiny* provides some explanation. The following is paraphrased from his book.

According to Plato, the soul is able to be separated from the body and is inherently immortal or imperishable. Only the "soul" is the real person and it is our share in the eternal, divine reality. Death is "the separation of soul and body," or "the release of the soul from the chains of the body." Souls undergo "judgment" after death. Salvation is by the cultivation of wisdom and virtue, above all through philosophy.

Under the influence of Greek philosophy, spread through the world following the conquests of Alexander the Great, some non-biblical Jewish writings before Christ accepted the soul's immortality.

Under the same influence, the doctrine eventually prevailed in Christian tradition. It was entrenched as Roman Catholic dogma by the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517 A.D.). Although the Protestant reformer Martin Luther ridiculed the dogma and many radical Christian groups opposed

it, "from Calvin onwards it was accepted in post-Reformation Protestantism as a part of Christian doctrine."<sup>12</sup>

A sad testimony is ours if our beliefs about death and eternal life are founded upon the intellect of Plato rather than God's holy Word. We must search the Scriptures to formulate our beliefs.

That King David will be in the Kingdom of God and live again is apparent from both the Old and New Testaments. Also, it is clear that currently he is dead and in the grave.

Acts 2:29, 34

Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

For David is not ascended into the heavens....

David's present state is referred to as sleep.

I Kings 2:10

So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.

Acts 13:36

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption.

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<sup>12</sup> *Life, Death and Destiny*; Prestidge, Warren; Resurrection Publishing, Auckland, New Zealand, 1998.

Jesus told his disciples when Lazarus died that he was sleeping, meaning that he was dead. They did not understand, so he said it plainly.

John 11:11-14

These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.

Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

The dead are referred to as sleeping because, as in normal sleep, there is a temporary cessation of all consciousness. When we sleep at night, all of our involuntary functions such as breathing, blood pressure, and heart movement slow down considerably. In death, these functions stop. The most important similarity is that both are temporary. In the morning, we get up; when Christ returns, the dead are also awakened.

I Thessalonians 4:13-15

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto

the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

Everyone who has died, with the exception of Jesus Christ, remains in the grave asleep until he or she is awakened when Christ returns.

Daniel 12:2

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.

Let us summarize before we move on. The dead are dead! The Scriptures do not ever talk about the immortality or incorruptibility of the soul or spirit separate from the whole man. The popular phrase "the immortality of the soul" is not a biblical one. Every time that immortality or incorruptibility is used, it is referring to the whole person in a future state at the resurrection.

## Heaven

With Abraham, God begins to reveal the promise of His future Kingdom. The original promise was, "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Genesis 12:7). As Abraham's relationship with God grew, so did the promises and God's commitment to fulfill them. When Abraham journeyed into Canaan, he was told by God, "...Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18). To Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob, the promised land continued to increase. In the New Testament, we see the promise extended to include the whole world: "...For the promise

that he [Abraham] should be the heir of the world..." (Romans 4:13).

All the prophets spoke emphatically and frequently about the coming of the Messiah and the inheritance of a new, regenerated earth. Not one record in the Hebrew text speaks about anyone's ascending into heaven and living there eternally. Israel's Hope was always the coming of the Messiah who would rule on earth with them. The promise was that the new earth would be similar to the one that God originally created with Adam and Eve. (See *The Foundation*, Volume I, chapter five, *Father Abraham*).

Psalms 37:9, 11, 22, 29, 34

...but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall **inherit the earth**.

...the meek shall **inherit the earth**....

For *such as be* blessed of him shall **inherit the earth**....

The righteous shall **inherit the land**....

...keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to **inherit the land**....

Our Redeemer, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, preached and taught the Kingdom of God. Its central theme was the believers' inheriting the earth with Christ the King. Christ is not his name but his title. "Christ" is Messiah, meaning anointed King of earth. He will rule God's Kingdom on earth. He said, "Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." The parables focus on the Kingdom with emphasis on the earth. His response to the believing malefactor, who was crucified with him was that he would see him in paradise. Paradise is on earth, not in heaven.

On the day of his ascension, his disciples asked if it were time to restore the Kingdom to Israel.

When the Apostle Paul experienced extreme tribulation and persecution, God gave him a vision of the future which is recorded in II Corinthians 12:1-4. The hope presented was not of heaven but rather of paradise on earth. Paul taught that the promises given to Abraham about the future are the same promises given to Christians today.

Romans 4:16

Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Galatians 3:6-9, 29

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The book of Revelation, the conclusion of the written Word, clearly and concisely states our future destiny.

Revelation 5:10

And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall **reign on the earth**.

Revelation 11:15

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

The only human who will ascend into heaven already has ascended and will remain until God sends him back. He will **descend** from heaven, the dead will be raised, and those alive will meet him in the clouds.

I Thessalonians 4:16-18

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

After we meet him in the clouds, we all will return to earth to reign with him forever.

When these truths are first considered, they may be shocking and disturbing since they contradict the commonly accepted beliefs. What should be much more upsetting is the enormous lack of honest biblical study. If learning that the dead do not immediately go to heaven and that no one

is going to go to heaven is unsettling, then search the Scriptures and see if these things are so (Acts 17:11).

## Hell

If the righteous do not ascend into heaven but rather inherit the earth, then what happens to the unrighteous? We have previously seen that there will be a resurrection when Christ returns. Actually, there will be two resurrections: the first immediately upon Christ's return and the second 1,000 years later. (See Revelation 20). The first will be for the just, and the second for the unjust.

John 5:28 and 29

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,  
And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

The case has already been stated that the dead do not ascend into heaven nor do they descend into hell. However, we have not established what happens to the resurrected unjust.

God told Adam that the consequence for his disobedience would be death.

Genesis 2:17

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

The ultimate penalty for sin is death. "In the day" indicates not the time of death but its inevitability if they were to sin. Throughout the Bible the result of sin is death, and the alternative to eternal life is death and annihilation.

Deuteronomy 30:15

See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

There are a number of Hebrew and Greek words translated as "hell" which need to be examined. The Hebrew word *sheol* and the corresponding Greek word *hades* are often translated hell. However a better translation would be grave or gravedom.

David spoke of his death and, at the same time, prophesied regarding the Lord.

Psalms 16:10 and 11

For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [*sheol* - grave]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

Acts 2:25-27

For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:  
 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [*hades* - grave], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Neither David or Jesus went to hell, nor will they. Both went to the grave. The final state of the wicked is defined and described in a variety of ways, but all of these amount, in the end, to the same thing — rejection by God, death, and extinction forever. However, the common doctrine is that the evil one's destiny is a place of eternal hellfire. *Webster's Dictionary* defines hell as "the place where fallen angels (devils) live, and to which sinners and unbelievers go after death for torment and eternal punishment." Many seem to believe that Satan is the ruler of hell, and that its location is under the earth. Yet, there is no such place as this described in the Bible.

The Scriptures say of Satan that he currently is "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). His location is not beneath earth in hell but rather in high places according to Ephesians 6:12: "We wrestle against ... spiritual wickedness in high places."

The Apostle John was given revelation regarding the future destiny of the devil as is recorded in the book of Revelation. In the future, he will be cast down.

Revelation 12:7-10

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,  
 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.  
 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which

deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

The "hell" that *Webster's Dictionary* described and that so many embrace today began around 600 B.C. and primarily evolved from Greek mythology. The Greeks believed in a three-story universe. The top story was heaven; the middle was earth; and the bottom story was the underworld. A god named Hades ruled the kingdom of the dead, which had the same name. The kingdom of the dead was believed to be beneath the earth. The ancient Romans preserved without change almost all the myths about Hades and his kingdom, but they called the god Pluto. Our traditions about Satan as the ruler of hell emanate from this mythology!

Although this concept of hell is commonly accepted, it has absolutely no biblical basis. When the Greek word *hades* is used in the Scriptures, it means the grave.

Two other words translated as hell are the Hebrew word "Hinnom" and the corresponding Greek word "Gehenna". When Jesus taught he referred to hell fire. Perhaps this is the cause of some misunderstanding. The correct understanding of what he meant can be gained from studying the Old Testament (as is true regarding much of what our Lord taught).

Molech was a false Egyptian deity that the children of Israel were commanded not to worship. The worship of Molech included the burning alive of infant children.

Leviticus 18:21

And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through *the fire* to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I *am* the LORD.

Solomon built an high place for Molech during the latter part of his reign (1 Kings 11:7). Many years later, Josiah tried to eliminate the worship of Molech which apparently had become intertwined among the Israelites.

II Kings 23:10

And he defiled Topheth [the burning stove where babies were cremated alive], which *is* in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.

Jeremiah speaks of God's utter disgust about Israel's worship of Baal and Molech.

Jeremiah 32:35

And they built the high places of Baal, which *are* in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through *the fire* unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

Due to the worship of Molech and other abominable acts, Israel and Judah were then taken captive by the Assyrians and Babylonians respectively.

The place where Molech was worshipped and the children were burned was the Valley of Hinnom. It was a deep narrow ravine next to the city of Jerusalem. After the

Babylonian exile, in order to show their abhorrence of this location, they made it a city dump where they burned refuse. The fires in the valley continually burned. The Jews associated this valley with two ideas: (1) that of idolatrous practices and the suffering of the victims that had been sacrificed and (2) that of filth and corruption.

The Valley of Hinnom then to most became a symbol of the abode of the wicked. The Greek word "Gehenna" is the corresponding word to the Hebrew "Hinnom." When referring to Hinnom or Gehenna, there was not one iota of understanding that the person burned eternally. Rather, the person died and, like the sacrificed children and rubbish, was annihilated and turned to ashes. By the time of Jesus Christ, the word had evolved to denote only hell, the place of future punishment.

When Jesus spoke of "hell fire" (Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; and Luke 12:5), he was not referring to a place of eternal torture but rather Gehenna which implied everlasting separation from God, death, and annihilation. His teachings were a reflection of his understanding of the lake of fire which was spoken of in the book of Revelation. The lake of fire is for the beast, false prophet, and those that receive the mark of the beast.

Revelation 19:20

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

The devil, gravedom, and those not written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:10, 12-15

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [*hades* - grave] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

And death and hell [grave] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

The book of Jude provides insight regarding eternal fire as it is compared to Sodom and Gomorrha.

Jude 1:7

Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Sodom and Gomorrha are held up throughout the Scriptures as a type for God's final judgment. Fire and brimstone totally obliterated these locations with all of their

inhabitants. The destruction was so complete that to this day no one is certain where these cities were. Eternal fire does not mean that the person burns in hell eternally but rather that the effects are everlasting — separation from God, death, and annihilation.

The lake of fire spoken of in Revelation must not be a literal lake of fire because it has the ability to destroy spirit beings, death, and the grave. Similar to Sodom and Gomorrah, the lake of fire represents everlasting, irreversible destruction. The result of it will be the complete elimination of the beast, false prophet, those with the mark of the beast, the devil, death, gravedom, and those not written in the book of life. These beings and things will not live on in the age to come.

The words "eternal" and "everlasting" are both translated from the Greek word *aionios*. *Aionios* means ages. Eternal life could be translated "ages' life" or "life in the age to come." "Eternal damnation" or "eternal fire" could be better translated damnation in the age to come or fire in the age to come.

In God's future Kingdom, all evil will be completely and absolutely gone forever. There will not be some remote corner preserved eternally where evil and the evil ones will continuously burn.

Revelation 20:14 sums up the lake of fire as the second death. We have already established in the beginning of this study that death really means death. The significant difference of the second death is that it is not reversible.

In conclusion, the summary of this study is that the Bible never speaks about the immortality of the soul or spirit. The dead are not alive, rather in the absolute but temporary state called sleep. When Christ returns, the dead will be resurrected. The just will be given eternal life which will be enjoyed on earth. We do not live eternally in heaven. The unjust will also be resurrected and judged for everlasting damnation. Eternal hellfire with Satan as the king is

mythology and not biblical truth. The evil ones will be thrown into the lake of fire which is the second death, irreversible separation from God, death, and total annihilation.





## *New Birth*

**A**fter forty hours of intense interrogation and horrendous torture, Jesus hung on the cross from 9 a.m. to approximately 3 p.m. with his life draining from him. After he said, "it is finished" and bowed his head, he died. Unmistakably, with no doubt, Jesus died at that moment and remained dead for three days and three nights according to Matthew 12:40.

For Jesus to rise again, God had to give him new life. He was the first person to be born from the dead.

Colossians 1:15, 18

Who [Jesus Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn of every creature**:

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the **firstborn from the dead**; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.

"Born" means to be brought into life. "Firstborn" implies two things: (1) no one was born from the dead before him. (Others were raised from the dead, but they died again. Jesus was given a new life which will continue throughout eternity.) And (2) others will follow after him.

He is called the "firstborn of every creature" and the "firstborn from the dead." The book of Revelation reiterates:

Revelation 1:5

And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the **first begotten of the dead**, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

From just these three verses, we can clearly understand that Jesus, who was completely dead, was given a new life. Evident also is that this life is characterized as being **born** from the dead.

When Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:17) and on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5), God said of him, "This is my beloved son." After he was raised from the dead, God said of him, "This day have I begotten thee."

Acts 13:32-34

And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

After His beloved Son was resurrected from the dead, God declared, "I have begotten thee," which was prophesied in the second Psalm. "Begotten" is used of

Jesus in another way regarding his first birth. The English word "begotten" is translated from the Greek *gennaō*.

Matthew 1:2, 16

Abraham begat [*gennaō*] Isaac; and Isaac begat [*gennaō*] Jacob; and Jacob begat [*gennaō*] Judas and his brethren;

And Jacob begat [*gennaō*] Joseph the husband [father] of Mary, of whom was born [*gennaō*] Jesus, who is called Christ.

The words "begat" and "born" are both translated from *gennaō* because basically both English words mean the same thing. Jesus was born the first time of Mary. The angel of the Lord explained to Joseph how his espoused wife became pregnant.

Matthew 1:20

But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived [*gennaō*] in her is of the Holy Ghost.

His first life began when he was born of Mary and ended on the cross. His second life began when he was born from the dead and will never end. According to Acts 13:33 and Psalm 2, the second birth is when he was begotten, or born, of God. Therefore we can accurately say that Jesus was born again. Of this second birth, we can also say that he was born from above, or born of God.

The resurrected Christ is also referred to as the firstfruits.

I Corinthians 15:20-23

But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the **first fruits** of them that slept.

For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

But every man in his own order: Christ the **first fruits**; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

The term "first fruits" is similar to "firstborn" in that it implies two things: (1) he was the first to be resurrected and (2) others will follow. When the others will follow is clearly stated as "afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." When he comes back, we too will be given a new life just like his. At that time, we will be born a second time.

When Jesus was put into the sepulcher, his lifeless body was so marred and disfigured Isaiah said that it was beyond human semblance. When he got up, he had a completely new body. We are promised a similar transformation.

Philippians 3:20 and 21

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

The resurrection, second birth, and new life are not unique New Testament concepts. They have their roots, like so many things, in the Old Testament.

Ezekiel 11:19 and 20

And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit [*ruwach*] within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:

That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

The word "spirit" is translated from the Hebrew word *ruwach* and can be understood in this context as the breath of life, that which gives life to a person. God promised to give a new life.

Water was used for cleaning before service was rendered in the tabernacle, temple, or offering of sacrifices. The washing with water symbolized the cleansing of sins. Obviously water cannot wash away sins but served as a substitute until the cleansing that Christ would provide would be available. The Scriptures also point to the day when Christ returns as the time when sins and transgressions will be completely washed away for ever.

Ezekiel 36:25-28

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit [*ruwach*] will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

And I will put my spirit [*ruwach*] within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.  
And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Ezekiel, the prophet, was blessed to be given a vision which explained how and when this new life would be given.

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,

And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, *there were* very many in the open valley; and, lo, *they were* very dry.

And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.

Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:

And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and

behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.

And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but *there was* no breath in them.

Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.

Therefore prophecy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,

And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken *it*, and performed *it*, saith the LORD.

This prophetic vision was first realized by our Lord Jesus Christ when he was resurrected. When those of

faith are resurrected at his return, they, too, will be born again. This second birth will be from above, of God.

Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about this new birth.

John 3:1-3

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

The word "again" is from the Greek word *anōthen* which means from above. *Anōthen* is translated from above in John 3:31, "He that cometh from above [*anōthen*] is above all." Jesus told Nicodemus a person must be born from above, which logically means born of God, in order to enter into the Kingdom of God. Many places in the Old Testament explain that the Kingdom of God will begin when Christ returns. Those who are raised in the resurrection of the just receive entrance into His Kingdom.

Many Christians believe that the new birth takes place when a person repents and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. The change experienced by those who accept Christ as Lord is often radical and life altering. Hence, it is understandable why people would refer to that change as being "born again" or "born from above." However, no one is literally born again or begotten of God until he is raised from the dead just as Christ experienced. Remember, he is the first fruits of those raised from the dead. Although everything about our lives may change with

Christ as Lord, we still maintain the same breath life we received from our parents. The resurrection is when we will be born a second time and receive a new life which prepares us for entrance into His Kingdom.

Nicodemus did not understand what the Lord was saying.

Verses 4-6

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Ezekiel 36 revealed that with the resurrection God will sprinkle clean water upon us and cleanse all filthiness. We are born of water and spirit with the resurrection. The first birth is flesh, the second is spirit.

Verses 7 and 8

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

"Nicodemus, you cannot comprehend where the wind comes from and goes. However you should understand it is God's doing. In like manner the spirit." Nicodemus just

could not grasp hold of the concept, but he should have been able since he was a teacher of Israel.

Verses 9 and 10

Nicodemus answered and said unto him,  
How can these things be?

Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou  
a master [teacher] of Israel, and knowest not  
these things?

The reason Jesus expected him to understand is that the Hebrew scriptures had already revealed these truths. We have already read that which is written in Ezekiel about these matters.

God inspired Paul to write a simple truth to broaden our understanding about what will happen.

I Corinthians 15:35-38

But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

*Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other *grain*:

But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

When a farmer plants wheat or some other grain, the original seed dies so that the new, much more abundant plant can grow. The contrast between the seed and the fully grown wheat is extreme. To gain the latter, the former must die. So it is with our bodies. They must die so that we can take on a new body like Christ's resurrected body.

Verses 42-44

So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; 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.

The natural body is sown in corruption, dishonor, and weakness, but it is raised in incorruption, glory, and power.

Indeed, Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. He was born again, given a new body and a new life. In like manner when he returns, we, too, will be born again and receive a new life!



## *Eternal Life*

**J**esus is the bread of life, the substance necessary in order to have everlasting life. He clearly stated that our realization of eternal life will commence with the resurrection.

John 6:39 and 40, 44, 47-51

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.  
I am that bread of life.  
Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

A predominant misunderstanding about eternal life is that it lives within people when they accept Christ as the Lord. This assumption has its roots in Plato's philosophy (see chapter 9) rather than biblical accuracy.

Beginning with Adam and Eve, we see that eternal life is not associated with a person's soul or spirit. The consequence of their sin was death; therefore they were driven from the Garden of Eden so that they could no longer eat of the tree of life. Had they not sinned, they would have lived forever. That which provided everlasting life was described as the tree of life. Exactly what the tree was may not be clear, but what is obvious is that the tree existed outside of themselves. They had to eat of it in order to live eternally. God placed cherubims and a flaming sword at the east of the Garden of Eden to keep them away from the tree of life; therefore they eventually died (Genesis 3:24).

Because of sin, no one is born to live eternally. Jesus taught that in order to gain eternal life, we must eat of the bread of life which is something outside of self. The bread of life is Jesus the Christ. Although we do not have eternal life living inside of us now, we do have the promise of eternal life if we stay connected to our Lord.

Verses 56 and 57

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

Just as Jesus derives life from the Father Who sent him, in like manner, all who partake of him by faith will live by him. As the Father is the source of life to Christ, so Christ is the source of life to us.

Jesus also used another metaphor to explain that which is necessary to attain eternal life.

John 15:1-6

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned.

The relation of the individual to Christ is never a static (standing still) relationship, existing as the irrevocable consequence of a past decision, act, or experience. Our

relationship is demonstrated emphatically throughout the Scriptures as a present mutual indwelling of the believer and the Lord, the sharing of a common life which emanates from him. Christ is our life (Colossians 3:4).

We are to have active participation proceeding from a living faith in our Lord Jesus the Christ. Jesus reduced it to its simplest statement with the words, "abide in me, and I in you."

To bear fruit, we must stay connected to the vine. To have a belief in and relationship with the Lord at one point in time does not ensure a continuous relationship which culminates with eternal life. The branch, representing the believer, must continue to abide in the vine, representing Christ. If we do not abide, we will be cut off and burned. If we abide, we will produce fruit, the greatest of which is eternal life. The only way to continue "clean" and to bear fruit is to maintain a vital connection with Christ (the vine). Advocates of the doctrine of unconditional security invariably are subject to blind complacency which is equal to becoming a fruitless branch. According to the Lord, these branches are broken off, wither, and become cast into the fire.

### **Life in the Age to Come**

The English word "world" has many different meanings. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* states as its first definition that the old English use, as is used in the King James Version, is age. The word "world" in the King James Version is derived from a number of Greek words. When "world" means age, it is derived from the Greek word *aión*. Some places to consider follow.

Romans 12:2

And be not conformed to this world [age]: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

We are not to be conformed to that which is vogue in our age, our time, but rather we are to be transformed to God's will via His Word.

I Corinthians 2:6-8

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world [age], nor of the princes of this world [age], that come to nought:

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world [age] unto our glory:

Which none of the princes of this world [age] knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Paul spoke with God's wisdom, not the wisdom of this age, nor the princes of this age. God's wisdom was ordained before this age. An age is a length of time.

II Corinthians 4:4

In whom the god of this world [age] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

God is the Creator of heaven and earth (Revelations 4:11), He is the possessor of heaven and earth (Genesis

14:19), He is Lord of heaven and earth (Acts 17:24), and He is the everlasting King over all of heaven and earth (I Chronicles 29:11). Satan is not the god of this world, rather he is the god of this age.

Galatians 1:4

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world [age], according to the will of God and our Father:

The world of itself is not evil, but this age is evil.

*Aion* is translated "world" in the following places: Matthew 12:32; 13:22, 39, 49; 24:3; 28:20; Mark 4:19; 10:30; Luke 1:70; 16:8; 18:30; 20:34 and 35; John 9:32; Acts 3:21; 15:18; Romans 12:2; I Corinthians 1:20; 2:6 (two times), 7 and 8; 3:18; 8:13; 10:11; II Corinthians 4:4; Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 1:21; 3:9, 21; 6:12; I Timothy 6:17; II Timothy 4:10; Titus 2:12; Hebrews 1:2; 6:5; 9:26; and 11:3.

*Webster's Dictionary* states that the English word "eternal" is akin to the word "age." In the New Testament, the words "eternal" and "everlasting" derive from the Greek word *aionios* which is the adjective of *aion*. *Aionios* can be translated ages, and with the word life can be translated ages' life or life in the age to come. Both Weymouth's New Testament and Young's Literal Translation render *aionios* as ages.

John 3:15 and 16

King James Version

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal [*aionios* - ages'] life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting [*aionios* - ages'] life.

#### Young's Literal Translation

That every one who is believing in him may not perish, but may have life age-during, for God did so love the world, that His Son — the only begotten — He gave, that every one who is believing in him may not perish, but may have life age-during.

#### Weymouth Translation

In order that every one who trusts in Him may have the Life of the Ages.

For so greatly did God love the world that He gave His only Son, that every one who trusts in Him may not perish but may have the Life of Ages.

Significant misunderstanding can be cleared up if we acknowledge the correct translation for "eternal life" and "everlasting life" as ages' life or life in the age to come. When we read "eternal life" or "everlasting life," we should think life in the age to come which is unending. The age to come begins when Jesus Christ returns. Upon Christ's return, the dead in Christ will be raised and given a new life. Those who are alive, mortals, will put on immortality. At that time what we commonly call eternal life will begin. Therefore we do not have eternal life now. We have the promise now, but we do not have the reality.

As we have noted in a previous chapter, when people die, they are dead with no part of them continuing to live. The dead believer is given a new life with the resurrection. Hence, we cannot have eternal life abiding in us now.

When a person repents and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, he or she receives the gift of holy spirit. The spirit helps the believer in many ways. It has come to teach us all things (John 14:26), to empower us in our witness for Christ (John 15:26 and 27; Acts 1:8), to guide us into all

truth and show us things to come (John 16:13), to clothe us with power from on high (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4 and 5), to fulfill the righteousness of the law in us (Romans 8:4), to bear witness with our spirit (Romans 8:16), to help our infirmities, and to make intercession for us (Romans 8:26), to help us know the things that are freely given to us of God (I Corinthians 2:9-15), to give us the understanding of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16), to impart manifestations empowering us for effective service (I Corinthians 12:1ff), to enable us to have fruit (Galatians 5:22 and 23).

The holy spirit is also the official seal of God's ownership and the earnest of our promised inheritance as sons and heirs of God.

II Corinthians 1:22

Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Ephesians 1:13 and 14

In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,  
Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 4:30

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God,  
whereby ye are sealed unto the day of  
redemption.

The seal and earnest are a guaranteed pledge of God's faithfulness ultimately to fulfill His purpose and promise of our redemption. The spirit is God's guarantee.

Yes, indeed, the spirit provides many great blessings to the believer. However, we should not misinterpret what the Scriptures state (as is commonly done) by attributing to the spirit the absolute guarantee that we have eternal life. The spirit is God's guarantee that He will do what He said He will do. It is not the guarantee that we will do what is necessary to receive the gift of eternal life. The spirit is not eternal life living in us now. Eternal life means life in the age to come or ages' life. Therefore it cannot live in us now. The spirit is not eternal life. The spirit is the seal and earnest that there will be life in the age to come.

Abraham and his descendants were given the circumcision as a sign and seal of the righteousness of the faith. The circumcision ensured them that God would be faithful to His promise. Will all of Abraham's circumcised descendants receive the promise? No! The Jews developed a convoluted, egotistical confidence that they were God's chosen because they were circumcised. Yet Jesus, and later Paul, confronted their gross hypocrisy. In like manner, the spirit is a sign and seal of God's faithfulness, not of ours.

All the great promises of the faithfulness of God in performing His work of grace in the age to come assume a corresponding faithfulness on the part of man. To suppose that there are no qualifications attached to such promises because we have the spirit is the same convoluted confidence that Israel possessed because of the circumcision.

Many believe, as I once did, that salvation is the act of a moment — one great moment in which the sinner humbly acknowledges his sin, repents, and accepts Jesus Christ as his personal savior. This one grand and holy moment of decision would usher one into an irrevocable state of grace in which he would be unconditionally secure. Some think, "once saved, always saved." A popular reasoning for the doctrine of unconditional security is argued with the question, "If eternal life is eternal, how can it be terminated?" This question proceeds from a fundamental misunderstanding. It rests upon the erroneous assumption that with the acceptance of Christ, God would implant a part of eternal life within the individual, and it would become his inalienable personal possession. Eternal life (ages' life) cannot be terminated because it does not start until Christ returns. You cannot end something that has not begun! We have already noted that the spirit has many functions, but not one of them is implanting eternal life in us now.

### **What Must I Do to Be Saved?**

The all important question we must ask and God's Word must answer is: "What must I do to be saved?" Throughout the Scriptures the answer resounds and is stated simply, forcefully, and frequently. Because of the importance of this question, we will review a number of places which will provide the same answer, yet in different ways.

Matthew 19:16-22

And, behold, one came and said unto him,  
Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that  
I may have eternal life [ages' life]?

And he said unto him, Why callest thou me  
good? *there is none good but one, that is,*

God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

Honour thy father and *thy* mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me.

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

Jesus gave the young man the answer to his question although it made him sad. The sadness was due to his wrong relationship with his possessions. They were more important to him than following the Lord. The possessions of themselves were not the hindrance, but his attitude towards them. Jesus in a very simple way stated this truth at another time.

John 12:25

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal [life in the age to come].

Those who hear his word and believe will receive life in the age to come.

John 5:24

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life [life in the age to come], and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

A certain lawyer asked him the point-blank question, howbeit with wrong motives.

Luke 10:25-28

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life [ages' life]?

He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

The answer given was to live lovingly towards God and man. Elsewhere we learn that love is obeying His Word, keeping His commandments.

While Jesus was on the Mount of Olives, his disciples asked him about the end of the age. He gave a most detailed answer which is recorded in chapter 24 of Matthew. At the end of his teaching, he explained who will receive life in the age to come and who will receive punishment in the age to come.

Matthew 25:31-46

When the Son of man shall come in his glory,  
and all the holy angels with him, then shall he  
sit upon the throne of his glory:

And before him shall be gathered all nations:  
and he shall separate them one from  
another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep  
from the goats:

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand,  
but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his  
right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father,  
inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the  
foundation of the world:

For I was an hungered, and ye gave me  
meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I  
was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye  
visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto  
me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying,  
Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and  
fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink?

When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee*  
in? or naked, and clothed *thee*?

Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and  
came unto thee?

And the King shall answer and say unto  
them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye  
have done *it* unto one of the least of these  
my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left  
hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into  
everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his  
angels:

For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Those who live righteously will receive life in the age to come. For those who do not, their destiny is everlasting (*aionios*) fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Everlasting fire is fire in the age to come. Revelation 20 states that the lake of fire is for the devil, his angels, and the unrighteous. It is the second death, meaning continual separation from God, death, and total annihilation. Matthew 25:46 says it is everlasting punishment, which means punishment in the age to come.

By no means do the Scriptures teach that eternal life is acquired by a one-time confession in our Lord apart from a lifetime lived for him. Nor do the Scriptures teach that life in the age to come is for those who walk perfectly, without sin. I John 1:8 states, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The Lord's prayer tells us to pray daily for forgiveness of our sins. This indicates that it would be a daily concern. Faithfulness, not sinlessness, is the requirement. If Jesus is our Lord, then we obey his commands. Faith and obedience are

inseparable. Our lives are to be centered in him, and we are to live for the day he returns.

Romans 2:7

To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life [life in the ages to come]:

We are saved by the faith of Jesus Christ. No one can save himself. We must believe in the accomplished work of our Lord, which implies that we live accordingly.

Romans 6:15-23

What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things *is* death.

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life [life in the age to come] through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The wages of sin is death. The gift of God is ages' life or life in the age to come. Jesus is the author of ages' salvation to all them that obey.

Hebrews 5:9

And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal [ages'] salvation unto all them that obey him;

God is the only just Judge. He is the One Who knows what each man does and that qualifies Him to be just when He judges. We are to do our best to live for Him and know that He will reward us with life in the age to come.

Galatians 6:7-9

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.





## *New Heaven and Earth*

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth which remained until the flood in the time of Noah. The flood caused cataclysmic changes in both the heaven and the earth. The world we know today is the result of that devastating flood. Yet, another heaven and earth are promised in the future, beginning when Jesus the Christ returns to earth.

Hence, the Bible speaks of three distinct phases of heaven and earth. The first was God's original creation which terminated with the flood. The second began after the flood and continues today. It will be destroyed at the end of this current age. The third is promised to come and remains our Hope.

Isaiah 65:17

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

The third heaven and earth shall remain forever.

Isaiah 66:22

For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.

The Apostle John was given revelation about the new heaven and earth.

Revelation 21:1

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first [former] heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

The second Epistle of Peter sets forth all three heavens and earths. This epistle was written to arouse our minds by way of remembrance regarding that which was written in the Old and New Testaments.

II Peter 3:1 and 2

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in *both* which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior:

The holy prophets wrote the books contained in the Old Testament, and the Apostles wrote the New. In order to understand this final chapter of II Peter, one must take into consideration the whole Word of God. The primary subject is regarding the events that will happen in the end times. Throughout the centuries, many people have endeavored to understand this important subject. Far too often, error has prevailed rather than sound biblical truth. Countless false teachings and prophecies have been communicated about the end. Christian history is marred by false doctrine and made a laughingstock by false predictions.

The primary reason for the enormous error is not taking heed to Peter's encouragement about studying the whole

Word of God. The conclusion of the Bible is impossible to understand without the scope of the whole book. Revelation, the last book in the Bible, has over 500 references including quotations, and allusions to the rest of the Scriptures. How can anyone think accurate understanding can be gained without studying that which preceded? No book is designed to be read backwards, and, most assuredly, God's wonderful Word is no different.

The last days of this age began on Pentecost as Peter taught in Acts 2. (Hopefully we are in the last days of the last days.) Since Pentecost, there have been scoffers questioning Christ's coming.

Verses 3 and 4

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,  
And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation.

Responding to the mockers' false accusations about how nothing has changed, God points to the most grandiose change of the past and the future.

Verse 5

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

This verse refers to creation of the original heaven and earth recorded in Genesis chapter one. When the earth was without form and void (nothingness), God moved upon the face of the waters. Therefore, before God created

heaven and earth, there was water. After light was created, God divided the waters from the waters causing an expanse which is called heaven.

Genesis 1:6-8

And God said, Let there be a firmament [expanse] in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

And God made the firmament [expanse], and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament [expanse] from the waters which *were* above the firmament [expanse]: and it was so.

And God called the firmament [expanse] Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

Firmament = Expanse = Heaven
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Outside the expanse (firmament) is water. Once heaven was established, God spoke the earth into being.

Verses 9 and 10

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry *land* appear: and it was so.

And God called the dry *land* Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that *it was* good.

On the sixth day of creation, God made man who dwelled in this beautiful heaven and earth. The record shows that Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and all things began to change for the worse. They were expelled from Eden, and the land was cursed. Approximately 1600 years

later, man had become so depraved that Genesis 6:5 says, "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The earth was also corrupt because of man's evil ways. God passed judgment and decided to destroy mankind with the earth, hence the flood.

II Peter 3:6

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

Everyone was destroyed save Noah and his family, eight souls in all. Considering the rapid manner in which man reproduces; the longevity of life then; no wars, plagues etc.; there may have been more people at the time of the flood than now.

The destruction of the flood did not eliminate the earth, although it completely affected the entire earth and heaven.

Genesis 7:11

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

"The great deep" refers to the water that is in the earth. Two things took place: "the windows of heaven were opened," which allowed the water from above; and "the fountains of the great deep" were broken up, which allowed water from within the earth to gush out. Waters gushing from within the earth caused the surface of the earth to change drastically. Perhaps this is when the mountains, valleys, deserts, wilderness, and other uninhabitable surfaces developed. To have so much more water enter the earth's atmosphere, then had been before, must have

radically changed the weather patterns. Before the flood no rain had fallen! The flood water covered the entire surface of the earth for one year.

After the waters finally abated, that which was left was a world entirely different from the first. Heaven, the earth, and everything changed. Even the animals were drastically effected. Before the flood, both man and animals were vegetarians and able to coexist peacefully as they did on the ark for over a year. After the flood, the relationship of the animal kingdom and mankind completely changed. Animals became fearful of man and meat for him to eat. Many animals were now carnivorous, which began their death-dealing struggles.

The heaven and earth described once as Eden were destroyed. The end of the first marked the beginning of the second (that which we now know). As the evolution of the first led to God's judgment and destruction, so will it be true of the second.

II Peter 3:7

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

God made a covenant with Noah that "the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Genesis 9:15). The next world-cataclysmic judgment will be by fire. It will also be marked with violent, overwhelming upheaval and demolition. In view of these shocking realities, the scoffer's hideous accusations are insane. "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (II Peter 3:4). Yeah, right!

God's perspective of time is entirely different from ours.

Verses 8 and 9

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

One thing that we all can be absolutely sure of is that God keeps His Word. Numerous times in the Scriptures, we are given testimony of His faithfulness to do exactly what He says He will do. The delay of our Lord's return is due to God's longsuffering and loving desire for all men to be saved.

In the time of Noah, the flood came as a surprise to humanity. Like a thief in the night is unexpected and sudden, so was the flood, and so will be the Day of the Lord.

Verse 10

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

In order to understand properly the Day of the Lord, we must study the Old Testament prophets, for all of them speak concerning these matters. For example, read Isaiah 13:6-13; Ezekiel 32:7-10; and Joel 2:30-32. We must also study the New Testament records such as Revelation 6:12-17; and 8:1-10:11.

There are many similarities between the judgment in the time of Noah and that which is yet to come. The flood affected both heaven and earth. The judgment by fire will also impact both. The earth was not completely destroyed, but greatly altered by the flood, so will it be in the end. Noah's family was spared. Those who endure until the end and call upon the Lord will be saved. In Noah's time, devils were placed in prison. In the Day of the Lord, there will be a war in heaven which will result in the devil being locked in chains for a thousand years. After this he will be freed for a short time and then completely destroyed (Revelation 12).

Jesus spoke of this time when he responded to questions about the end.

Matthew 24:29-31

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

When all the records are compared, we can conclude that II Peter 3:10 is referring to the end of this current age and the beginning of the next when Christ will reign on earth for 1,000 years. The judgment by fire will have a two-fold impact on the earth. It will eliminate all the destructive

pollutants caused by evil and, at the same time, begin the restoration process.

As we consider this revelation about God's final judgment, what kind of people should we be now?

II Peter 3:11 and 12

*Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

The four substances which make up the elements are air, water, fire, and earth. The elements shall melt, which means liquify. The Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom, Gomorrah, and their neighboring cities. The effects of this were so devastating that nothing remained. Volcanoes cause the earth to liquify and powerfully impact the air and water. The exact way in which God will carry this out is not stated, but is not hard to imagine.

Verse 13

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

From Adam to Noah (the first heaven and earth), there was a negative evolution in which mankind and the earth were corrupted. From Noah until the final judgment (the second heaven and earth), there has been, and will continue to be, a negative progression. From Christ's return until the new Eden (the third heaven and earth), there will be a very positive progression for mankind and the earth.

The evil influences that are in the world have not only ill effected man but also the heaven and the earth. Our world is physically decaying around us. As technology has advanced, so have its devastating influences on the environment. The whole creation needs restoration.

Romans 8:22 and 23

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

The redemption which will be provided is going to effect not only man but both heaven and earth and everything in it. Before the regeneration will begin, God's judgment will come. The judgment will bring about great destruction but also the genesis of the new heaven and earth. Some cataclysmic desolations, such as an atomic explosion, cause waste and unreconcilable desolation. However, other catastrophes produce immediate damage but ultimate good. A forest fire ruins the forest but causes the soil to become exceedingly rich. God's next judgment will be by fire. Fire indeed can be destructive, but also very cleansing and the springboard for rejuvenated life. All of creation is in need of a complete twofold overhaul. First must come the elimination of evil and its corrupting influences, and second the complete restoration of life.

Jesus Christ is currently seated in the heavenlies, but God promises to send him in the times of restoration.

Acts 3:21

Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution [restoration] of all things,

which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

This time is also called regeneration in Matthew 19:28 and Titus 3:5. The regeneration is the production of a new life – recreation. The changes are going to be radical and encompass everyone and everything. The undesirable and unproductive geographic features of the earth will be changed. Valleys will be exalted, and mountains will be brought low.

Isaiah 40:4

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

Deserts and wilderness will flourish with water and vegetation.

Isaiah 35:7

And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, *shall be* grass with reeds and rushes.

Isaiah 41:18 and 19

I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, *and* the pine, and the box tree together:

Isaiah 43:19

Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, *and* rivers in the desert.

When Christ reigns as King upon the earth, the weapons of war will be burned with fire for seven years.

Ezekiel 39:9

And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years:

All war will end; there will be a multilateral disarmament; and the weapons will be molded into tools of agriculture.

Isaiah 2:4

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Micah 4:3

And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

The next heaven and earth will be similar to the Garden of Eden which was in the first heaven and earth.

Genesis 2:8, 15

And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

Since the uninhabited and uncultivated wastelands will be flourishing with vegetation, we will need agricultural tools to dress and keep the garden. An incredible amount of the earth's surface is covered with wastelands. Deserts alone spread across millions of miles. The Sahara Desert covers almost 3.5 million square miles, the Australian Desert 1.3 million square miles, the Arabian Deserts 1 million square miles, and the Turkestan Desert 750,000 square miles. The most agriculturally rich nation, the United States, has 500,000 square miles of desert. Numerous smaller deserts are also scattered across the globe. Yet, we are told all of this will be changed because the deserts will have flowing rivers and pools of water. The earth is going to be transformed into an Eden-like environment.

The animal kingdom will also be greatly influenced. Before the flood, the animals were vegetarians and lived peaceably with each other and with man. Today, the animal kingdom is ravenous with carnivorous animals who hunt and devour other animals. Animals also have a fear of man. In the future, they will again be vegetarian and peacefully coexist with each other and mankind.

Isaiah 11:6-9

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 65:25

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust *shall be* the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

All the consequences resulting from the fall of Adam and the flood will be reversed. The curse of the land will be eliminated. Earth will no longer be thorned and thistled.<sup>13</sup> The devastating geographic effects of the flood will be changed and return to God's original design of which He said, "It was very good" (Genesis 1:31). The animals will be transformed. Mankind will also be changed. The resurrection of the just will occur when Christ returns.

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<sup>13</sup> Genesis 3:17 and 18 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

Corruption will be replaced with incorruption, dishonor with glory, weakness with power, and the natural body with a spiritual body.

I Corinthians 15:42-44

So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It 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.

Our current, vile physical bodies will be made like Jesus Christ's resurrected body.

Philippians 3:20 and 21

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

I John 3:2

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

The greatest blessing in that day will be that God will be glorified in all the earth. All sin and evil will be destroyed forever, and God will be exalted.

Isaiah 2:11

The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

God's purpose for creating the heavens and forming the earth was for it to be inhabited.

Isaiah 45:18

For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I *am* the LORD; and *there is* none else.

The first heaven and earth, in its beginning state, provided paradise for man. The second was the result of God's judgment with the flood. The universe today is not what God originally intended. The third will bring everything back to God's original plan. The third will be like the first.

God made man to be an earth dweller. Adam and Eve did not live in heaven. Jesus is coming back to reign on earth with those who have faith. Nowhere do the Scriptures teach that God's chosen ones will live in heaven eternally. The prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament clearly taught that man will once again dwell on earth as God intended from the beginning.

Isaiah 65:17 and 18

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

But be ye glad and rejoice for ever *in that* which I create....

A glorious future is promised to those who have faith. Our current behavior should be molded in view of all that is ahead of us.

II Peter 3:14

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.



## *Unto the End*

**M**an's inability to save himself is abundantly evident throughout the Scriptures. Salvation must be a gift by God's grace, or no one would be saved.

Ephesians 2:8 and 9

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

That which is necessary for man's salvation was provided through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God's loving gift of salvation is available for all mankind. Yet, not everyone will be saved because there is a requirement on man's part — faith. Faith is confidence, assurance, and belief in the promises of God. Faith is not works, but rather trusting that God means what He says and will do what He promises. Faith begins with hearing the Word of God, which is called the Word of faith. Faith must be maintained unto the end in order to receive salvation.

These two verses (2:8 and 9) must be viewed in the context of the whole book of Ephesians and the entire Bible. Yes, indeed by grace we are saved, but who are the "ye" being talked about? According to chapter 1, verse 1, this Epistle is addressed to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 1:1

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Saints are those who live holy lives. Faithful are those who maintain their faith. The holy ones who persevere are those who are saved by grace.

The book of Hebrews provides simple and clear information on the subject of this study. This book gives great insight regarding who Jesus Christ is and what he accomplished. It also clarifies the difference between the old covenant given to Moses and the new established with Christ. In the beginning of chapter 3, God highlights to whom He is speaking.

Hebrews 3:1

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

Those of us who believe we are Christians would agree that we are considered "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." We should give special notice to the truths which follow. Attentive consideration should be given to Christ Jesus. He is "the" Apostle and High Priest of our profession. The word "profession" is most often used today regarding an occupation requiring an education such as a doctor or lawyer, etc. However another meaning, as it is used in Hebrews, is a declaration of belief in a religion or faith professed. We could exchange the word "faith" for profession and have the same understanding.

Verse 2

Who was faithful to him that appointed him,  
as also Moses *was faithful* in all his house.

Christ Jesus is compared to Moses because the book of Hebrews teaches the significance of Christ. According to chapters 1 and 2, he is better than the angels. Now he is shown to be greater than Moses. This comparison is particularly important because those of Israel's background revered Moses and still wanted to adhere to the old covenant.

Verses 3-5

For this *man* was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.

For every house is builded by some *man*; but he that built all things *is* God.

And Moses verily *was faithful* in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

Moses was faithful in a wonderful way as so few men have ever been. He did much to help the people of God and to communicate God's truth to the world. However most of what he did was temporary and a type for Christ and what he would do. His work was mostly to illustrate and suggest those things that would happen later. Moses laid the blueprint for the house, but Christ built the house.

Verse 6

But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

A definite requirement is stated to be a part of Christ's house. We are to hold fast the confidence, our bold certainty, and rejoicing of the Hope firm unto the end. The end is when Christ returns or we die. Our Hope is when Christ returns and salvation is realized. The glorious Hope of the coming age is fully communicated throughout all the Scriptures. This Hope is the promise of God in which we are to have faith all the way to the end. We should rejoice or boast in it to the degree it determines the way we live each day.

What follows is the example of what happened to Israel who did not hold fast their confidence and rejoicing firm unto the end.

#### Verses 7-11

Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,  
Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:  
When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.  
Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in *their* heart; and they have not known my ways.  
So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

When Israel was harshly treated in Egypt, they called unto God for help. He responded and had Moses lead them out of their bondage. After a series of ten plagues, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, finally allowed them to leave. Following their departure, Pharaoh foolishly decided to chase after them, and, as a result, God parted the Red Sea for Israel to cross over. When Pharaoh and his soldiers

tried to follow, the sea returned and drowned all the Egyptians.

When Moses told Israel to enter into the sea, they had enough faith in God to obey. Subsequently they were released from their bondage. If they did not have faith when Moses said to go, they would have stayed put and been destroyed by the Egyptians.

God had told them that He would lead them into the land He promised to Abraham — a land flowing with milk and honey. He told them that He would send hornets before them to drive out the inhabitants. The Israelites could simply stroll in and take over without any resistance at all. While they were in the wilderness on their way to the land, God provided manna and water for them. He protected and led them with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. However Israel had great difficulty remaining faithful to God's promise. Ten times in the first year out of Egypt, they tempted God with their unbelief.

When the time finally came for the angel of God to lead them into the land, they begged God to allow them to send spies first. This request was foolish in that God had already surveyed the land and promised to protect and lead them. No matter how many men or how powerful they were, all would run for the hills when the hornets attacked. What would you do if a swarm of hornets attacked you? Although it was foolish, they were allowed by God to send one spy from each tribe, 12 in all, who spied the land for 40 days.

When Israel was at the border of entry into the land, the spies returned with an evil report. Ten said that there were too many, that they were stronger than they, and were giants. Only Joshua and Caleb gave a positive report. The people gravitated to the evil report and completely lost their faith.

## Numbers 14:1-10

And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of them that searched the land, rent their clothes:

And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, *is* an exceeding good land.

If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they *are* bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us: fear them not.

But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

Had God not intervened, they would have killed Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb. They would have appointed a new leader and marched right back to their bondage in Egypt. As a result of their unbelief, they stayed in the wilderness for 40 years — one year for each day that they spied the land. During that time, their unbelief continued until all of those who were 20 years and older who had crossed the sea had died, save Joshua and Caleb. This record is held up to us as an example not to follow.

When we accept Christ as Lord, we are freed from the bondage of sin. We experience a tremendous enlightenment that begins our walk with God. However, beginning does not ensure ending successfully according to what we are reading. Israel experienced great deliverance leaving Egypt, but failed to maintain faith to enter into the promised land. Likewise, we must hold fast our faith unto the end in order to enter the Promised Land.

Hebrews 3:12 and 13

Take heed, 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 To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Take heed lest the same thing happen to us! Every day we must stay firm. We must help each other so as not to be deceived by sin. Only to begin with Christ is not enough; we must hold our faith steadfast unto the end.

Verse 14

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

Again, God states a clear and unmistakable requirement if we want to be partakers of Christ. Verse 1 told us that this section is addressed to holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. Therefore we can conclude that being a partaker of the calling does not assure being a partaker of Christ. The Israelites died in the wilderness because of their unbelief. God swore that they "shall not enter into my rest." They did not enter into the land, but the rest referred to is far greater than the land. The rest is that which is entered into when Christ returns.

II Thessalonians 1:7

And to you who are troubled rest with us,  
when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from  
heaven with his mighty angels,

Holding fast the confidence of the Hope firm unto the  
end is the requirement to enter into God's rest.

Hebrews 3:15-19

While it is said, To day if ye will hear his  
voice, harden not your hearts, as in the  
provocation.

For some, when they had heard, did provoke:  
howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by  
Moses.

But with whom was he grieved forty years?  
*was it* not with them that had sinned, whose  
carcasses fell in the wilderness?

And to whom sware he that they should not  
enter into his rest, but to them that believed  
not?

So we see that they could not enter in  
because of unbelief.

Their experience is held up to us so that we do not make the same mistake and forfeit our opportunity to enter into rest.

Hebrews 4:1

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

We have this very vivid and sobering example to help us stay on course. God led them out of the bondage of Egypt, but their own failing to believe unto the end caused all but Joshua and Caleb to die in the wilderness. We are to fear lest we also die in the wilderness of our lives and hence do not enter into the Promised Land when Christ returns. Again, this verse is unmistakably clear that we (holy brethren of the heavenly calling) can come short of entering into His rest — the rest available when Christ returns.

Israel was taught the Gospel but simply did not believe.

Verse 2

For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*.

God's plan for man since He first made the world was for them to live in His rest. Adam and Eve began in paradise, and, according to the book of Revelation, those who have been faithful unto the end will again live in paradise.

Verses 3-6

For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath,

if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

For he spake in a certain place of the seventh *day* on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

And in this *place* again, If they shall enter into my rest.

Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

After the 40 years in the wilderness, Joshua led into the promised land all those who had been under 20 years of age when they left Egypt. But this was not the rest promised. The rest is still promised for it comes with Christ.

Verses 7-11

Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

For if Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his.

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

The word "labour" is translated from the Greek word *spoudazo*. *Spoudazo* is translated in Ephesians 4:3 as

endeavoring, II Timothy 2:15 as study, and II Timothy 4:9, 21 as do thy diligence. If entering into this rest, which we know begins when Christ returns, were certain with the initial acceptance of Christ as some believe, then these verses would be meaningless. "Once saved, always saved" is a popular doctrine but absolutely wrong. We must continue to labor to be diligent, or we will fall after the same example of unbelief.

Israel's idolatrous beliefs were often hidden in their hearts, but to God they were open. In like manner for us, God knows whether we have faith or not.

#### Verses 12 and 13

For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Being faithful unto the end can be a daunting concept if we evaluate it in light of our own human ability. However, we are not left in this endeavor on our own. We have a great High Priest who is compassionate and very willing and able to help in our time of need.

#### Verses 14-16

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;

but was in all points tempted like as *we are*,  
*yet* without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne  
of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find  
grace to help in time of need.

A portion of this record is directly quoted from Psalm 95.  
This psalm provides great insight on the right way to walk  
and the wrong way. Our focus is to be steadfast on God so  
as to worship Him. We are not to focus on our own  
behavior.

Psalms 95:1-7

O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us  
make a joyful noise to the rock of our  
salvation.

Let us come before his presence with  
thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto  
him with psalms.

For the LORD *is* a great God, and a great  
King above all gods.

In his hand *are* the deep places of the earth:  
the strength of the hills *is* his also.

The sea *is* his, and he made it: and his hands  
formed the dry *land*.

O come, let us worship and bow down: let us  
kneel before the LORD our maker.

For he *is* our God; and we *are* the people of  
his pasture, and the sheep of his hand....

The latter part of the psalm is the same warning we  
read in Hebrews chapter 3.

Verses 7-11

...To day if ye will hear his voice,

Harden not your heart, as in the provocation,  
*and as in* the day of temptation in the  
wilderness:

When your fathers tempted me, proved me,  
and saw my work.

Forty years long was I grieved with *this*  
generation, and said, It *is* a people that do err  
in their heart, and they have not known my  
ways:

Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they  
should not enter into my rest.

Two very important keys to garner from this record are:  
(1) focus on God, not on behavior modification, and (2) stay  
faithful today.

In addition to the negative example of Israel's  
wilderness walk, we have many positive examples of those  
who were faithful unto the end. They did so by focusing on  
God and embracing the promises. The human tendency  
seems to be to focus on self and try to change behavior.  
This tendency leads to failure, guilt, and condemnation —  
the opposite of the result desired. When worshipping God  
and embracing His promises are our focus, our behavior  
will automatically follow. Abraham did not live in a tent  
because he was trying to change his behavior. He lived in  
a tent because he was absolutely persuaded regarding the  
promise.

Hebrews 11:8-10, 13

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go  
out into a place which he should after receive  
for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out,  
not knowing whither he went.

By faith he sojourned in the land of promise,  
as *in* a strange country, dwelling in

tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Those who died in faith (which means that they were faithful unto the end) stood firm one day at a time. If we want to hold fast unto the end, there is only one way and time to do it — today. Notice how often we are encouraged regarding today.

Hebrews 3:7

Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, **To day** if ye will hear his voice,

Verse 13

But exhort one another daily, while it is called **To day**; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Verse 15

While it is said, **To day** if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

Hebrews 4:7

Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, **To day**, after so long a time; as it is said, **To day** if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

The thought of living a life of faith may be scary and intimidating. However, worshipping God and embracing His promises with the help of our Lord and God TODAY are very conceivable. We can be steadfast unto the end today only.

The concept of "unto the end" is reiterated throughout the book of Hebrews. Chapter six for example says:

Hebrews 6:10-12

For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Our forefathers of faith like Abraham are good examples to follow. Read Genesis 12 through 22 to gain the scope of our father Abraham. Another section to consider is Hebrews 10 and 11.

Hebrews 10:23

Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith [Hope] without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;)

The word "profession," as in chapter 3:1, is referring to our faith; whereas the word "faith" should have been translated Hope. The exhortation is to hold fast without wavering. We must help each other in this walk of faith.

Verses 24 and 25

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

The day of Christ's return is approaching, and we have a responsibility to remain faithful. If we willfully sin, we have the judgment and wrath of God to face rather than to receive rest.

Verses 26 and 27

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,  
But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

In Moses' day those who despised the Law, the old covenant, were put to death. What should be the punishment for those who reject Christ and the new covenant?

Verses 28-31

He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:  
Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden

under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Today we can remain faithful. When we first accepted Christ, we experienced great enlightenment. Now each day after, we can still live it.

Verses 32-35

But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

Again we have the encouragement to stay faithful unto the end which requires patience. Patience is very reasonable when we consider that Christ will soon come.

Verses 36-39

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Those who draw back (do not stay faithful) have perdition as their end. Perdition means utter destruction, eternal damnation. The next chapter in Hebrews is the record of the many faithful ones who are held up to us as a great cloud of witnesses. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, and others listed all had the same thing in common — they had faith unto the end.

Hebrews 11:13-16

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

They refused to look back so as not to be pulled back into the world. They all will receive the promise for they will be resurrected when Christ returns. In view of these great witnesses, we should run with patience.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

The benefits of remaining steadfast unto the end and the consequences of not doing so are clearly stated in the Revised Standard Version's translation of Romans chapter two and make a fitting conclusion to this brief study on this important subject.

Romans 2:6-11 Revised Standard Version

For he will render to every man according to his works:

to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life;

but for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury.

There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,  
but glory and honor and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.  
For God shows no partiality.





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**EPILOGUE**

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## ***Thy Kingdom Come***

written by John Cortright

**T**he coming of the Kingdom of God is spoken of throughout the pages of Scripture. It is the central theme of the Bible. What God originally intended for the earth and for mankind will be realized in the end. The Lord's Day, the end times, the return of Christ, and the resurrection from the dead are all part of the blessed Hope that is communicated in the Bible. There is one Hope, which the prophets spoke about, and which the Apostle Paul adamantly professed in his ministry. Both the Old and New Testaments communicate the same Hope.

Ephesians 4:4

*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

Acts 26:6 and 7

And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

Acts 24:14 and 15

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

When studying future prophecy, we must remember what is written in I Corinthians.

I Corinthians 13:9-12

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

There are many scriptures which give detailed information about the end times. However, God is the One Who must give us understanding regarding His Word. Just as the tabernacle and other parts of the old covenant were a shadow of what Christ would do the first time he came, we now see through a glass darkly. The things that will come to pass are often presented in a figurative, shadowy, enigmatic form. Preachers, writers, television, and movies have presented us with many theories regarding the future and have given various interpretations of what the Scriptures mean. It often becomes confusing to a person seeking the truth. Rather than building faith towards the

end, this wrong information can lead us to unbelief and confusion. We must keep our minds keen to exactly what is written and not read into what is said. Nor should we look at current events and attempt to fit the Scriptures into what is happening in the world. We must be open to the possibility that our theology or our belief regarding future events may be incorrect, especially since these things have not yet occurred. Some individuals are adamant about their theological position to the point that churches split and have great contention over this subject. However in the end, what is going to happen, will happen, whether it fits into our theology or not!

Although these things are written as an enigma, they are written. The parables were spoken so that those, who had eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand, could know the truth. The same is true with the things regarding the future.

At the end of Daniel, it says, "the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9). It then says, "...and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise **shall understand**" (Daniel 12:10). In the book of Matthew, Jesus said, "When ye therefore shall **see**...[what was] spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, **let him understand**)" (Matthew 24:15). In the book of Revelation when speaking to the seven churches, it states, "He that hath an ear, **let him hear** what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). The same thing is said later in the book, when describing the beast and what the beast will do. The Scriptures state, "If any man have an ear, **let him hear**" (Revelation 13:9). We may not fully understand, until these events actually take place, but let us pray that if we are here when these things transpire, we will have eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand.

The book of Daniel is written during the time of the Babylonian captivity. Daniel was one of the young men

carried away to Babylon, and he along with some other Judeans were placed among the wise men of Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that he said he could not remember. He called for the wise men of Babylon to tell him, not only the interpretation of the dream, but the dream itself. They could not. He sent a decree to have all the wise men killed. Daniel and his Judean brethren prayed to God, and God revealed the dream to Daniel. This dream reveals the last five great kingdoms of the world.

Daniel 2:31-35

Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness *was* excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof *was* terrible.

This image's head *was* of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass,

His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet *that were* of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

Here is information regarding the future that is given in an enigmatic form. Without God's wisdom, it would be guesswork. Daniel now gives the king the understanding.

Part of this dream has come to pass, and part of it is still yet to come. That part that has already happened, we can look back on with great certainty of the validity of this dream.

Verses 36-45

This *is* the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.

Thou, O king, *art* a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou *art* this head of gold.

And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all *things*: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

And *as* the toes of the feet *were* part of iron, and part of clay, *so* the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.

And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave

one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream *is* certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

THE INTERPRETATION  
OF THE DREAM OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

- The head of gold:  
Nebuchadnezzar: the Babylonian Empire
- The breast and arms of silver:  
2<sup>nd</sup> kingdom: the Persian Empire
- The belly and thighs of brass:  
3<sup>rd</sup> kingdom: the Grecian Empire
- The legs of iron:  
4<sup>th</sup> kingdom: the Roman Empire
- The feet part iron and part clay:  
the Roman Empire divided
- The stone that smote the image:  
**THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

Nebuchadnezzar was given this dream over 500 years before Christ; and with stunning accuracy it came to pass as Daniel said. The head of gold was Nebuchadnezzar, which is the great Babylonian Empire. After his death the Babylonians were defeated by Persia, which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> kingdom; the breast and arms of silver. Under Alexander the Great, the Greeks defeated the Persians and the 3<sup>rd</sup> kingdom; the belly and thighs of brass. The next great and powerful kingdom was the Roman Empire. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> kingdom; the legs of iron. This empire ruled for hundreds of years. Many of the great nations today, such as England, France, Italy, and even the United States of America, are remnants of the Roman Empire, the feet of part iron and part clay. In the end, the stone (that crushed this image and made the entire structure as the chaff of the summer threshingfloors) is the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom has yet to come to pass, but when it does, it will prevail over all the kingdoms of men. It will become great and will fill the whole earth.

Daniel 7:13 and 14, 27

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed.

And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom *is* an

everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

Perhaps the greatest, and clearest presentation about what will happen in the end is that which was communicated by our Lord when he was asked by his disciples.

Matthew 24:4-14

And Jesus answered and said unto them,  
Take heed that no man deceive you.

For many shall come in my name, saying, I  
am Christ; and shall deceive many.

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of  
wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all  
*these things* must come to pass, but the end  
is not yet.

For nation shall rise against nation, and  
kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be  
famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes,  
in divers places.

All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted,  
and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all  
nations for my name's sake.

And then shall many be offended, and shall  
betray one another, and shall hate one  
another.

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall  
deceive many.

And because iniquity shall abound, the love  
of many shall wax cold.

But he that shall endure unto the end, the  
same shall be saved.

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

This chart lists the events recorded in these verses.

#### THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS

- False Christs shall deceive many
- Wars and rumors of wars
- Famines, pestilence, and earthquakes in divers places
- Killed and hated for Christ's name
- Many shall be offended, and shall betray and hate one another
- False prophets shall arise and deceive many
- Iniquity shall abound
- The love of many shall wax cold.
- The Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached to all nations.

These are the beginning of sorrows. Sometimes we do not look at the overall scope of what has transpired. We often live in the little time and space that we belong, and miss the big picture. These sorrows have been going on since the day of Pentecost. Starting with the first century Church, and then on into early church history, there has been great persecution of Christians. Still today in certain countries, individuals who promote Christianity are persecuted. In the last 1,000 years, there have been incredible sorrows. In the crusades between 1000 and 1200 A.D., hundreds of thousands of Jews, Muslims, and

Christians were killed. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century during the Black Plague, over 25 million Europeans died. The cholera epidemic in Russia claimed the lives of over 2 million. In the infamous famines in Ireland and Szechuan China, over 4.5 million people died. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century in China, a false prophet rose up claiming to be the son of God and brother of Jesus Christ. He started a movement called Taiping, and a 15 year struggle ensued. By the end of this struggle, there were millions of casualties.

In just the last century, great sorrows have occurred. The great Tokyo and San Francisco earthquakes killed over 150,000 people. War in the last century has brought enormous casualties. Over 14 million people died in World War I, 40 million in World War II, and another 7 million in Korea and Vietnam; not to mention the number of people that died in the Russian Revolution and the Communist takeover of China. Through systematic genocide in Armenia, Cambodia, and Bosnia, over 1 million people were killed. Another 6 million were killed in the holocaust during World War II.

Even as recently as 1967, smallpox disease had killed 2 million people. Today, cancer, heart disease, and AIDS kill over 100,000 people each year. In just the last 20 years, there have been over 25 major earthquakes in many places on the earth that have killed over 150,000 people. We have been, and still are, in the beginning of sorrows. We are in the last days.

Through a careful study of Jesus' teachings in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and of the information contained in the books of Daniel, Corinthians, Thessalonians and Revelation, we can get a brief outline of what will take place in the future.

### EVENTS OF THE LAST DAYS AND THE END TIMES

The beginning of sorrows

The abomination of desolation

The beast, the false prophet, the little horn, the son of perdition

Gentile rule of Jerusalem

Daily sacrifice removed and an abomination setup in the temple

The great tribulation

The days will be shortened – approximately three and a half years

The return of Christ at the last trump

The Resurrection of the just

The saints return with Christ to the earth

Beast and false prophet are destroyed

The 1000-year reign (the millennium Kingdom)

Satan is bound in the bottomless pit

All kingdoms are subdued, brought under rule and authority

The saints reign with Christ on the earth

At end of 1,000 years, Satan is cast into the lake of fire

The Resurrection of the unjust

Great white throne judgments of the unjust

Death and hell are cast into the lake of fire

Those not written in book of life cast into the lake of fire

Final paradise on earth

The new heaven and earth are completely established

The tree of life is again in the midst of paradise

The day of Pentecost began the last days. We have been, and continue to be, in this beginning of sorrows. The event that commences the final end we find in the words of Jesus Christ in verse 15.

Matthew 24:15-26

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe *it* not.

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Behold, I have told you before.

Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, *he is* in the secret chambers; believe *it* not.

The book of Daniel prophesies that a king of fierce countenance will rise in power over the city of Jerusalem and set up the abomination of desolation.

Daniel 8:23

And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, **a king of fierce countenance**, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.

This king is also called the little horn in the book of Daniel (Daniel 7:7-8,11,19-21).

He is called the beast in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 13:1 and 2

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a **beast** rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

And the **beast** which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as *the feet of a bear*, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

He is called the son of perdition in the book of Thessalonians.

II Thessalonians 2:1-4

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by our gathering together unto him*,

That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a

falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;  
Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Although many people today call this man "the antichrist," this is not the biblical term for this beast. The term antichrist only appears in the Epistles of I and II John and is a term for an individual who is a deceiver — one that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. The Scriptures say that there are many antichrists in the world (I John 2:18, 22; 4:3; II John 1:7). The beast is definitely an antichrist, but not all antichrists are this beast.

Besides the beast, the book of Revelation also speaks of the false prophet that shall arise (Revelation 13:11-15; 16:13). This false prophet will assist the king.

Apparently, it is through this king and his Gentile rule of Jerusalem that the great tribulation is orchestrated. During this time of tribulation will be affliction such has not been since the creation.

Mark 13:19

For *in* those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.

Daniel 12:1

...and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time....

The great tribulation is not the same as the wrath of God. Most often, when the Scriptures speak of tribulation,

affliction, and persecution, men (usually tyrant kings or religious leaders) bring it on. Christians are not to expect to be exempt from tribulation. Actually quite the opposite is stated.

John 16:33

...In the world ye shall have tribulation....

Acts 14:22

...and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

I Thessalonians 3:4

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation....

II Timothy 3:12

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Although this tribulation will be great, the promise of God is that this time will be shortened. Many references in Scripture indicate that this period of time will be only three and a half years. This time period is presented in the Scriptures in three different ways. It is presented in years, months, and days. The phrase "a time, times, and dividing of times" is a description in years. A "time" is a year; "times" is two years; and a "half " or "dividing of times" is a half a year. One year, plus two years, plus a half a year equal three and a half years. The Scriptures talk of this time as being 42 months which is also three and a half years. In days it is shown in one instance as 1,260 days. When describing a different aspect of these times, it speaks of 1,290 days. The day and the hour are not exact; but putting all these scriptures together, we have a general understanding that this time period will last approximately

three and a half years. Daniel 7:25; 12:6 and 7,11; Revelation 11:2 and 3; 12:12-14; 13:5 all reference this truth

If these times of the end should occur in our lifetime, the Word of God has given us assurance that this tribulation does have an end. Knowing this should give us strength to endure patiently.

During this time false prophets may be saying that Christ has come. However, when Christ returns there will be no mistake about it. It will be like lightning coming out of the east and shining all the way to the west! The Lord is coming back in power.

Matthew 24:27-31

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The Lord will come back when the last, the seventh, trumpet sounds and with the voice of the archangel. This is the time of the resurrection of the just. The graves of the

earth will be opened, and the dead in Christ will rise and meet the Lord in the air.

I Thessalonians 4:16 and 17

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Daniel 12:1 and 2

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people...and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life....

Revelation 8:2, 6

And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

## Revelation 10:7

But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

## Revelation 11:15, 18

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth.

## I Corinthians 15:51 and 52

Behold, I shew 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

The just shall be raised from the graves of the earth and will meet the Lord in the air. The Scriptures do not indicate how long we will be in the air, but what is evident is that all the saints will return with Christ to the earth to usher in the King of kings. He is coming to take the Kingdom.

Acts 1:11 and 12

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet....

Zechariah 14:1-5

Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.

For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which *is* before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *and there shall be* a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, *and* all the saints with thee.

## II Thessalonians 1:7-10

And to you who are troubled rest with us,  
when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from  
heaven with his mighty angels,  
In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that  
know not God, and that obey not the gospel  
of our Lord Jesus Christ:  
Who shall be punished with everlasting  
destruction from the presence of the Lord,  
and from the glory of his power;  
When he shall come to be glorified in [with]  
his saints....

There will be a battle when the Lord comes back. He will defeat the kingdoms of this earth and will destroy the beast and the false prophet.

## II Thessalonians 2:8

And then shall that Wicked be revealed,  
whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit  
of his mouth, and shall destroy with the  
brightness of his coming:

## Revelation 19:11,16,19-21

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a  
white horse; and he that sat upon him *was*  
called Faithful and True, and in  
righteousness he doth judge and make war.

And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh  
a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND  
LORD OF LORDS.

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the  
earth, and their armies, gathered together to

make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

This time of the Lord's return is referred to as the Lord's Day, the Day of the Lord, the Day of Christ, and the Day of Wrath of our God. There are many events that transpire during this time including devastation of the planet. The stars will fall from heaven (Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:13); the heavens being on fire will dissolve [loosen or break up] and the earth will also break up and melt with liquid heat (II Peter 3:10,12; Micah 1:4); one third of the vegetation on the earth will burn up (Revelation 8:7); a third part of the sea and the creatures therein will burn up and die (Revelation 8:8 and 9); and a third of mankind will be killed by fire, smoke, and brimstone (Revelation 9:18); the heavens will roll like a scroll, and every mountain and island will be moved out of their place (Revelation 6:14; Isaiah 34:4); it will be a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness and the sun and moon will not give light (Joel 2:1 and 2, 10; Ezekiel 32:7 and 8; Revelation 6:12; Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24). This is the wrath of God on an ungodly world.

Those who have faith in Christ will be saved from the wrath to come.

Romans 5:9

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

I Thessalonians 1:10

And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

The wrath of God may begin to be poured out during the time of tribulation, or it may come while the just are gathered in the air with Christ, or it may come at the time Christ comes back to earth. Whenever it occurs, the faithful in Christ will be saved from the wrath. In Egypt, God's wrath was poured out upon Pharaoh and his people, but the children of Israel were protected; they were saved from the wrath. It will be similar in the future.

Although the earth will be devastated by what happens, the unbelievers on the earth that survive, still will not repent of their sins.

Revelation 9:20 and 21

And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:  
Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings will then begin to rule in his Kingdom. The nations of the world, all of

mankind, will ultimately come into subjection and bow at his throne.

Ephesians 1:21

[Christ] far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

Philippians 2:9-11

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth;

And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

I Corinthians 15:24 and 25

Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

This reign of Christ on earth will last 1,000 years.

Revelation 20:1-6

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.

Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

The 1,000 year reign begins with the earth in disarray. What has transpired is devastation, but during this time the earth rejuvenates itself, and what awaits at the end of this time is paradise.

At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan is loosed. He attempts to deceive the nations into revolting against Christ. He is destroyed and cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:7-10

And when the thousand years are expired,  
Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,  
And shall go out to deceive the nations which  
are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and  
Magog, to gather them together to battle: the  
number of whom *is as* the sand of the sea.  
And they went up on the breadth of the earth,  
and compassed the camp of the saints  
about, and the beloved city: and fire came  
down from God out of heaven, and devoured  
them.

And the devil that deceived them was cast  
into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the  
beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be  
tormented day and night for ever and ever.

At this time is the resurrection of the unjust. At other places in the Bible, the resurrections of the just and unjust are grouped together (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28 and 29; Acts 24:15). In the book of Revelation, the understanding is given that there will be 1,000 years that separate these two events.

Verses 11-13

And I saw a great white throne, and him that  
sat on it, from whose face the earth and the  
heaven fled away; and there was found no  
place for them.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand  
before God; and the books were opened: and  
another book was opened, which is *the book*  
of life: and the dead were judged out of those  
things which were written in the books,  
according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

Finally, at the end of the 1,000 years, all those that are not written in the book of life, along with death and hell, will be cast into the lake of fire.

Verses 14 and 15

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

I Corinthians 15:26

The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death.

Finally, Jesus the Messiah, the King, will deliver the Kingdom to his Father. God will rule as the King over His creation, and mankind will live in this new heaven and earth. Again the tree of life will be in the midst, giving life and healing to the nations of the world.

Verses 27 and 28

For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under *him*, *it is* manifest that he [God] is excepted, which did put all things under him [Christ].

And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him [God] that put all things under him [Christ], that God may be all in all.

Revelation 21:1

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first [former] heaven and the first [former] earth were passed away....

Revelation 22:1 and 2

And he shewed 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.

After telling his disciples about what will happen prior to his coming and the end times, Jesus made a remarkable statement.

Matthew 24:34

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

The verbs in verse 34 are in the subjunctive mood and are more accurately understood as "might not pass" and "could be fulfilled." It would read: "This generation may not pass, till all these things could be fulfilled." These things could have happened in the first century, and they could have happened in every generation following. And they could happen in our lifetime.

Verses 35 and 36

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*,  
no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father  
only.

No man knows the day or the hour; so we need to be diligent, watch, and have faith till the end. It is not our responsibility to figure out the times and the seasons. Our responsibility is to do what we have been called to do.

I Thessalonians 5:1-10

But of the times and the seasons, brethren,  
ye have no need that I write unto you.

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of  
the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

For when they shall say, Peace and safety;  
then sudden destruction cometh upon them,  
as travail upon a woman with child; and they  
shall not escape.

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that  
that day should overtake you as a thief.

Ye are all the children of light, and the  
children of the day: we are not of the night,  
nor of darkness.

Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but  
let us watch and be sober.

For they that sleep sleep in the night; and  
they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

But let us, who are of the day, be sober,  
putting on the breastplate of faith and love;  
and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but  
to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Who died for us, that, whether we wake or  
sleep, we should live together with him.

We should live our lives in light of this coming Kingdom of God that we may obtain salvation and have life in the age to come. When this hope is alive in our souls, then we, too, will pray as John did in the closing verses of the book of Revelation: "Come, Lord Jesus."

Revelation 22:20 and 21

He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.