A unique series of Bible Studies that focus on the points of life and Christianity that it is assumed that everyone knows already, but few really know.

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The desire to study God’s word is the most important desire a person can have. Within its pages, a person can find everything necessary for a fulfilling life here on this earth plus information on how to have eternal life. The Bible is the world’s most popular book. Millions of people have found hope, strength, comfort, peace, direction for their lives and yes, words of correction and admonition to correct their behavior and thinking. You too can grow as many before you have grown through a regular earnest, study of God’s word.

Many of us, who were born into Christian homes, came to regard a Christian in some very unfortunate ways. The author of this set of studies was one of those. Many of these people, later in life, still wanting to be a Christian but seeing that their old approach just was not working, have gone to opposite extremes. After they find that these extremes do not work either, they have a tendency to just give up and float along with the crowd.

However, there is a very important principle in Christianity. It is:

“A Christian can never go to any extreme, except in their allegiance and submission to God.”

This can be the sum and substance of this examination of what the Bible describes a Christian to be. One who avoids the extremes, but is deeply in love with their Savior.

The series of subject examined here were selected in order to discover the very basics of what it means to be a Bible Christian. Unique doctrines of various Christian groups are not addressed here, except some that bear on these basics. This is not a catechism of any given church, other then the universal Church of God. Rather it is an attempt to examine those things that we are all sure that we know already.

So, if your Christian experience is all fine and dandy, either you have already discovered these principles, or you may not really realize just where you are in relationship with God. A comment a number have made is:

“If I had only known this information much earlier, my Christian walk would have been much easier.”

Any course of study, openly or otherwise, assumes a level of knowledge in the one who is the student. In this series, there are only two theological assumptions made.

1. That you believe there is a God in heaven and
2. That the Bible is God’s written message to us.

The author recognizes that many who may study these lessons will have more knowledge then this assumed, rudimentary level. However, many who have had a greater level of knowledge, after examining these principles have reflected that they were able to make much more sense out of what they knew already. Besides, it never hurts to review the topics in God’s word. New vistas of thought will come at each setting to the honest and earnest seeker for truth.

The original lessons in this series were set to paper back in the early 1970’s. Each time these topics are examined, more and more information is brought to mind and shared in these lessons. In some cases, some very startling discoveries have been made, which has made the life of the Christian much easier and more successful, when compared to the more common outlooks on being a Christian. Therefore, this revision is just another link in the chain of discovery that will continue as long as life shall last.

It is safe to say that none of us even yet, including the author, has a detailed knowledge of the whole picture presented in God’s word. Since each person may have some part of the picture that is missing, when these different focal points are examined in the light of God’s word, a more accurate sketch of the whole picture will be presented. Than, what you previously knew will be reinforced, and what was unknown will add to your knowledge of God’s
word. So as we advance in this study, let us observe and follow the advice Paul gave: “let your mind dwell on these things.”¹

**LAYOUT**

The layout of this book is unique in some ways. Originally, these were just lessons where the reader was given a set of questions with the texts where one could find the answers. Then different ones wanted the information that was given in the study that was not included in the questions. So that was added. Then it was felt that maybe it would be better to narrate the information with the original questions to be used as a study guide. What you hold in your hand is the product of that evolution of information.

In the following pages, you will find both “end note” and “foot note” references in the narrative.

**END NOTES** - The “end notes” are shown in the texts as, xx¹. These refer the student back to the end of the chapter where the quiz or study guide is found. Somewhere near the referring number, the student will find the answer to the question with the corresponding number at the end of the chapter.

**FOOT NOTES** - The footnotes shown in the texts as,¹ will serve, as most footnotes do, as the place to list the numerous references for the information given at the bottom of the page.

There are two suggested ways the student can approach this study.

1. They can go to the study guides and search out the information that provides the answer to the questions on their own. Then read the narrative to discover those areas, which do not immediately open themselves to their study.

2. One can just read this as a book, and then, when they come to the end of each chapter, they can refresh their memory by answering the questions posed.

Either way, it is hoped that the student will find new vista’s opening up and share the joy of discovery the author had when these wonderful truths from God’s word opened up to him.

**NOTE:** UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED ALL THE REFERENCES IN THIS SERIES OF STUDIES ARE FROM:

The New American Standard Bible,
LOCKMAN FOUNDATION.

Other Bibles referenced are the King James Bible and the English Standard Version.

¹ Philippians 4:8
1. HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO US

As a background for examining God’s word, in this study we will look at the composition of our Bible, and examine a little of its history. You will find the brief overview of the different translations and the suggestions on how to study your Bible; which will make your time in its study more rewarding.

WHAT MAKES UP THE HOLY BIBLE?

First, you will notice two things about your Bible.

1. The Bible is divided into two major divisions called the **Old Testament** and the **New Testament**. This division is a man made division, loosely corresponding to the division of time into BC and AD. The Old Testament refers to the parts of the Bible that records events prior to the coming of Jesus to Bethlehem. The New Testament deals with events that occurred after that time. So, when Jesus walked this earth, there was no New Testament. When He referred to the “scriptures,” or “word of God” or “sacred writings,” He was talking about what we call the Old Testament. Not one page of the New Testament was written before Jesus returned to heaven.

2. As you start reading, you will find the story is not always continuous. This is because some 35 authors wrote 66 books. There are 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. They wrote it - over a period of some 1,600 years. The earliest writer, Moses, wrote Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers Deuteronomy and Job, around about 1,500 BC. The last book of the Bible, Revelation, were written about 95 AD by John, Christ’s disciple, just before he was released from prison on the Isle of Patmos and returned to Ephesus where tradition says he passed away. Here John wrote the newest of the books, the gospel of John, sometime just before 100 AD. Therefore, the Gospel of John is the last book written that is found in God’s word, the Bible. Some modern theologians challenge this, but it is the author’s opinion that their evidence is weak and the evidence for the Gospel of John being the last book, is stronger.

THE LANGUAGES THE BIBLE WAS WRITTEN IN

Two primary ancient languages are used in the Bible. The New Testament was virtually entirely written in the Greek language. The Old Testament is primarily written in Hebrew, with some parts written in a related language, Aramaic. God used the language of the common people of the day in which each book was written. Since Koine (common) Greek was the language of the then known world during the New Testament times, this is the language used in writing the original autographs (manuscripts) of the Bible.

Since Hebrew was the language of the common people who had chosen to be God’s people, most of the Old Testament is written in this language. However, toward the end of the Old Testament time, Aramaic came in as a common language, so the books written during that time use this language. Daniel is a major example where this language is used. If God had written in the language spoken in heaven, we would not be able to comprehend the message at all. This would defeat the whole purpose of the Bible. God designed that it was to be a channel of communication for God to use for all of humanity, not just the higher educated portion of society.

God used a number of authors. Each author has his own unique way of presenting the good news that God gave him to preserve. The various presentations would bring different points of view, as each different author would be impressed with a different part of what God revealed to him. Therefore, God used human agents rather than angels to write the Bible so that we might better understand what God is trying to communicate.

HOW DID WE GET THE BIBLE?

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1 Revelation 1:9
Your Bible was not originally printed on a high-speed press, nor even typed on an electric or even a manual typewriter. It was written with crude pens made of quill, or bones, or other writing instruments. The first material was not paper, as we know it, but carefully prepared animal skins called “parchment.” Later, scrolls made of papyrus, the first efforts at making a crude paper. This papyrus came from a rush-like plant called papyrus, which grew in the great abundance in the marshes along the Nile in Egypt. In North America, it would closely compare to what is called “Cat Tails” here. The long, broad, flat, tough leaves were laid out in two layers. Each leaf of the papyrus was laid parallel to the other forming a mat. Then the next layer was laid cross wise to the first, resulting in a crosshatch pattern. These were laid out on smooth stones and then beaten with mallets until it turned to a whitish pulp. The pulpy mixture was smoothed and left to dry in the hot Egyptian sun until it resembled a rough approximation of the paper that we know today. While much advanced, the most modern papers we have today still uses the same basic principles of plant fibers in a pulp used back then. However, today, wood chips provide the raw material that is cooked, instead of beaten, into a pulp. Then the resulting mash is pressed into thin sheets between huge steel rollers, giving us a much finer product. The results are almost unrecognizable as coming from the same basic process.

The original copies of the manuscripts are called autographs. None of these originals is known to exist today. Ancient scribes took the greatest care to preserve for humankind the most valuable message we will ever receive. They very carefully copied these originals under the watchful eye of the Holy Spirit to insure that the meaning God intended, would not be lost. While we might consider the results a little faulty at times, we must remember the length of time this book has been preserved. For when the latest translation is compared with the very earliest copies in existence today, there is no real change in the meaning. God has guarded His word and we can truly trust the Bible as the revelation of the truth He wants us to know for today. Indeed, you can trust the Bible, even though it is an ancient book.

The “faults” today are only the result of more knowledge being brought to bear in the examination of the Bible. Returning to paper as an example of what is meant. If we look at the paper this is printed on, one will see a fine, reasonably smooth, finish. However, put this page under a microscope and the higher the power of magnification you use, the more imperfections in the paper one wills see. The product is still the same, only greater technology and knowledge has been brought to focus on it. The same is true with God’s word. When used correctly, the greater knowledge is a benefit in that it helps us to have a more accurate understanding of the meaning hidden in God’s word.

The original Old Testament is written primarily in Hebrew and the New Testament is written in Greek. The Old Testament was translated into Greek by a group of 70 (some sources say 72) scholars in Alexandria, Egypt during the third and second centuries BC. Today it is called the Septuagint. You can buy copies of it today in most Bible Book Stores.

The Greek that the New Testament was written in is the Koine or common Greek. This was the language of the common people of that day. The copies of the Bible were highly treasured and high prices were paid for each copy.

In 1844, the German scholar, Tischendorf, discovered what is now known as the Codex Sinaiticus at the monastery of St. Catherine near Mt. Sinai in the Palestine desert. In 1859 he gave it to the Czar of Russia at St. Petersburg. It remained there until 1933 when it was purchased for the British Museum by a public subscription and a government grant for 100,000 pounds sterling (about $510,000.00 US). This was the highest price ever paid for a book up to that time.

Another copy of the Bible is found in the British Museum. It is known as the Codex Alexandrinus, which dates back to the 5th century. Probably the oldest copy is the copy known as the Codex Vaticanus that has been in the library of the Vatican in Rome since 1481. Scholars date it from the first half the forth century.

Other partial manuscripts number into the hundreds and more are found each year as archaeologist dig into ancient tombs and city ruins in the Middle East. The Dead Sea Scrolls, found in the early 1950’s, are one of the most famous of modern archeological discoveries. Scholars are still studying these manuscripts today.

**HOW ABOUT THE MODERN VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE?**
Starting with the Tyndale translation of the Bible into the language of the common people, there has been a virtual avalanche of translations since. The Geneva Bible alone went through about 200 editions. In 1611, the king of England, King James, commissioned a translation of the Bible. This is what we know today as the King James Bible (KJV) and it has dominated the Bible scene for over two-and-a-half centuries. Even today, some are found who will not read any translation other than the King James Bible. The American Bible society has distributed well over 4 billion Bibles since 1815. The 1990’s opened up the Iron Curtain to the Bible and it was hungrily received by the people of the Soviet Union like a letter from a long lost friend.

Today the perplexing question is not how to get a Bible, but which translation to use. The types of translations run the spectrum. On one side is the King James Version with its beautiful, stately language. From there one can move on to the strictly literal translation, like Young’s Literal Translation, by Robert Young, and from there one can go to the very readable paraphrases, like the Living Bible by Dr. Ken Taylor or more recently the Clear Word Bible. In between are many other good translations. Some emphasize, along with faithfulness to the text, a faithful rendition of the grammar (a more literal translation). The New American Standard Bible by The Lockman Foundation and more recently (2001) the English Standard Version, are examples of this type of translation. Some translations stress readability over grammar. These are often called thought or dynamic translation. An example of this approach is the New International Version. This translation has had probably the best publicity campaign of any new translation in recent history if not ever. While easy to read, it should be compared to some of the more literal translations to obtain the best understanding of what the Bible is really saying.

There is another way to divide the different translations. Some are the work of just one man. One example of this is the work by Dr. J. B. Phillips and his Phillips Translation. Here is an example of a translation by a brilliant single author. The other type is the committee translation. These tend to be the more accurate versions because the translating is seen through the eyes of a group of scholars and not with the single eye of one person. These are usually, but not always, the better study Bible. An example of one that needs to be carefully watched is the type of translation that is commissioned by a particular church or religious group. These are often slanted to try to prove some particular unique doctrine that the group is trying to espouse. Their translation may be good or not so good, but it should be compared and carefully examined. For the student who is intent on a study of God’s will, it is better to stay with the committee translations. These private translations are best set aside for now. Only after one is very familiar with the text should these private translations be checked out.

**PUNCTUATION AND WORD DIVISIONS**

The original languages did not have the refinements of word and sentence divisions that we have today. John 3:16, in its original language of Greek, would look something like this in the original.

```
Ουτωσγαρηγαπησενοθεοστυνκοσμονωστετονιονπονμονσγενηεδωκενιναπασοπιστευωνεισαυτνμηαπολα
tαιαλλεξζωαηνιον
```

Scholars divided up the words that make up this uninterrupted flow of letters and later a French printer divided the words up into numbered chapters and verses to facilitate finding a passage.

In various translations, you will find the same text translated in more than one way. This may be a result of different translators dividing the string of letters in different ways. Revelation 22:14 is an interesting example of this type of translation as well as an example of how God has watched over His word... In the KJV it reads:

**“Blessed are they who keep His commandment . . . “**

and in the NASB it reads:

**“Blessed are they who wash their robes . . .)”**

This comes from two different scholars (or groups of scholars) dividing this following string of Greek letters in two different ways.

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Μακαριοιοιπλνοντεσταστολασαντον
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The interesting thing is that it is correct either way, depending on where you break the words. When the thought is analyzed, it means the same thing either way. Putting the break in the letters in one position would produce the literal meaning, while selecting the optional position it would use the symbolic meaning. Since our robes symbolize our characters, and the purity of our character is tied to keeping the commandments, they both mean the same thing. God truly protects His word!

**INSPIRATION – HOW DOES IT WORK?**

One of the hottest topics of recent years in regards to the Bible is “how was the Bible inspired?” Since this has become a focus of attention today, we need to spend a little time looking at it here.

**TWO MAIN SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT ON INSPIRATION**

Christianity is divided into two camps on the concept of inspiration.

1. Verbal Inspiration
2. Plenary Inspiration

Virtually everyone will recognize the first one, verbal, as meaning that a person believes that each word was inspired by God. The second term is much less well known. Plenary merely means “full” or “complete” inspiration. In this concept, it is not the words themselves, but the person who was inspired to write the words. Sometimes called “thought inspiration.” In this process God inspires a prophet and they write down the ideas God has planted in their mind, but with the words they choose, with the help of the Holy Spirit. It is this second method of inspiration, plenary, that is the position taken in this study. Before we look at the reasons for this selection, let’s see why verbal inspiration is a most difficult option, even though it may be the more common approach used by many scholars.

**VERBAL**

As we have seen in the previous discussion so far, we do not have any of the original autographs available to us today. As to whether they are still even in existence or not, only God knows for sure. Most likely they are not for at least one reason. If the original manuscripts were available to us, people would tend to worship the autograph instead of the God who caused them to be written. It would just create one more barrier for some people as they would fail to accept the messages the writings contain. So in mercy God has not allowed them to be preserved within the reach of humans, if indeed they still do exist. For it is the message, not the letters on “paper” that is important.

The next reason why verbal inspiration is not a viable option is this most glaring one. At just what point in the preservation process do we have a word-by-word inspiration? If verbal inspiration were to be the correct option, then which version or translation or manuscript is the correct one? With no originals, the choice of which exact word the prophet was given by God is not something that anyone can prove, no matter what their belief system might be.

As we have already seen there are hundreds of translations in the English language, not to mention all of the other translations in the other languages of the world. While in some cases there is a relatively common translation of many of the texts in the Bible, the instances where the translations differ are far more common.

So some argue that the manuscripts from which these translations are translated are verbally inspired. Since we do not have the original autographs, which of the many manuscripts that we have do we select as the “authograph?” The oldest one? The most popular one? See, the problem of selecting the manuscript to establish which is the one to consider as the one that was verbally inspired, is not a do-able task.

When God inspired people to write the original autographs, they didn’t become “His pen,” they only became “His penmen.” God gave them the thoughts, they wrote them down. Therefore the concept of verbal inspiration, while it sounds noble and grand is just not a viable option, nor is it one we would really want when we examine it more closely. For this discussion, this is all we will go into about this type of inspiration, but these are some of, but not the only reasons to reject this school of thought on the subject of inspiration.
Therefore the remaining option, or thought inspiration, is the one we will examine and follow here. Really, there is no need to guess as to which is the correct one to use, since the Bible tells us just how God inspired His word.

“\textit{So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will,}’’

Now notice the last part of this text most carefully.

\textit{- but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” 2 Peter 1:19-21} \textsuperscript{XIII}

The “prophetic word” spoke of here is God’s word, or what we today call the scriptures or the Bible. Notice, however, that God says that it isn’t the “words” that are inspired, but the “men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

It is the prophet who is inspired, not the words. \textsuperscript{XIV}

This is an absolutely essential concept to understand if one is to have a correct understanding of God’s word. Any other approach to God’s word is doomed to failure. Only as the student of the Bible concludes that the prophet is inspired, not the words, not the translator, not the version, not the manuscript, but the person – will one be able to also be inspired by the message of God’s word. For just like the original author was inspired by God, so God, in the form of His Holy Spirit, stands by our side to inspire us with the same meaning that He inspired the original author to attempt to communicate.

\textit{“And He [Holy Spirit], when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; . . .” John 16:8} \textsuperscript{XV}

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us into the knowledge of all truth, not a reliance of faulty human languages.

\textbf{MASTER PLAN FOR INSPIRATION}

There is a master plan for how inspiration operates. Jesus revealed this plan when He spoke with the two discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus after His crucifixion and resurrection.\textsuperscript{2} When Jesus started to explain the events of the previous few days, Jesus:

\textit{“Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”} \textsuperscript{3} \textsuperscript{XVI}

Here is the pattern. First Jesus referenced the books written by Moses. These are the ultimate benchmark for establishing the authenticity of any teaching as to its being truth or not. Then Jesus checked with all the other prophets/biblical writers.

See, when a teaching comes to our attention, the first thing we must do is to go to the writings of Moses, the first five books of the Bible and the book of Job.\textsuperscript{4} When a new prophet shares what he/she claims God is telling them it is to be in accord with the writings of Moses. Only then can it too becomes part of the benchmark for testing all subsequent prophetic works. E.g. the writings of Daniel were only accepted as they were in harmony with all inspired writings that had gone before, etc. So too with the writings of Samuel, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the gospel writers and Paul were each in turn tested by the writings of Moses. Then, they too became part of the benchmark. Today, if another prophet should come onto the stage of history, all that has gone before, that has been proven to be in harmony with what God revealed through Moses, should test any new prophet too.

\textsuperscript{2} Read the story starting with Luke 24:13 an onwards.

\textsuperscript{3} Luke 24:24

\textsuperscript{4} All scholars do not accept the Mosaic authorship of the book of Job. However, this author believes the evidence is strong enough to take this position.
When God sent the “Comforter,” or the Holy Spirit, He was given a very special job description. One that is quite different from what many today believe it to be.

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

This makes the following test the most important of any of the others.

“To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.”

So no one need be deceived if they apply the tests and the plan God has given to us in regards to how He will work through the process of inspiration to communicate with the world.

**WHY THEN DO WE DO WORD STUDIES?**

The next question, sure to be brought up is this one. “Why spend so much time in word studies? Why go back to the original languages and examine words so minutely? If only the thoughts are inspired, then why worry about the meanings of the words?”

This is something like a cook saying: “it is only the final product which is important, don’t worry about the ingredients.” However, the final product is totally dependent on the individual ingredients. A story from my past will illustrate.

Cooking has always been a fascination for me. From the time I was about five or six, I have been baking and cooking in the kitchen, at first I was usually carefully supervised. However, one day I wanted some oatmeal, chocolate chip cookies. My mouth could just taste the delicious cookies that mom baked, and I knew the recipe well, since I had baked them myself before. So one day when mother was gone, I decided to make some delicious oatmeal chocolate-chip cookies. I turned on the oven to the proper temperature; I got out all of the ingredients and mixed them up just as I had done before. But since I had a sweet tooth, I decided that instead of putting in 1 cup of sugar as the recipe called for, I would make it 2. I could hardly wait for those delicious, sweet, cookies to come out of the oven. I waited the right amount of time and then the time came to take them out of the oven. As I put one of those wonderful looking, hot, delicious morsels into my mouth it was in high anticipation of the treat I was about to enjoy. But instead of the taste I was expecting, I spit the cookie out immediately. I then went looking for the “sugar” I had put into the cookies and discovered that I had in fact put in 2 cups of salt. Needless to say that batch of chocolate chip cookies was thrown out. While a half teaspoon of salt was necessary, 2 cups of salt was totally too much.

This is like the words used to convey the thoughts in inspired writings. Unless we understand the words with the same meaning the author who selected them meant to convey, the end result will be more disastrous than my salty cookies. Words in any language are simply symbols to communicate an idea with. The letters “e o l v” mean nothing by themselves. But placed together in this sequence: “love,” and a whole flood of ideas come to mind. But even this “idea” has many variations, as we will see in a following lesson on love. Depending on the context the word is found in, it can make us think of a happy family setting, a wonderful emotion or maybe a fulfilling relationship.

**IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT**

So it is vital, to be sure, not only that we understand the words, but that we understand them in a correct setting, as virtually all words have multiple nuances, if not more than one meaning. So we engage in word studies, not because we believe the word used is inspired, but because we are trying to discover from the original word the thought the original author received from the Holy Spirit that inspired him to use that word. In this study we must include many things. Some of these are:

1. Original meaning the word carried in the writer’s time.

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5 John 14:25
6 Isaiah 8:20 ESV
2. The historical context it was written in.
3. The immediate context it is used in, i.e. the sentence or paragraph.
4. The larger context - how the author uses the word elsewhere.
5. The even larger context of how the word or idea is used in the whole Bible.

An example that is very current is the Hebrew word “qadesh.” In some places it is incorrectly translated as being a heathen spiritual leader. In another place it is used in the Bible to describe a characteristic of God. Obviously the first instance and the second can not both be correct. One must be in error. But only as the larger context is seen can it be correctly determined which is incorrectly translated. (In this case, the first occurrence mentioned is really not a translation, but an illustration.)

**IS EVERYTHING THE PROPHET WRITES INSPIRED?**

No, not everything a prophet writes is inspired. Paul gives us a good example of this when he writes about interpersonal relationships when writing to the church at Corinth:

> “But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband.”
> 1 Corinthians 7:10

and

> “But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her.” 1 Corinthians 7:12

and

> “Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy. I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.” 1 Corinthians 7:25, 26

Paul clearly says in the first example that he has a command from the Lord for this counsel. In the next two samples, Paul clearly states that he has no command from the Lord for this advice. But, let’s stop and consider something before we hastily move on. Let’s take the case like we have seen several stories about in the news lately (2005). A wife lies in a comatose state and someone else has to decide whether to “pull the plug” or not. Setting all the other complicating factors aside for this discussion, we must consider this.

> “Who is the most likely to know her will in this matter? Her husband or a stranger?”

A loved one who has lived with her and talked these things over is much more likely to know her desires in this area then someone who has never seen her before. So too with spiritual matters, a prophet who has been living close to God and through whom God has communicated His will to the world, is far more likely to know God’s will in a matter then one who is distant from God. So even though a direct command was not received from God, the counsel is still valuable.

Here is an example of where a prophet spoke on a matter and it was not God’s will that he gave. The story can be read in 2 Samuel 7. David had fought all of his battles and peace was on the land. He had built himself a wonderful house/palace, but the ark of God was still in a tent. David was talking with Nathan the prophet one day and told him that he wanted to build a house for God more glorious then his own. Nathan approved of the plan and told David to go ahead. However, that was not God’s plan. God spoke to Nathan about this and the next day Nathan had to return to David and retract the permission that he had given in God’s name and give David God’s message regarding the building of the house of God.

This story gives us the assurance that if a prophet does speak in error, God will correct that misstatement. So in the advice that Paul gave in the above passages, had this not been according to God’s will, God would have corrected Paul and put the correction in the Bible, just as when Nathan misspoke. But in the case of Paul, God made no such corrections.

It is in passages like the ones quoted above that some people believe that they can set aside the counsel presented, because it clearly states that it is Paul who is speaking, not the Lord. Is this a correct conclusion to come to?
Obviously not, as already discussed. However, if you take the position that the very words of the Bible are inspired, then such a position would be in trouble. But if we take the position that the prophet is inspired, that the men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, then what evidence is there that God didn’t move Paul to say these things, even if they did not come through a direct revelation? God made no effort to correct the counsel and God preserved that counsel down through the ages. Maybe Paul didn’t have a theophany,7 but for one who knew the mind of God in this area as Paul did, the source of his information is still the Lord.

Or here is another question to consider.

Is a prophet inspired at one time and not at another? Or does the special relationship they have with God become an on again or off again experience? Can we trust what a prophet says when they are not directly moved by the Lord in a theophany experience? Just how accurate are their pronouncements when they openly state that God didn’t tell them the specific thing they are about to reveal?

This depends on one’s concept of inspiration. If one chooses to believe that inspiration only occurs at special times and places: i.e. in a theophany, and that a prophet is not inspired at other times, then their response to the above questions will be much different then if one believes that the inspiration process is more like a marriage. While some would seem to like to have their marriages as an on again, off again situation, such an arrangement will never produce the happiness and fulfillment of the marriage where there is a total commitment.

So too with the prophetic relationship the prophet has with God. It is not an on again, off again relationship. It is a full time relationship with God. Elijah is just such an example. Sure, he fled from the face of Jezebel when she threatened his life.8 But this did not separate him from God. Oh, it placed him in a position where God had to have a talking to with him, but they still had the relationship.

Like in a good marriage, it takes total commitment by both sides. As in a marriage, when two people live together long enough, they can often know just what their spouse would do, even if not told directly. The same is true with those who have had a long walk with God. They know the mind of God without having to be specifically told.

In this setting we should note an extreme, which is not warranted, but that some take. Some would have us to believe that if this inspiration is truly of the person, then that the person will never make any mistakes. This is no truer of the inspiration relationship between God and man then it is in the marriage relationship between husband and wife. Note what God’s word says about this issue. XXI

“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.” James 5:17

Even though Elijah was still human, even though he had human weaknesses, never-the-less, he was still inspired by God. Just because a person is inspired, it doesn’t mean that he will never make a mistake. In one case some have claimed that if a prophet makes conflicting statements that they can’t be inspired. Here context must be considered and as to whether they are a false prophet or a true one. They have pointed out situations where the biblical account differs from the secular historical account as evidence that the Bible writers couldn’t be right. However, in many cases further historical findings have proven that in fact it is secular history that is wrong, not the Bible. So an apparent “error” in the inspired account is no evidence that the writer wasn’t inspired. In such instances, it just may be that we are being tested as to whether we believe God’s word more then what secular sources tell us.

**IN CONCLUSION**

A study has noted that men and women considered infidelity to be different things. It was of interest to note that the level of infidelity that women found to be the most hurtful was when their husbands found another woman to confide in more then with them. They said that kissing, or other forms of sexual infidelity short of actual sex, although they hurt, were far easier to deal with then mental infidelity. And the same study showed that men were not far behind in this concept either. Could it be that the same thing is true in the relationship with the prophet and

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7 A Theophany is an experience where God reveals Himself to the person like God did to Moses on Mount Sinai, otherwise called a vision in some instances.

8 1 Kings 19:1 ff
God? That being the case then, if we reject the so-called “non-inspired” portions of the Bible, like the one cited above (and there are more such instances), that are we in fact doing the same as a spouse who confides in another? Isn’t this the same as trusting someone else more than the one we have claimed to formed a relationship with?

As couples get older, it is not uncommon for one to be able to finish a sentence that the other one starts. Their thinking becomes so much alike that they know instinctively what the other person is going to say with just a brief clue. The same is also true with being inspired by God. When a person has walked with God, been inspired with God, written under inspiration by God, soon their whole life becomes a reflection of the thinking of God. Only a fool would try to separate what is directly inspired from what they might think is not inspired. They are setting themselves up as a judge on the Bible. The final point is that since it is in the Bible, it is approved of by God or it would have been eliminated by now.

**IS EVERY WORD IN THE BIBLE INSPIRED?**

The question should immediately come to mind, “how can we tell what is and what isn’t inspired?” The answer is easy, let God decide what is inspired and what is not. God has not left us to try and sort that question out for ourselves. He has been quite clear as to what is and what is not inspired. In fact there is very little that isn’t inspired, but there are some passages. There are two examples, which possibly represent almost everything in the Bible that isn’t inspired by God.

The first one is in Titus.

> “One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” This testimony is true.”

The Bible is quite clear that this statement about Cretans is not inspired by God, but by one of their own prophets. Paul validates the comment by repeating it then confirms that it was true. This is an example of a statement that didn’t originate from God’s inspiration, even though Paul was no doubt prompted to remember that statement by the Holy Spirit.

The largest selection of text that could be considered as “uninspired” is found in the book of Job. Notice what God says.

> “It came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has.”

God plainly tells us here that the speeches of Eliphaz and his friends were not inspired by Him. What is so interesting is that how many times the sentiments spoken by these friends are echoed today as truth. It can be shocking to examine oneself and discover that we hold to some concepts they expressed and believe it to be inspired by God. Yet, God didn’t speak in parables when He told Elaphaz that their long-winded speeches were all hot air.

The conclusion is that with these very few exceptions, all of the Bible is inspired by God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof and instruction in righteousness.

Then why did God include, especially in Job, these extensive sections of uninspired thoughts? The answer to this can possible be found, again in the writings of Paul.

> “Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.”

Or you might say, these were included so we could know what not to do. It is a fool who refuses to learn from other people’s mistakes. So we find all through the Bible, examples of the mistakes of others. Here in Job and

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9 Titus 1:12, 13
10 Job 41:7
11 See 2 Timothy 3:16, 17
12 1 Corinthians 10:6
in Paul’s comments about the Cretans, we find invaluable examples of how not to do things today. So even though God was not the source of that information, while God didn’t lead those people to rebel against God as they did, their choices and concepts are recorded so we can learn what not to do.

In fact, this shows the greatness of God. In most, if not all, other “holy books” the flaws of the characters are not openly and extensively spoken of, as they are in the Bible. Yet in the Bible, God is open to show us all sides of those who have claimed allegiance to Him. This is to be an encouragement to us when we fail, and we will, that even the best, like Abraham, the father of the faithful, Moses, the law giver of all time, David the sweet singer of Israel, Peter, the big fisherman, John the disciple Jesus loved and Paul the apostle to the Gentiles all had their flaws. But through the power of the gospel they were still used by God and most likely will walk the streets of gold. There are few things that can bring us more encouragement today.

Therefore, it is a fact that if we ignore any portion of the Bible, it is at our own risk. The important part isn’t to try to determine what is inspired and what is not, but to take everything in context, even the parts written by the hand of God. As we will see later on, even the things written by the hand of God are more often stumbling blocks to the reader of the Bible than the portions, which are technically “not inspired.” So the issue of what is or isn’t inspired is really a moot point. The real point is “What is God trying to communicate to me in this passage?”

**DID INSPIRATION END WITH THE BIBLE?**

Many people strongly insist that there will not be any more inspired writings after the Bible. If that were to be the case, then explain why the most common warning given in the New Testament by Jesus and the New Testament writers for those of us who live in the last days of this earth’s history is about false Christ’s, false prophets and false apostles? It is totally impossible to have a “false” if there is no “true.”

Have you ever seen anyone try to counterfeit a $15.00 bill? A humorous story is told about one who tried. A friend told him that no one would ever accept a $15.00 bill, but the counterfeiter disagreed, so they went to the store to see what would happen. They bought an item for a dollar and handed the clerk the $15.00 bill. The clerk didn’t even pause, but reached into his till and handed back two $7.00 bills for change.

We laugh and say that such a thing only happens in the world of jokes and humor. Oh, if that were only true. There are more “$15” and “$7” dollar bills floating around in the field of religion then one might imagine. This is why in our next lesson we will discover the tests the Bible gives us so we can determine whether we are being given legitimate currency or a counterfeit. But the presence of the counterfeit is still good evidence that there is a legitimate somewhere. So the advice given in God’s word is the best advice we can have.

> “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

This we will do in the next lesson.

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13 1 John 4:1
QUIZ - CHAPTER 1

I What is the general division that the Bible is divided into? ________________________________

II What important event is recorded at the first of the second division of the Bible? ______________


IV Who wrote the first five books of the Bible? ___________________ Who wrote the last book? __________

V Which book of the Bible was written last, chronologically? ________________________________


VII What are the original manuscripts of the Bible called? ________________________________

VIII What was God’s main purpose in inspiring the writing of the Bible and protecting it? ______________

IX What was the original substance that we call paper today, called back then? __________________

X What is the name of the first English language translation of the Bible and when was it first written? ________

XI Give the names of at least two modern translations of the Bible other than the King James Version. ________

XII What are the two primary approaches to translating the Bible? ____________________________

XIII Which member of the Godhead moved or inspired the men God choose to write the Bible? ____________

XIV Who/what did God inspire, the Man or the words? ____________________________

XV What three things is the Holy Spirit sent to do? 1) ___________________ 2) ___________________ 3) ___________________

XVI What is the proper way to use the Bible to understand any truth? ____________________________

XVII What is the most important test to apply to any doctrine to be sure it is from God? ______________
Basic Christianity

XVIII What is an important principle to adhere to when attempting to understand what a Bible writer has said on a subject? ____________________________

XIX Is every word written in the Bible inspired by God? __________________________________________

XX Are there any examples of a prophet speaking something that was not from God? ___ If so, when? _______

XXI If a prophet makes a mistake in their personal life, or commits sin, does this mean that they are not a prophet of God? ____________________________

XXII Why would God use people to represent Him who make mistakes and sin in their personal life? _______

XXIII Does the canonization of the Bible mean that the Holy Spirit is no longer inspiring prophets in modern times? ______________________________
2. HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

PREPARATION FOR BIBLE STUDY

There is a profitable way and an unprofitable way to study God’s word. Many perceive “Bible Study” as going to an Easter egg hunt. Where the eggs are spread all around, just for picking up. But true Bible Study is like digging for Gold. One has to exercise not just effort, but knowledge. To the untrained eye, iron mica looks very much like Gold. A trained eye can see the difference quickly. However, one will never gain the trained eye if they spend their time in defending the mica they may have found as being gold. There are many doing that today.

Following are some suggestions for a profitable experience in studying God’s word. As in most of the Christian life, how we do it is equally important as what we do. While there is no rote way to study, there are certain criteria that are essential. Whatever study plan we use must include the following, the first three are essential.

1. **PRAY FOR DIVINE ENLIGHTENMENT.** This is essential in any study of the Bible. Spiritual things are only discerned with the help of God’s Holy Spirit. It is only as the Holy Spirit enlightens our minds that we can understand what God is trying to tell us. Also, *it is only when we love truth and are willing to follow where it leads us that the Holy Spirit will reveal it to us.* Any other attitude will cause us to believe a lie.

2. **ENDEAVOR TO LAY ASIDE ALL PRECONCEIVED IDEAS AND OPINIONS.** Unless we are willing to recognize that we may have been mislead or mistaken in what we have previously believed, we will never find truth. Only if we have carefully studied God’s word in a thorough and careful way, can we then hold fast to what we believe.

3. **BE WILLING TO ACCEPT WHAT IS DISCOVERED IN YOUR STUDY OF THE BIBLE.** Willingness to learn is essential when we study God’s word. Unless we feel a need for instruction, God cannot fill that need. Only when we submit our minds to the evidence presented before us in the Bible can we “accurately handle” the words of truth.

4. **USE STUDY HELPS PROPERLY.** Commentaries are just human ideas about what that person thinks the Bible is saying. Sometimes they can be helpful, but all too often they prejudice the mind as to the meaning of scripture. Study the Bible carefully first, then if you feel a real need to; consult a good commentary. But, remember, if it comes across different from what you find in scripture, the commentary may not be correct. The Bible is the standard, not the commentary.

One more point about commentaries. Even the best ones have inherent problems. Having known various ones who have written for commentaries, they shared with me that they wish they could rewrite those articles, because they have found more truth since writing what they did. What they wrote was the best information they had when it was written. But truth is dynamic, not static. So if one is really seeking truth, they will continue to find more and more gems of truth, not just stagnate with what everyone will agree about. So if one reads commentaries, recognizing that this is the best information at that time, then they will have no problems. But if they see commentaries as the last word, then the seeker for truth will run into major problems with their use.

There are, however, some very good tools we can use.

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1 Corinthians 2:10-15  
John 16:13  
2 Thessalonians 2:11,12  
Proverbs 21:2  
John 7:17  
2 Timothy 2:15
BASIC CHRISTIANITY

OTHER HELPS IN BIBLE STUDY ARE: IV

1. A GOOD DICTIONARY. Look up words even if you may feel you know their meaning. You might be surprised at some other meanings of that word you didn’t know about. You may also be surprised that what you think a word means may not be what it means at all. This is especially true with words that are not often used in common conversation. Allow the possibility that the word may be used in a way different then the most common meaning for a word. This will open up the window heavenward to learn more truth.

2. A CONCORDANCE. Two popular ones are Young’s Analytical Concordance and Strong’s. Both are good and each has its strong and weak points. Consulting both of them is not a waste of time. Time spent using them is not wasted for the student who really is seeking truth.

GOOD STUDY HABITS AND METHODS

The following are some suggestions for a planned approach to Bible study. You may have a different method for study, which is fine if it works. Whatever plan for study you may have, be sure that it is applied. The main idea is to be thorough and organized in your study.

1. CHOOSE A TOPIC AND FINISH IT BEFORE MOVING ON.

This is very important. Virtually any topic you choose in the Bible will present doors to other topics of equal interest. There are so many interesting things to discover and in the process you may want to explore a sidetrack. Resist the urge for the time being. Make a note of the idea then continue with the main subject and come back later. If you cannot resist the urge, go ahead but remember what the original subject was and return to it as soon as possible. Only as a subject is carefully examined all through the Bible can it really be understood.

Also, don’t make the mistake of concluding that just because you haven’t found it, that the Bible is silent on a subject. While the Bible doesn’t cover every topic, the Bible does present principles that cover every topic. So if you can’t find a specific reference, seek to find a principle that will address the issue. History is filled with stories about faithful students of the Bible who have discovered topics they had no idea that the Bible addressed at all. Many are making shipwreck of their faith, even in the church, because they fail to carefully examine what God’s word says on a subject. They are too eager to proclaim that the Bible is silent, when in fact it is only silent because the desire to know God’s word has grown cold. For, unless we are willing to be lead, the Holy Spirit can not lead us into all truth.7

2. SET UP A REGULAR SYSTEM FOR STUDY.

A system should include a time, a place and a system for study. This is important; otherwise your time spent will not be as productive as it could be. With most people’s busy schedules, it is important to get as much out of the time spent with God’s word as possible.

Here are some suggestions that will help set up the above and make your study more profitable. These are just common study techniques. They can be used for any subject.

TOOLS FOR STUDY

1. SELECT A GOOD BIBLE. It should be sturdy enough to stand much handling, but not so big it is cumbersome. You will want to make notes in it so it should have adequate margins. Since you will want to retain those notes the Bible should be one that will last awhile. Choose a committee translation for best results. A modern language committee translation of the Bible will probably be the most rewarding. For the English-speaking student here are some suggestions. The New American Standard Bible, the Revised Standard Bible or the New King James Bible, the New English Standard, any of these would be a good choice. If you have a computer, there are some excellent computer copies of these Bibles to make your study easier, including all of the above translations. Many programs will have two or more of the above in one program for comparison purposes as well as helps for Hebrew and Greek words.

7 John 16:13
2. **PENS, PENCILS AND MARKERS.** Have an adequate supply of writing and marking tools. Check felt markers and ink writing tools for bleed through. You could ruin a good Bible with permanent markers that bleed through and make the print on the other side of the page hard to read. Some computer Bibles present the option for the student to make notes on the computer, which will come up when that passage is referenced again. These can be helpful.

3. **PAPER.** A good supply of paper for notes is important. You will probably want two different kinds. Some scratch paper for the hurried notes while you are studying. Then a notebook or notebook style paper for more permanent storage. This will be for your finished notes. If you use a computer this is made easier. You can set up a file folder for all of your study notes on each topic. This also makes retrieval easy.

4. **HELPS.** Have a good dictionary and concordance handy. If you have a computer Bible, the function of the concordance may be largely filled with the computer search program, depending on the one selected.

5. **A COMFORTABLE LOCATION FOR STUDY.** An easy chair is not recommended, however, a comfortable desk or table with room to spread out (and leave it spread out when interrupted if possible) with good lighting is very helpful. Good ventilation with breaks every now-and-then. When studying longer subjects this helps keep the mind clear. Avoid chemicals that may deaden your senses. Tea, coffee, cigarettes, caffeine containing drinks and alcoholic beverages will all greatly diminish the ability of the mind to understand the clearest truth’s God will try to communicate to you. It is only through the nervous system that God can communicate with humans. The clearer and healthier the level that can be maintained at, the more accurate will be the conclusions one will come to.

**OK! LET’S GET STARTED**

First choose the topic for your study. Then write down all key words you can think of. Leave room to add more. Then take your concordance (or do a computer search) and find and read every text that deals with the topic being studied. Do not limit yourself to either just the Old Testament or the New Testament. Remember it is all God’s word to us today. Sometimes marginal references can be of help to locate other text on the same topic but with different words. Again, remember that marginal references are man’s connections, not God’s. They are sometimes incorrect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>COMPARE SCRIPTURE WITH SCRIPTURE.</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>There is an important sequence to use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Consider the immediate context of the text under consideration. This is the verse before and after.</td>
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<td>2. Consider the context of the chapter.</td>
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<td>3. Consider the context of all that author says on the topic.</td>
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<td>4. Consider all the Bible has to say by other authors.</td>
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<td>Here is an important rule:</td>
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<td><strong>ALWAYS USE A CLEAR TEXT TO UNDERSTAND AN UNCLEAR TEXT.</strong></td>
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<td>A clear text is one that can legitimately admit to only one meaning.</td>
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<td>An unclear text is a text where honest minds can see more than one meaning in it.</td>
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<td>Seek to understand the key words and how they are used. Then after you have evaluated all the evidence reread all the texts again. You may be surprised to find they sound different after reading the other text on the same topic. Now look at companion topics. They too can be helpful. Proceed no faster than you can comprehend what you are studying and pray without ceasing. Far too often, those who refuse to take the time do be careful in their study feel they are as knowledgeable as one who does the study. The Bible speaks to this when it says:</td>
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8 2 Timothy 2:15, 16
9 Isaiah 28:10, 13 and 2 Timothy 3:16
“Every man’s way is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts.”\textsuperscript{10}

And this warning is added:

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.”\textsuperscript{11}

Listening to the counsel of the Lord is indeed the mark of a wise man. While listening to the babblings of humans who know not God is the mark of a fool. Especially when eternal life is at stake.

\textbf{REMEMBER}

The Bible is a complete whole. All the pieces must fit together. If one text seems out of place, restudy it and the others to find out why. While some text may become obvious with only a few texts, others may take much more research. So in your study accurately handle the word of truth.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} Proverbs 21:2
\textsuperscript{11} Proverbs 12:15
\textsuperscript{12} See 2 Timothy 2:15
QUIZ – CHAPTER 2

I  What is the first essential for seeking for truth in the Bible? __________________________________________

II What is the second most important thing we must do in order to discover truth in God’s word? __________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

III What is the third most important choice one must make when seeking for truth in the Bible? __________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

IV List two good helps for the student of the Bible?
1) _________________________________________________________________________________________
2) _________________________________________________________________________________________

V What important rule must be used when dealing with an “unclear text?” ______________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
There are many today who are calling to us to follow them in religious matters and expect us to believe their teachings without question. Beware of such a teacher. Some claim to be following the "Bible and the Bible only" but in fact they teach their own speculations, which are far from biblical. Some believe that their spiritual leaders are the only ones who can define truth. This is the trap the Jews fell into and most of them missed out on knowing Jesus, the Son of God, when He was here on earth.

Some claim to have the gift of prophesy in their midst and they feel that this is an important part of their information source. This is not something to laugh at or make fun of, but a claim that must be tested with God’s tests. Then some who claim to believe “the Bible and the Bible only,” yet they laugh at this prophetic gift, even though they claim to believe in the gifts of the Spirit the Bible promises. Some today claim that the prophetic gift is currently active in themselves or in some member of their group. And this is only a small sample of the confusion one finds out in the world today. There are bits of truth here, but we need to examine them in the light of the Bible to really know what is the whole truth.

How can a person sift through all these conflicting claims and find what is in fact the “truth?” God has not left us to guess about such an important matter. He has given us some test that we can apply to these claims and counter claims that will keep us on the straight and narrow. In order to pass these biblical tests, a prophet or a doctrine must pass 100% of the tests that apply to them. This is because there are some “prophets” who do not claim to have visions direct from God. In that case we wouldn’t apply the tests for visions to that person. We must only apply the tests, which are appropriate to the level of inspiration that the prophet under examination claims, not what others might claim for them.

The beloved apostle John sends good council down to us today. It is found in his first letter to the church where he warns us not to:

"believe every spirit, but to test the spirits to see if whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

This applies even if they seem to be very spiritual or belong to the same religious group we belong to. Don’t forget, a prophet can’t be a false prophet unless he/she is claiming to be something they in fact are not. So one might claim to be a minister, but if they are a false prophet, they will use their position to lead people in the wrong way. Here is the only common denominator for all false prophets,

They will claim to be a true messenger of God, but they are not.

If they claimed to be a false prophet and are one, they wouldn’t be making a wrong claim, now would they? So the number one thing we must check on is if they claim to be a true prophet or messenger of God. Then apply the tests we are about to examine.

Also it is important to note that warnings about false Christ’s, false prophets and false apostles are the most common warnings penned for those living in the last days. That should remind us that those claiming to be something that in fact they are not; will surround us. It is also important that we apply the tests the Bible gives us to apply and not those we come up with ourselves.

Here is just one example. The life of the prophet is different from the message they are presenting. True, their life should, and most of time it will, reflect how the truth is working or should work in a person’s life. But that isn’t always the case, and in fact it is seldom that one can find a prophet that something can’t be found in their lives that is not in accord with all that God has instructed us about. Why? Because they will be growing in their allegiance to God just as the rest of us are. Remember, if

1 1 John 4:1
God only called sinless people to represent Him, He would not have anyone to represent Him and spread the gospel. For all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.²

Notice the two more prolific writers of the Old Testament, Moses and David. Both of these men had some very serious moral problems. Moses killed at least one man and David not only killed many men, but he killed a close friend and took his wife for his own. Yet, he was a prophet of God and we read the songs he wrote as recorded in the Psalms with joy. As for Moses, he is called the greatest of the lawgivers of Israel.

The same could be said for almost all of the prophets found in the Bible with very few exceptions. So if we hold a prophet’s personal life as a criteria for judging their message, we will most likely ignore the true and follow the false that are adept at hiding their personal problems form the public by lying, etc. Or in fact they may not even realize themselves that they are not presenting what God’s word says from any number of reasons. So we must test their message by God’s word and not take their word for their authenticity.

This does not in any way excuse sin in one who God has called. No, for as Isaiah 8:20, as translated in the English Standard Bible so well informs us. A primary test is that one who claims to be a prophet must be willing to correct their problems when they are made aware of them. This failure to be corrected is a red flag as to just how accurate their claim maybe as being led by God.

Paul adds to the warning John gave with this warning where he counsels us:

"Do not quench the spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances, but examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good."³  

So there will be some good leaders, and a lot of bad ones, that will demand our allegiance. We must know how to choose what is good and not be confused by what is not from God.

Before looking at the principles the Bible says we should apply to keep from being deceived, we need to look at some general counsel Paul gives to all of us.

It is a law of the mind that everything we pay attention to is permanently stored in our brain and will effect every decision we ever make in our life after that.

This makes Paul’s counsel even more important. ¹ In his letter to the church at Philippi he gave them a list of things to check information against. He said that it should be “true, honorable, right, pure, lovely and of good repute.”⁴ We should only let our minds dwell on those things that have excellence and are praiseworthy. In reality these aspects are to be taken in sequence because each one builds on the ones that are given before. For example, something might be true, but is it honorable? There are many true things we are better off not knowing about. But suppose it is true and worthy of our time (honorable), is it something that will draw us closer to God (just)? Likewise, is it pure and lovely? This is not to say that we will not have to deal with other things at times. But what Paul is talking about is the things we dwell on, that we give our approval to or are our favorite subjects.

WHAT REALLY IS A PROPHET – AS USED IN THE BIBLE

The word we translate "Prophet" carries more meaning than we normally give it today. In the days before all the wonderful communication abilities we have today, kings could only communicate with their empires by sending a messenger. The word of these messengers was considered the same as if the king had spoken. These messengers of the King carried the name “prophet.” So the way it is used in the Bible goes beyond just someone who claims to have the prophetic gift of visions and dreams, that is to say to have messages about the future communicated to them directly from God. It refers to anyone who

² Romans 3:23  
³ ¹ Thessalonians 5:19-21  
⁴ Philippians 4:8
is representing God to other people, i.e. a spokesman for God. In the larger sense it meant anyone with a message from God, no matter whether it came from a dream, a vision or merely from their studying the scriptures.

Today we have three general classes of "Prophets."

1. **The True special prophet** – These are those who pass all the tests for a prophet found in God’s word. They would have visions and dreams and God would speak to them personally about things not otherwise known to mankind. This is the most common concept of a prophet, but not the only kind referred to in the Bible.

2. **The False special prophet** - Then there are the ones who claim to have dreams, visions or other direct revelations from God. If they make such claims then they are subject to the test the Bible gives or such phenomena. Unlike those in #1 above, these do not pass the biblical tests. The wise seeker for truth will not listen to them in any way.

3. **The Common “Prophet”** - There is a third kind of person who would qualify as a prophet and the one we run onto the most often. This person we would call a minister, priest, missionary, teacher, seminary professor, Bible worker, etc. They do not claim the direct revelation, but they do claim to have a message from God that they have gleaned from their study of God’s word and prayer. They would not, of course, be subject to the same test as those who have dreams and visions, but there still are test for them that they must pass. It is in this category that most false prophets are found.

As can be seen, anyone who claims to be a spokesman for God is a prophet, as the term is used in the Bible. Anyone who presents a message they claim is from God, must be tested at the level of inspiration that they claim to enjoy.

Telling the future is only a small part of a prophet’s work for God. In fact seeing into the future is only given to a very few of those God’s calls as prophets and who wrote their messages in the Bible. Most of God’s prophets are sent in the form of teachers or preachers. Their main function is to convey to us God’s instructions. The things he or she will tell us (prophesy) will be correct. They will not try to bend the message to satisfy the person they are giving it to. Instead they will encourage the recipient to bend their will to conform to the message. They will turn the attention of the person they are reaching out to, to Jesus, not themselves. Also they will not have itching ears. Seeking to tell people what they want to hear. Such a person is not from God.

Some see a prophet as some special, perfect person who walks around in funny clothes and has a halo over their head and has a solemn pious expression on their face. Nothing could be further from the truth. A prophet will be a common, ordinary person just like you and me. He will have a nature just like us. The major difference between most people and a true prophet will be his/her commitment to serve God no matter what happens. But even then, they will still be a human being and subject to all the weaknesses of humanity. You can rest assured that when a prophet shares God’s message, it will carry with it the authority of heaven. The message will not be given in vain.

**Tests of the Gift to Foretell the Future**

First we will look at the test the Bible would have us apply to the people who claim they have information through direct revelation to know what is in the future. God says that He will communicate

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5 In the days of Elijah and Elisha, they operated “schools of the prophets.” See 2 Kings 2. There are many references to prophets who were true to God, but did not have dreams and visions.

6 James 5:17

7 Isaiah 55:11
directly with the person He chooses for this honor in visions or dreams.\textsuperscript{8} In a vision the prophet may exhibit certain physical phenomena, which we will discover later, that do not occur in a dream. Also in a vision the prophet may interact with other people or things in a manner similar to the way they would when not in a vision. The people around them will know that something supernatural is going on but that will be the extent of their knowledge unless the prophet shares with them while in vision.

In contrast a dream will be more or less like the other dreams everyone has when we sleep, except that the prophet will get a message from God in their dream. There will not be any special physical phenomena that would identify it as being different from any other dream anyone else might have. In the case of a dream, only the subject matter presented would be testable. The Bible seems to indicate that God will use this method to communicate, at times, to those who are not called to be a special prophet.\textsuperscript{9} The only other manner of communication is “face to face,” which few, if any, other then Moses, were privileged to enjoy.\textsuperscript{10}

God tells us that one proof we can have that the vision or dream is from God is this. If the subject matter of that phenomena is about something that will happen in the future and it is not a conditional prophecy and what is foretold comes true, then there is a good chance to believe it is from God.\textsuperscript{vii} But that is not totally conclusive as we will see later. God does not give misinformation. So if a prophet claims that he/she was told something is going to happen unconditionally, and it doesn’t happen, then we can know that God did not give him/her the message. But there are some exceptions. These are called “conditional prophecies.” These are prophecies that are dependent for their outcome on choices humans make.

\textbf{CONDITIONS FOR CERTAIN PROPHECIES}

Just because a prophecy does come true, we still do not have conclusive proof that the person's calling is or is not from God until we look at two more things.\textsuperscript{ix}

God was speaking to Jeremiah one time and He revealed the conditions for what is sometimes called “conditional prophecies.” The prophecies regarding blessings or punishment are always conditional. For example, God promises to bless someone, or some nation who is obeying God and following His will. But if when the blessings start to come and that nation or person turns away from God, then the blessings will be withdrawn and misfortune and trouble will replace the blessings. Or even worse, blessings will continue to come, but they are from Satan and not God. Maybe not immediately, but it will happen. God’s prophecy didn’t fail, the conditions upon which the blessings were promised changed.

Like when Jonah went to Nineveh and gave them a message from God that in forty days, Nineveh would be destroyed. But when forty days came and went, Nineveh was still standing as usual. What made the difference? They whole city from the king down had repented. God will not punish a truly repentant sinner. But if the prophecy is regarding something that is not dependent upon a person or group of people’s obedience, then if it is from God, it will happen just as He said.

No one can choose to receive a message from God or be a mouthpiece for God except to agree to respond to God’s invitation.\textsuperscript{x} God chooses the person, the place, the time and the subject mater of all visions or dreams or any other special revelation. Just like a telephone cannot determine what is said over it, so likewise a prophet cannot determine what God will tell them. The prophet cannot determine what the message means.\textsuperscript{xi} This is God’s prerogative just like whom He chooses to give the message to. This is an important point to understand especially today when there are so many people trying to place

\textsuperscript{8} Numbers 12:6-8
\textsuperscript{9} Joel 2:28 quoted in Acts 2:17
\textsuperscript{10} Exodus 33:11, Deuteronomy 5:4, 34:10,
their own meanings on God’s clear statements of truth. When one does that, it shows that God is not the ruler in their life, nor the source of their teachings.

One other thing that must be taken into account is this.

“If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

“You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you.

“If your brother, your mother’s son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods’ (whom neither you nor your fathers have known, of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end, you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him.

“But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.

“So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

If a prophet passes all the other tests, but after gaining your confidence instructs you to not do what God has asked His people to do, but instead counsels following some other authority (god), we are not to listen to them. As it can be readily seen, the office of a prophet of God where that prophet is given special messages through visions and dreams must follow very strict guidelines.

**Physical Phenomena in Visions**

The best example of the special physical phenomena that occurs when a prophet goes into vision is found in the experience of Daniel. This can be found in the tenth chapter of his book. This story occurs in the third year of Cyrus, king of the Persians. Daniel had been in prayer and mourning for three weeks. He was on a fast in that he didn’t eat any fancy food, just plain things. On the 24th day of the month, he was out along the river Tigris. As he was walking along with his accompanying court, he sensed a presence. When he looked up, here was a man unlike any he had ever seen. Those who were with him were aware something was happening, but they couldn’t be a part of it, so they fled the scene. Daniel was left all alone with this divine personage. At that Daniel lost all of his strength and all his color left him. Then he fell into a trance like sleep and fell with his face to the ground.

Then a hand touched him and he was set up on his knees trembling. His strength came back and he stood trembling. Then the divine being spoke to him and gave Daniel the answer to his prayers. Again the magnitude of the situation overwhelms him and again Daniel loses his strength and this time even his ability to talk. At this point Daniel even looses his breath, he stops breathing. The being restores his strength again and his speech. Notice that in vision, the prophet does not breath. While the other physical phenomena can be faked, no one can last long without breathing unless God is sustaining their life.

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11 Deuteronomy 13:1-10
The heavenly being tells Daniel why he has come. He is there to give understanding to Daniel. XIII This is the purpose of the vision in the first place. Not to dazzle onlookers with the physical manifestations, but so a mind surrendered to God can receive information from God. The message was so important that God seemed to feel it necessary to have direct, undivided attention from the prophet. This message would affect the church to the end of time and it must be communicated correctly. So God uses a special channel of communication, the vision, to impart understanding.

**GENERAL TESTS ALL PROPHETS MUST PASS**

No matter what level of communication a prophet claims for the source of their information; there are certain tests anyone who claims they have a message from God must pass. This would include the ones discussed already in the case of those who claim to have visions and dreams as well as those claim to being a prophet is only claiming a spiritual gift. Those who do not make a claim of direct communication with God, the ones who only claim that they are teaching information gleaned from a study of God’s revealed will, only have to pass the following tests. These tests are just as important as the test for those claiming to have the physical phenomena of visions. However, both sets of tests are equally important.

The apostle John\(^{12}\) gives us a warning about those who go too far, or beyond what God has specifically said.\(^{13}\) This is one place Eve made her mistake.\(^{14}\) She overstated what God had said when she added those fatal three little words "or touch it."\(^{15}\) When she said this, Satan was able to take advantage of her. So when he touched the fruit and he didn't die right then, she felt it was safe for her to touch it. When touching it was not fatal, then she felt free to eat of it. By going beyond what God had said she was deceived. This example tells us two things.

First, of course, is that no prophet or messenger from God can add to what God has said.

Second, and just as important, is that just because we or the “prophet” does not drop dead or is otherwise punished when they do fail a test, it does not mean that they haven’t shown themselves to be a false prophet.

Their punishment will come. God may allow them to continue and even apparently prosper to test us to see if we will believe what God has said or believe the lie of the false prophet. We become the ones being tested in that case.\(^{16}\)

**TEST OF LOYALTY**

If that prophet is not faithful to God and counsel’s obeying any authority other than God, that person has shown that they are not from God. XIV A prophet of God will always counsel a strict obedience to God’s every command or bit of instruction. This is basic. Would a mouthpiece for God tell someone not to obey God? Not hardly. So if a minister or anyone else who claims to have a message from God says that obedience to all God has said is not important or that it has been changed, he or she is not really from God, but they are a false prophet. In the days of Israel, if God’s word had been followed, they would have been stoned.

Today we hear some excuse their failure to follow God’s instruction by claiming that they are following an “administrative decision.” That is true. And the “administration” we choose to follow will determine our eternal destiny. If we follow an “administration” that tells us that it is OK to disregard God’s instruction, we can know for a surety that such an “administration” is not from God. If we follow such an dictate, we most assuredly will be among the lost.

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\(^{12}\) 2 John 7-11 (see vs. 9)

\(^{13}\) Also see Galatians 1:8, 9; 2 Peter 2:1, 2; 3:15-17

\(^{14}\) See Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:2, 3

\(^{15}\) Genesis 3:3

\(^{16}\) Read 1 Kings 13:1-32
SPIRITUAL GIFTS

There are many today claiming to have what they call "Gifts of the Spirit." Prophesying is only one of those gifts. There are several others. You can read a list of these gifts in the Bible.¹⁷ The Holy Spirit is willing to give each person who is willing to surrender fully to God the spiritual gifts he needs to represent God in the right way and fit into God’s larger master plan. Because there are counterfeit manifestations of supernatural phenomena that are passed off as gifts of the Spirit, the Bible has given us the ability to test these too.¹⁸

Paul had established a church in the seacoast town of Corinth on the east coast of Greece. This was a typical port community, but it was even worse than some. Corinth had a harbor on each of two gulfs, the Gulf of Chenchreae on the east and the Sardonic Gulf on the west. In order to avoid a long and dangerous passage around the southern end of Greece, an overland route for the smaller ships of that day had been made over the five mile Isthmus of Corinth. The time the sailors had to wait, while their ships were transported overland gave them lots of time to spend money and play. Also the narrow isthmus was the only land bridge from Greece to the continent. All land travelers to and from Greece had to pass through Corinth. So Corinth was a “real swinging town” as we would say today.

Corinth was at a cross roads of travel as well as commerce and religion. Here was located a temple to the goddess Aphrodite. In this temple was a center of glosalalia, or speaking in tongues. This was a phenomena where spirits from the spirit world were suppose to enter a priestess and cause her to speak in an unknown language and reveal secrets. The immorality here was legendary. But in this hot bed of sin, Paul had established a church. A woman who sold her body was said to have been “Corinthianized.” It carried the same meaning as being from “Sodom and Gomorrah.”

Paul had some real concerns for the believers there in Corinth and they are dealt with in his first letter to them that we have in our Bible in I Corinthians.¹⁵ So he wanted to inform them of the true spiritual gifts so they wouldn’t be deceived by the illegitimate spiritual gifts from Satan. They had been lead astray once by these heathen gods,¹⁶ and he had received reports that they were wandering back to those practices. So he gave the Corinthians, and us today, four test to apply to those claiming to have spiritual gifts. These tests also apply to the message from the prophets.

FOUR IMPORTANT TESTS

TEST #1 ¹⁷

The first test is a two-part test. He told the Corinthians that no one speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit would say:

“Jesus is accursed.”¹⁹

Today we do not use the word “accursed” very often or even in the same way it was used then. The word then meant that something was worthless, or of no value or even was a liability.²⁰ Something you would want to stay away from at all cost.

The second half of this test is that no one would say: “Jesus is Lord”²⁰ except under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷ For the list see 1 Corinthians 12:7-10
¹⁸ For more information on this ask for a study on Spiritual Gifts. This will focus on 1 Corinthians 12 and elsewhere.
¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:3
²⁰ Ibid
This was not to say that a person could not vocalize those words. It meant that no one can in fact allow Jesus to be the Lord, Ruler, Master of their lives unless the Holy Spirit helped them to accept Jesus into their life. Only through the Holy Spirit are we able to allow Jesus to be the absolute ruler in our lives. Today our concept of “Lord” is badly eroded since the time the Bible was written. Later we will discuss the real meaning a “Lord” in a following lesson.

**Test #2**

The second test Paul gives us is that the Holy Spirit has many gifts.

*“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.”*  

The Holy Spirit is not limited to just one gift. The church has many needs and so God gives many gifts to meet all of those needs. No one person is expected to meet all of the needs, so He gives different gifts to different people to meet the needs they are assigned to meet.

**Test #3**

There is one common denominator and that is that all of the gifts are given by the Holy Spirit for the common good, not primarily for the good of the one receiving the gift.

*“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”*  

The gifts are not given to benefit the person who is receiving the gift. They are just the channels the Holy Spirit wants to use to bless the church as a whole with this gift. He may give one special wisdom, and to another the ability to know many facts, then to another a special gift of being able to trust God more. Some might be given the ability to heal, or work miracles. One might be able to foretell the future and some might be able to talk in languages they did not study. But all of these are to make the spread of the gospel more efficient.

**Test #4**

The last test must be the most important because Paul spends so much space talking about it. He tells us that the Holy Spirit is the one who chooses which gift(s) a person will receive.

*“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.”*  

We cannot demand that God gives us any gift. Would a wise parent give in to a child who demands a specific gift from their parent? If the parent gives in they are teaching the child a very bad habit. No, God is too wise to give in to our demands. We are foolish to demand that God give in to us. We are in fact saying that we are wiser than God when we make such demands for a certain spiritual gift or special privilege.

**The Greatest Spiritual Gift**

Paul lists a number of special gifts the Holy Spirit gives to the members of God’s church. They include such things as being an apostle, a prophet, a teacher, one who works miracles, one who can heal, one who is good at helping, the ability to administrate and the ability to speak in unlearned languages. Some of these gifts carry much honor with them like the role of an administrator, prophet or miraculous healer. We admire the apostles, but it is interesting that few seek for that gift. In contrast, the gift to speak in an unlearned language is almost never sought for. However, the counterfeit of this otherwise unnoticed gift is very popular in some circles.

In contrast, the greatest gift is also the only gift that everyone must have in order to be a real Christian. That is the gift of divine (agape) love.

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21 1 Corinthians 12:4  
22 1 Corinthians 12:7  
23 1 Corinthians 12:11
“... the greatest of these is [divine] love.”

Unless we have this gift of divine love, none of the other spiritual gifts will be of any value for the church or ourselves. (We will study about love in more detail in the next lesson.) Jesus said that the type of love we have for each other would be what will identify us as a Christian. Unless we have that kind or type of love He specified, our profession, if we claim to be part of the family of God, is a misrepresentation.

The message the Holy Spirit communicates to the “prophet” will always agree with what He has revealed to the other messengers who have recorded their revelations from God in the Bible as well as with others who also pass the tests for the prophets subsequent to the writing of the Bible. A failure to agree with previously tested prophets always means the prophet being tested is not from God and is a false prophet. This is not to say that succeeding prophets will not give new information the previous prophets did not give us. That is the reason God sends them to us. But that new information is in harmony with what has been given in the past.

God never changes.

We hear a lot today about how “Christians should be keeping up with the times.” This is often called: “progressive revelation,” staying relevant to our culture, “new light” etc. The gospel has and always will be far ahead of the times and transcends the lines of culture. If a prophet feels that God’s plan is “behind the times,” they are demonstrating that they, in fact, are not sent from God. They are the one who are really “behind the times.” The gospel is timeless and not controlled by culture or the whims of humanity. The gospel will always change culture for the better, but if the “gospel” changes to accommodate human cultural trends, both are changed for the worse. If a prophet tries to change God’s plan to fit their culture, it will show that they are not being lead by God. There is little, if any, truly “new light.” There is basically only a greater understanding of the truth that has always been. This is what is known as the genuine “progressive revelation.” The truth is always the same; it is our understanding of it that will constantly keep expanding as we submit to the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Note this warning God gave to His people and which is also valid for us today. We have seen it before, but it is well to reread it.

“If your brother, your mother’s son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods’ (whom neither you nor your fathers have known, of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end), you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him.

“But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.”

God is a jealous god and He will not stand idly by if we turn from Him and serve other gods/authorities in our world. “He must be Lord of all or He is not really Lord at all.”

The Job of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit will (among others) do two things.
One, He will guide us into all truth.
Second He will glorify the Father.

24 1 Corinthians 13:13
25 Progressive revelation is not always wrong. Truth is progressive, not static. However, unless the progress is in the same path of the original, it is not from God. A “progressive revelation” that sets aside what has been given is not from God, but from an enemy of God.
26 Deuteronomy 13:6-9
BASIC CHRISTIANITY

Just like the spiritual gifts cause glory to go back to God, so the Holy Spirit Himself will glorify God, not the recipient of the gift or Himself. While many claim they want the Holy Spirit, they are misinformed as to what it is that will happen when the Holy Spirit comes into their life. The most common misconception is that they will have a very happy experience and start jabbering in some undecipherable noise, appropriately called: an “unknown tongue.” There is absolutely no biblical support for this concept.

Here are just a few things that the Holy Spirit will do.

“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.” 27

First, He “will convict the world of sin.” Most do not want to be convicted of sin (we will study sin in more detail in a future lesson). That is too uncomfortable for the unconverted heart. Especially those who are seeking to “speak in tongues,” they typically will not be corrected by any authority at all. xxvi

Second, the Holy Spirit will convict us of “righteousness” or of what we should be doing. He doesn’t just tell us what is wrong in our lives; He also shows us what we should be doing that is right.

Third, He convicts us of “judgment” to come. He tells us just what needs to be changed, what we should be and that there is a day coming when the decisions we make will determine where we will spend eternity.

A person who is rebellious at heart and who the Holy Spirit is working on through a prophet will rebel when the Holy Spirit presses the concept of “judgment” home to their heart. They will accuse the human messenger of judging them when most of the time it is the Holy Spirit who is doing the convicting.

If the thought of judgment is bothering you, if you feel someone is judging you, ask the Holy Spirit to come in and change whatever is in your life that is in conflict with the message being brought by the prophet. That is if the prophet passes the test for a prophet from God. Of course if the prophet does not pass the test, then it is not the Holy Spirit and we should not listen to that prophet anyhow.

A MOST IMPORTANT TEST

A most important test for every message and every messenger from God was revealed to the prophet Isaiah. The various translations of some words in the Bible do not always communicate the full meaning of the original word since the words in Hebrew and Greek do not always have exact equivalents in the English language. So translators are always faced with making a compromise and choosing what for them seems like the best equivalent.

Like the Greek word that is commonly translated “Faith.” It really carries the meaning of three English words, “Faith,” “Trust” and “Belief.” Likewise one of the Greek words used for the English word “know” in reality means “the information is available and one can know.”

So in the statement Isaiah made, as commonly translated,

“To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.” 28

The Hebrew word (torah) that is commonly translated as “law” is more accurately translated “instruction,” especially in this case: “God’s instruction.” So it would better read,

“to the instruction of God and the testimony.”
In fact, this is very close to how some new translations, the English Standard Translation referenced here, is an example of. Isaiah is talking about all the instructions God has given to us, not just what is found in what is commonly known as the “Ten Commandments.” Even if this were not the case, nowhere in Isaiah does this warning apply directly to the Decalogue.

Obedience to all of God’s instructions is imperative. Some feel there is only one command, love. Many think that God’s instructions ended at the tenth commandment. Yet, these are just the core principles that are presented in this law. It takes careful study to discover God’s instruction, but that is why Paul challenged Timothy:

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”

The diligence of our effort to know God’s will, reveals the depth of our love for Him and determination to do all that He wants us to do.

Because, breaking any of God’s instruction will cause us to be guilty before God, we must seek to know His will as best we can. This is how we can test those who are not what they claim to be. According to Jesus:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.”

Unless they are dedicated to doing God’s will, their claims to be a prophet of God are false. A relationship with God is just like learning to know a loved one. We have to study them through a heart filled with love in order to really know their likes and dislikes etc.

JUDGING OR FRUIT INSPECTION

A common counter response by many, who are called to a closer walk with God, or a correction of some non-biblical practice, is: “You are not suppose to judge.” The passage they are referring to is:

“Judge not that you be not judged.”

This is possibly one of the best known and most often misquoted text in the Bible. But the same God, who told us not to judge, also told us to be “fruit inspectors.” What is the difference between judging and fruit inspection? It is in essence this.

Judge - A judge is a person who determines a person or a things fate, destiny or reward/punishment.

Fruit Inspector - On the other hand a fruit inspector only identifies what he is looking at.

If he sees an apple that is nice and ripe and solid, he proclaims that from the evidence he can see, that the apple is a Red Delicious or other type depending on it’s characteristics and it is good to eat. He doesn’t determine the end result of that apple, as to whether the apple will be eaten fresh or whether it will be made into applesauce or possibly into a pie or apple dumpling or maybe it will be thrown out as useless. He just identifies it as an apple and in what state of development it is in. Jesus commands us to be fruit inspector.

“So then, you will know them by their fruits.”

A judge in a beauty contest determines who is the “fairest of them all” and awards a crown [reward] to the winner. A judge in a court of law determines a person’s guilt or innocents and hands out fines or other punishments when a person is found guilty, or sets them free and declares them innocent, in the

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29 2 Timothy 2:15
30 Matthew 7:20
31 Matthew 7:1
32 Matthew 7:16, 20
event of innocence. So the word “judge” carries several meanings. Just which one is the Bible talking about?

In order to know just which meaning the Bible is using, we need to check the context. This is always a good place to start. So let’s look at the context of these two seemingly contradictory texts, especially since they are found in the same chapter in the Bible.

“Do not judge so that you will not be judged.”

The context here is obviously attempting to determine another’s fate, read the next 5 or more texts following this statement. Furthermore, this warning is given.

“For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”

The next text where judging a prophet is brought into the discussion, it says this.

“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. “You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?”

Here we are obviously talking about inspecting fruit, or the identification type of judging instead of judging as in a court of law. Here the fruit inspector/judge identifies and assess the value or quality of the product. What happens to it is none of his concern. So we are to look at the evidence so we can identify what we are dealing with.

Paul gives us a list of the fruits (characteristics) we should expect to find. They are grouped into two sections. The first list is called the deeds or fruits of the flesh. These are the fruits we will find in the person who has not let God control His life, or is in the process of changing masters. In this list we have:

“Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

This is not a pretty list, is it? But these are the results of a person doing things his way. The second list of fruits are called the fruit of the Spirit.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

This list in reality just has one fruit, i.e. agape or divine love. All the other things listed are the results of divine love being in the heart, or the fruits of divine love. When we are filled with God’s love, we will have Joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. If this love is not present in a major degree, (we will study more about this in the next lesson) we can know that the person we are dealing with is a false prophet. This does not mean that we cannot allow room for growth in that person, but if they are asking us to follow them, then they should have most if not all of these characteristics quite well developed and be allowing the others to be developed in their lives.

SUMMARY

These are the tests the Bible gives us to test those who claim to be from God or to have a message from God. They must pass 100% or they aren't from the God of heaven. As you progress through these

33 Matthew 7:1
34 Ibid verse 2
35 Ibid verses 15, 16
36 Galatians 5:19-21
37 Galatians 5:22, 23
lessons, check them, not by what you may hear from men., not even this author, but by the test the Bible gives us to use, then hold fast to that which is good. Paul went so far as to say:

“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!” 38

Are you unsure? Do you feel inadequate for the job? James 1 holds a promise just for you.

“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” 39

Ask of God and if you are willing to do His will, you will know the doctrine whether it is from God. 40

Note that unless we have a love for the truth, God will cause us to believe a lie. 41 In addition, unless we obey the teachings of God, He will not accept our worship. 42 So it is important to examine all doctrines by the biblical tests and not by human tests. Any other test or list of tests will be sure to mislead us. Jesus warned us that the deceptions will be so powerful, that if possible they would deceive the very elect. 43 But the elect will not be deceived, because they will hold fast to God’s word, apply His tests and choose in all things to do His will.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.” 44

May God richly bless you as you attempt to accurately handle God’s word.

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38 Galatians 1:8, 12
39 James 1:5
40 John 7:17
41 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12
42 Matthew 15:9
43 Matthew 24:24
44 2 Timothy 2:15
QUIZ - CHAPTER 3

I What general counsel does Paul give regarding the things we should think about? Philippians 4:8

Whatever is ___________________________________________________________________
Whatever is ___________________________________________________________________
Whatever is ___________________________________________________________________
Whatever is ___________________________________________________________________
Whatever is ___________________________________________________________________
Whatever is ___________________________________________________________________
If there is any _________________________________________________________________
and anything worthy of _________________________________________________________
let your mind dwell on these things."

II What other things will the prophet present besides foretelling future events? Isaiah 30:8-10

_____________________________________________________________________________
Also see Jeremiah 23:16, 17; Ezekiel 2:1-10; 3:4-11; 13:10.

III Who will be the focus of their message? John 16:14 ____________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________
Also see 2 John 7-11; 1 John 4:1-3, 15; John 15:2-12

IV What kind of nature will the prophet have? James 5:17, 18. ______________________

V What will be the results of his message? 1 Samuel 3:19, 20. ______________________

VI How will God communicate to the prophets He has chosen? Numbers 12:6

_____________________________________________________________________________
Also see Jeremiah 23:25-32; Hosea 12:10

VII What requirement does God set up as proof of the fact He has sent that person? Jeremiah 28:8, 9

_____________________________________________________________________________
Also see John 13:19; 14:29; 16:4

VIII What can disqualify a person from being a true prophet of God? Deuteronomy 18:20-22

_____________________________________________________________________________
IX To determine if the prophet's claims are correct, what conditions or circumstances must we look at in the subject of the prophecy to determine whether a prophecy has failed or not? Jeremiah 18:5-10

_____________________________________________________________________________
Also see Ezekiel 33:1-20; Jeremiah 22:4-9; Jonah 3:10

X Who chooses when a prophetic message is to be given and to whom? 2 Peter 1:21

_____________________________________________________________________________
XI Who cannot determine what the message means, or its interpretation? 2 Peter 1:19, 20

XII What historical precedent exists for physical phenomena accompanying a vision? Daniel 10:7-17
   a. Vs. 7
   b. Vs. 8, 10
   c. Vs. 9
   d. Vs 10, 18
   e. Vs. 15
   f. Vs. 17 (last part)

XIII What was the purpose of the vision? Daniel 10:14, 21

XIV What can disqualify the persons who claims that they are from God? Deuteronomy 13:1-5

XV What was Paul concerned about regarding the Corinthian believers? 1 Corinthians 12:1

XVI Why was he concerned? 1 Corinthians 12:2

XVII What two-part test did he give them first? 1 Corinthians 12:3
   A. _____________________________
   B. ______________________________

XVIII What do you understand it to mean when a person says "Jesus is accursed."?

XIX What do you understand it to mean when a person says "Jesus is Lord."?

XX What second test does Paul give? 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (see vs. 4)

XXI What third and most important test does Paul now give to see if the phenomena is from God? 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 see vs. 7

XXII What forth test is given regarding spiritual gifts? 1 Corinthians 12:11-30

XXIII What is the greatest spiritual gift we can receive? 1 Corinthians 13

XXIV Will a revelation by God through the Holy Spirit ever differ from what God has said before in His word? Malachi 3:6

Also see James 1:16, 17; Hebrews 1:12; 13: 8, 9
XXV What will the Holy Spirit do when He fills us? John 16:13, 14
A. __________________________________________________________________________
B ____________________________________________________________________________

XXVI What job has the Holy Spirit been given to do for the world? John 16:8-11
"And He . . . will convict the world concerning __________ and ________________ and ________________ ."

XXVII What overall test must be met by every message and messenger from God? Isaiah 8:20
_____________________________________________________________________________
Also see Deuteronomy 6:5-9; 10:12, 13; 11:1; 30:15-20; Joshua 22:5; 23:11; Psalms 31:23; Proverbs 23:26; Matthew 4:10; 22:21, 36-40; John 14:15; 15:14; Acts 5:29; Jude 21

XXVIII How much of the law can be broken without becoming guilty of sin? James 2:10
_____________________________________________________________________________
Also see Matthew 5:17-19; Revelation 12:17; 19:10

XXIX Will everyone who claims that Jesus is their Lord be saved? If not, what is required?
Matthew 7:21-23 _______________________________________________________________
Also see Luke 6:46; Malachi 1:6; John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 6-8

XXX What does Christ command us to look for? Matthew 7:16-20
_____________________________________________________________________________
Also see Matthew 12:33; Luke 6:43-46; James 3:11-18

XXXI 31. Paul gives us the list of fruit the person filled with the Holy Spirit will bear in Galatians 5:22, 23. Compare these with those of the non-Christian listed in verses 19-21.

FRUITS (DEEDS) OF THE FLESH vs. 19-21
_____________________________________________________________________________
FRUITS (DEEDS) OF THE SPIRIT
_____________________________________________________________________________

XXXII How will men know we are following Christ? John 13:34, 35.
_____________________________________________________________________________
Also see Leviticus 19:18; Isaiah 58:6, 7; Matthew 25:34-46; Luke 10:25-37.
A reason that Jesus came to earth, one virtually as important as dying on Calvary, was to show us how Heaven wants us to live. He came to give us a living example of the Christian life. When we realize this, we can examine His life to find out just how we are to live. In doing this, we can’t go wrong.

Jesus left this command for us, to "love one another, even as I have loved you." Or to put it more accurately, in the same way I have loved you. The kind of love we have for one another is to be the badge of our discipleship. Love is a many faceted concept. Today the word "LOVE" is used so promiscuously that its real meaning seems to have, to a large extent, been lost. John tells us that the first essential in being a Christian is to know what kind of love God wants us to have, then we should strive to have that kind of love in our lives. The different kinds or facets of love and how we get each kind is the subject we are going to look at now.

A misconception about the type of love God wants us to have can be disastrous. How honest we are in that misconception will not make any difference. If someone offered you a glass of water, and they said it was absolutely pure, but in fact it had just one drop of a deadly poison in it, drinking it would kill you, no matter how sincerely you believed it was OK. An honest mistake is still a mistake and the results do not change just because we think otherwise.

In the English language we use the word LOVE to describe our feelings about many things. Some will say: "I love my work." or another will say: "I love my home." A teenager will tell their boy/girl friend, "I love you!" Then later in church they will all sing, "O How I Love Jesus." We do not love our work in the same way we love our lover do we? Could it be that we should love God in a different way even yet? That is the topic for this lesson.

**WHAT IS LOVE**

The Greeks had more than one word for love. In fact they had four words (some claim there are five) that we translate as love. They recognized that love was too broad of a subject for just one word to encompass its meaning. However, two of the four categories are so close, that for our study we will consider them both under the label of Philos. While the Greeks have given us the names for the different categories or types of love, to understand the one called “The Love of the gods,” or as Christians say: “God's love” we will look for it’s meaning in the Bible. We will go into more detail later.

**PHILEO (Φιλεω) OR PHILOS**

This kind or aspect of love is the most simple and elementary type of “love.” This is the kind of love that naturally occurs between family members, friends or other associates. This Greek word is well known to us as it is used in the word, Philadelphia, or the “City of Brotherly Love.” We are all born with this kind of love. It is natural to the human family. It is also found in the animal kingdom as is seen in the affection between animals. There are two identification points, or keys, that will help identify and differentiate this kind of love from the others.

1. Philos/Phileo is the love based on RELATIONSHIP.
2. This kind of love asks the question "WHO is that person or thing in relationship to me?" I am the center of this kind of love.

This word for love is mentioned 29 times in the New Testament. It is found in the following text, but not every occurrence in each text is the word philos.

**TEXTS IN THE BIBLE THAT USES THE WORD PHILEO**


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1 John 13:34,35
**EROS (Ερως)**

The next kind, or aspect of love that we will study is Eros. As with Philos, the Greeks had two words to describe this love we are looking at under just the one word. Also, as with Philos, this Greek word is familiar to us through the English word: “Erotic.” Today that word describes a kind of love that has become connected with a type of lifestyle that has bad connotations. However, this word is really just a description of a love based on our emotions. Like Philos, this kind of love is natural to man and animals, however it seems to be more complex than philo and definitely more demanding. It too has two identifying marks.

1. **This love is the EMOTIONAL LOVE or the love based on how one FEELS about something.**

2. **This love asks the questions: **"**WHAT is that person or thing in relation to me?" **"HOW will this person or thing benefit ME?"**

Like Philos, “I” am the center of this kind of love. This word is never used in the New Testament, but it does have an equivalent word (ahabah) in the Old Testament where it is used several times, especially in the book of Song of Songs, or otherwise called: “Songs of Solomon.”

This kind of love is used in many other aspects of life besides the sexual relationship where it is most commonly found. Anything to which one has primarily an emotional response to is an Eros response. To a fellow, a pretty lady will arouse an erotic response. But a similar response may also be made over his favorite sports car, recreation or food. Likewise, a lady may have an erotic response, i.e. an emotional response, to a flower, pretty dress or beautiful sunset as well as a handsome man. This kind of response is not, in itself, bad, God gave it to us so that we can enjoy life more. It is only when misused or when it takes control of our lives (likewise with Philos) that it becomes a problem. Properly controlled it makes our lives most pleasurable.

One common way it is misused is in the area of Christianity. Since Satan has nothing to do with divine love (the next one we will look at), he attempts to make people believe that eros love is divine love. By getting people to experience elevated feelings, they mistakenly believe they are experiencing divine love. But they are very different, as we will see. However, the damage that can be done when they are confused can last through eternity. Eros is the most demanding kind of love that comes naturally to man. It is in this area of our emotions that Satan manages to capture people the easiest. It is in this area that you will fight the hardest battles as a Christian. It is our emotions that drive us to the excesses in life. Unfortunately, it is in this area that far too many decisions for Christ are made. Because our emotions are so changeable, decisions made on this level do not last long. That is why so many people “lose” their “religion” so easily. The clamoring of Eros, when it is not under the control of agape, is the basis of every false religion and of most failures in Christianity.

**AGAPE (Αγάπη)**

This Greek word may not be as familiar as the others we have looked at, but it is being used quite a bit in religious circles in more recent years. It is the love the Greeks called "The Divine Love" or “The Love of the Gods.” However, the Greeks only understood it in relationship to their gods, which was a very superficial level in comparison to what we have revealed to us in the Bible. For them it was only a super erotic experience, not unlike some Christians experience today. It was seen as human loves elevated to a super intense level. In fact, it is only through Christianity that Agape can reach its highest level of meaning. Agape only comes from God. In God's plan, this kind of love is meant to control the other two kinds of love, not a super intense kind of either of them. It too has its identifying marks.

1. **This love is based on PRINCIPLE. It operates on the MORAL LEVEL. It asks the question: **"Is it MORALLY RIGHT or not?" **"HOW would God handle this situation?"**

2. **This love asks: **"**HOW CAN I HELP?" **It responds to a need. It is a GIVING kind of love, unconcerned about what is in it for me. It is always OTHERS CENTERED.**

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2 1 John 4:7
What is Love?

With these identifying marks, we can usually identify just what kind of love we are dealing with. Let’s not forget, though, that any given exhibition of love may and often does involve at least two and at times all three kinds at the same time. In fact, God designs that the agape love He wants to give us will operate in tandem with the other two, controlling them and keeping them from going to the excesses they are prone to.

Texts that use Agape.

This word occurs over 250 times in the New Testament. Any usage of the word "love" or "charity" found in the New Testament that is not included in the list under Philos is the word Agape (In some text both words are used as we will see later).

What the Bible Says About Agape.

Unlike philo, the love for those who we are related to, or have become part of our circle of friends, or of the things we own. Unlike eros, the emotional feelings we have, both of which we are born with. Agape love can only be acquired from God. God is not only the personal, living example of agape love, He is the only source for this love. Also unlike the other two kinds of love, we do not just receive it once and than we have it for life. It is like an electrical current. We must maintain the connection to continue to have it. We can have electricity connected to our home. We may have an electrical appliance that works fine. But unless it is plugged into a live connection, it will not function.

Likewise, we can’t be a reservoir for this divine love; we can only be a conduit. As soon as we stop sharing God’s love with others, we cease to receive God’s love ourselves. We can only operate on the level of a conductor of divine love. We must maintain our “plugged in” status to the source in order to have agape love. This is a hard concept for many to understand who have always been on emotions or relationships. We will see later how Jesus attempted to help Peter see this, but that is for later.

For now, let’s look at an example. Most buildings today have electrical outlets of various kinds. The most common being the 110/120v outlets found in most homes. Now, here is a question. “Is there electricity in that outlet?” This is assuming that it is working properly and the light bill has been paid. The most common answer (unless you are an electrician) is “Yes.” That would not be, however, a totally correct answer. See, for electricity to exist, it must have an outlet. It must have an closed circuit to a “common” or “ground” in order to be able to function. This is why a person can touch a line with even large amounts of electricity potentially there, but if they are not grounded or close to a ground, it is harmless. This is partially the reason it is called an “electrical circuit.” The power must be flowing for it to be an electrical circuit.

An example of this is seen when birds perch on a power line. As long as they do not touch anything else, the potential electricity is impotent. Older electricians, or at least some of them, when they had a house all wired, they would walk around the house putting their fingers in the light bulb sockets. They would feel a little tickle, as long as they were not grounded, and they would know that the socket was “hot.” They could feel the little tickle because their body provided a semi-ground, but not good enough for all of the potential power to flow through them. Some of us know the difference from first hand experience in dealing with electricity. And some know the difference from being solidly connected with God and the world can see divine love flowing through them.

Unlike philos and eros, which can be evoked in a person by just thinking those kind of thoughts. Divine love must have a “ground,” or a subject who is willing to allow this love to flow through them. Unless we become a conduit and allow Divine Love to flow through us in two different directions, back to God and out to others, we can not possess Divine love.

The same is true in the spiritual life. Many Christians are walking around just poking their fingers in the light bulb sockets and only getting a little tickle. A feeling that makes them feel good. But they never discover the full current of divine love. When they allow God to make them open to reaching out to others and back to God, then and only then can divine love flow through their bodies and souls and demonstrate the full power of divine love.

Before we continue, consider carefully this most important statement.

"Love not an impulse but a divine principle *Supreme love for God and unselfish love for one another - this is the best gift that our heavenly Father can bestow. This love is not an impulse but a divine
principle, a permanent power. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. Only in the heart where Jesus reigns is it found. ‘We love Him, because He first loved us!’ (1 John 4:19). In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the ruling principle of action.”

It is not enough to just be plugged in to the source of divine love, but we also need to have a connection to an outlet too. We must share this love to really have it. This is the law of this dynamic principle. Only as it is shared do we “have it,” unlike the other two kinds that we are born with. God demonstrated this facet of divine love when He sent Jesus to show us His love and to save us from the situation we got ourselves in when we rebelled against God. As Jesus walked on this earth, His greatest joy was found in serving others. He tried to get His disciples to understand this one-day when they were on their way to Jerusalem.

**WOMAN AT THE WELL**

Jesus and His disciples became weary and sat down on Jacob’s well near a town called Sycar, a city of the Gentiles. While the disciples went into the town to buy food, Jesus rested by the town well. A woman came out to draw water from the well and Jesus engaged her in conversation. One thing lead to another and the results were that the whole city came out to see who she had been talking to. When his disciples questioned Him as to why He was talking with a Samaritan woman, He pointed out that these people too were potential candidates for His kingdom. His love reached out naturally to everybody. There are several like stories in the Bible. But sharing divine love was not limited to just talking to and loving people, one on one. No, He came to pay the penalty for our sins, by taking on Himself the punishment for rebelling against God, which is death. So He showed the extent that we must love others when He surrendered His life so we might live. This is the greatest love we can have.

Sensitive, Loving Nature of Christ - " . . . Upon the cross of Calvary He made the great sacrifice of Himself in behalf of all men that the whole world might have salvation if they would. Christ was hid in God, and God stood revealed to the world in the character of His Son . . . ."

"Love for a lost world was manifested every day, in every act of His life. . . . In Christ, the light and love of God were manifested inhuman nature. No human being has ever possessed so sensitive a nature as did the sinless, Holy One of God, who stood as head and representative of what humanity may become through the imparting of the divine nature."  

What a gift from heaven! Having been given such a gift, just how should we respond to this greatest of all gifts? Well there are several ways. One way is to show our appreciation by developing a relationship with Jesus. But since this kind of love has to reach out to others, those who are filled with this kind of love will reach out to others. If we do not want to reach out to others in love, the remedy is not to try harder. But instead study God’s love, pray for that love and surrender our will so He can use us as a channel for that love. Because this is not something we can fake. On the other hand when we show it naturally, it shows that God is living in us and we are surrendered to Him. This type of love will never stoop to tearing others down. It will always seek to build those up who are also seeking to be more like Jesus.

The second outlet for divine love, must be back to God who gives it to us. Jesus demonstrated this by never doing anything except what His Father told Him to do. For Divine Love to function, these two outlets are essential. Without both in place, just like the electrical socket on the wall, all we have is “potentiality” power.

Unconditional Nature of Divine Love

Starting in the mid 70’s, in an attempt to try and make God’s love markedly superior to all other kinds, some people have done what Eve did, and have gone beyond what God has designed into Divine Love. They have made the claim that God’s love is “unconditional.” Oh how nice this sounds. Like the air that surrounds the earth, God’s

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3 Acts of the Apostles page 551
4 See John 4 for the story.
5 John 15:13 “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.
6 The Youth Instructor, August 16, 1894.
7 John 5:30, 8:28, 42, 19:18, 14:10, etc.
love is there and exists without any response from humans. So, we can do anything we like, or fail to do what we should do and God still loves us.

As with most false ideas, there is a little truth in what is presented. However, unless it is carefully defined, if there is one fault in the doctrine, it is all false. Refer back to the study of how to test for truth. It is true that God’s love exists, irrespective of anything I do or fail to do. However, it is of no value to me, so it might just as well not be there. There are some very essential conditions for God’s love. Here are a few of them.

We must choose to come to Him.\(^8\)

We must abide with Him.\(^9\)

We must keep His commandments.\(^10\)

These are just a few examples of what must transpire for us to be connected to heaven and have divine love flowing through us. There are more that the seeker for truth can dig out of God’s word.

So, Divine Love is far from unconditional, there are a number of conditions we must meet in order to benefit from this love. As stated before, technically, divine love exists, period. My choosing to not submit to the conditions does not do away with divine love. But as for any benefit I may receive, it might as well not exist. So, to make our relationship with God a working relationship, not just theory, divine love is not unconditional. Those who say so are reading more of what man says then what God is saying.

DIVINE LOVE – THE SURE SIGN OF A CHRISTIAN

If we profess to be a Christian and do not love our brother, the Bible says we are a fake or a liar.\(^V\) This is strong language. But think about it! Would you continue to believe someone loved you if they constantly ignored you, hurt you, put you down or never came around? You would be tempted to call their claims of love a lie wouldn’t you? So why should it be different in our relationship to God. Unless we demonstrate God’s love, we don’t have it. We cannot hide it any more than we can hide any other facet of being a genuine Christian.\(^11\)

“But,” some say, “I am afraid to let people know I am a Christian. I might not live like one and it would bring disgrace upon my profession.” Here is where this agape love comes in. We do not have to worry about our actions, all we need to be concerned about is our commitment to doing God’s will and letting Him love others through us. While this is a growing process, He will help us to grow as fast as it is best for us, as long as we allow Him to. So this love will cast out our fears because we are letting Him do the work in our lives.\(^VI\) Also when God loves others through us we will love them in the right way too. As we studied in lesson 1, we can test the results to see if it is God loving through us. That test is that we will be living in accord with His commandment.\(^VII\) We will want to obey Him in our relationship with others. This is incontrovertible proof that we love with His love.

"It is not conclusive evidence that a man is a Christian because he manifests spiritual ecstasy under extraordinary circumstances. Holiness is not rapture: it is an entire surrender of the will to God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love." \(^12\)

Look at what this love caused God to do for us. He loved us so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to leave heaven and come down and die for us.\(^VIII\)

Think about it. Jesus was equal with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. These three are not created beings, they are divinity, they are the creators.\(^13\) In them is the source of all life. Even if all of the created beings in the

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\(^8\) Isaiah 55:3, Matthew 11:28, John 5:38-40, etc.

\(^9\) John 8:31; 15:4 – 10, etc.

\(^10\) Matthew 19:17; John 14:15; 15:9, 10, 1 John 2:3, 4, 22; 5:3; Revelation 14:12, etc.

\(^11\) See Matthew 5:14-16, etc.

\(^12\) Acts of the Apostles page 51

\(^13\) Genesis 1:1, 2, etc.
universe rejected their rule, all created beings would cease to exist, when the life they enjoyed was removed by their own request, just like will happen to Satan and His angels at the end of the Millennium. So, the members of the Godhead cannot be threatened, they are above all of that.

Yet, they formed a plan, whereby if anyone ever chose to rebel against their rule, they would have a plan in place so those who changed their minds, repented and wanted to, could return. The central part of that plan was that the Son, the Creator, would forever leave His exalted position. He would take on human nature. He would connected Himself with the human race with ties that will never be broken. He would come to earth, not as a king, but as a servant, a slave, the lowest level of mankind there is. He, the source of all life, would give up His life to rescue mankind from the bad choice we made to serve Satan.

In one sense He didn’t have to do it. His life was in no danger because of our choices. But in a very real sense, He had to do it. Divine love would not allow Him to not come and save us. If a child is in danger, does a real parent think of his or her own danger? No, they would risk everything to save that child and that is only human, philo love. With God, we are talking about Divine love, which is as much greater then human love as divinity is greater then created beings. So, because those in the Godhead are the embodiment of Divine love, they couldn’t help Themselves. Jesus had to come because He is love and His love is as much greater than a parent’s love as heaven is higher than the earth.

THE LOVE HYMN OF THE BIBLE

This beautiful passage is often and accurately, called the “Love Hymn of the Bible.” It is here we see in detail, various facets of what agape love really is. Let's look at that love hymn in order to see how Paul describes agape love. First of all Paul stressed the importance of agape love. Paul starts with his own strong points first. Paul was a well-known orator, so the first example he uses is that speaking abilities. He says that even if we have great speaking abilities, so that we can sway men with our persuasiveness, if we lack agape love, we are nothing more than a sounding gong or a clanging symbol. A gong or clanging symbol is certainly not the most musical of instruments.

Another asset Paul possessed was a fantastic store of knowledge. But he says that even with all of that knowledge, even to the point of being able to foretell the future, without agape love it is worth nothing.

Another thing Paul is known for was his faith. While it is not recorded that he ever moved any physical mountains, we sure have evidence that he moved mountain of difficulty. His achievements in single handedly spreading the gospel leaves us today still in amazement. But he says that even with that kind of faith, without agape love, we still are worth nothing.

When he was writing this wonderful chapter, he was under house arrest in Rome. A martyr’s death faced him and he was not about to shrink from its pain. Yet Paul reminds us that martyrdom is of no credit without agape love.

Agape love is everything and it alone brings value to everything else we do.

Now Paul moves from describing his own relationship to agape love to a description of what agape love will and will not be or do. This special divine love will cause us to be patient, kind and we will rejoice in the truth. It will help us bear all things, believe all that God tells us, constantly hope in God and will endure all that God allows to come our way. On the other hand, if we do not have agape love in control of our lives, we will display one or more of the following characteristics.

We will tend to be jealous, brag, be arrogant and in general act unbecomingly. We will seek our own advantage, be easily provoked, and tend to keep an account of wrongs done to us and we will not want to forgive them. We will

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14 Steps to Christ, page 14.3
15 Philippians 2:5-8
16 1 Corinthians 13:1
17 Ibid 13:2
18 Ibid 13:3
19 Ibid 13:4-7
WHAT IS LOVE?

find our greatest pleasure in the things that are not in accord with God’s will, unrighteousness.\textsuperscript{XIV} 20 Quite a contrast between the two types of behavior, isn’t it? This is the difference between being a person who is “others centered” and one who is “Me centered.”

In addition to that, this kind of love will never fail.\textsuperscript{XV} 21 It is the greatest of the three greatest virtues in the Christian life, which Paul lists as: Faith, Hope and Agape Love.\textsuperscript{XVI} In fact, this is the only spiritual gift that we are admonished to pursue.\textsuperscript{22} The reason is that the others are of no value without agape love and the others will come along with agape love. So if we press our request to heaven for this love, we will get faith and hope along with the love we prayed for.\textsuperscript{XVII}

\textbf{PETER, DO YOU LOVE ME?}

Soon after Jesus had risen from the dead, John records a conversation between Jesus and Peter, which seems to be the turning point in Peter's life, his conversion. Here the two Greek words, Philos and Agape are used in a most interesting and enlightening way. \textsuperscript{23} The setting for this story is that it had been several days or possible weeks since the mock trial of Jesus, His crucifixion, burial and resurrection. Yes, He had been raised from the dead and had contacted the disciples several times over a short period of time. Jesus told them to go to Galilee and meet Him there. For this reason they had gathered beside the lake and waited for Jesus to come.

Peter had been one of the leaders of the disciples. But when he denied Jesus, he felt so low he had to look up to see bottom. He was miserable and felt he had lost all credibility with his friends, which he very possibly had. As they waited alongside the seashore, Peter suddenly said, “I'm going fishing.” Having been a good fisherman before leaving all to follow Jesus, this announcement was virtually a declaration of returning to his old trade. He had failed miserably as a follower of Jesus, so he might as well give it up and go back to something he had been successful at. This is a test that we all will be tested with, when we fully turn our lives over to Jesus. In response to his declaration, Thomas, Nathaniel, James and John, plus a couple other disciples who are not named, joined in and went along. See how careful we must be regarding the example we set.

These seven disciples fished all night and caught nothing. The blues that had settled over Peter only deepened with this additional failure. It is not impossible that all Peter could think about was the sound of Jesus saying “Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times,” three times, three times. In his mind echoed those three times when he denied that he knew Jesus and the ringing sound of the voice of that abominable cock announcing the coming morning, a morning he hoped he would never see. Oh if he could only make this right! That foolish mistake almost made life no longer worth living. Now, he couldn’t even catch any fish either! Would nothing ever going to go right for him again? As the sun came up and the sound of other cocks all around the quiet lake, their crowing echoing across the still waters, as they announced the coming day seemed to all be mocking Peter. Than someone noticed a lone figure on the shoreline. A familiar voice drifted out to them across the waters. The mood Peter was in was so deep that he did not recognize the voice at first. It seemed that nothing could penetrate the pity party Peter was having.

Now there is two things you never want to say to a fisherman, especially a good one like Peter.

1. The first is, you never want to tell him how to fish. Every fisherman has his own unique style and they believe it is the best.

2. Another thing you never ask a fisherman is if he has caught any fish, unless you see that he has some that he has caught.

But this impertinent stranger broke both rules. First he said: “Little children, have you caught any fish?”\textsuperscript{24} Now the old Peter would have turned the air blue between ship and shore. But Peter, Himself, was so blue that not even

\begin{itemize}
\item $^{20}$ Ibid 13:8
\item $^{21}$ 1 Corinthians 13:8
\item $^{22}$ Ibid 14:1
\item $^{23}$ John 21:1-19
\item $^{24}$ John 21:5
\end{itemize}
this insult to his fishing powers could raise any more of a response than a meek, “No.” Then the stranger told them
to cast their net on the other side of the ship. Peter had become so used to obeying that voice, that even though he
did not consciously recognize it, he obeyed. What happened then shook Peter out of his doldrums in a hurry.
There were so many fish in their net that they couldn’t haul the net in. While John suggested to Peter that “It is the
Lord,” Peter needed no one to paint him a picture as to who was the stranger on the shore. He knew who it was and
he lost all interest in fish, for he had some urgent business to attend to as soon as possible.

Peter threw on his robe and jumped into the sea, swimming that last 100 yards to shore as fast as he could. The
boat was far too slow; Peter was a man on a mission. The Bible discreetly draws a cloak over what happened next
as the narrative switches to the other six disciples. But, I believe we can imagine what happened fairly closely.
When Peter got on shore, he probably fell at Jesus feet, sobbing out in sorrow for what he had done and begged for
forgiveness. Apologies rushed out of the big fisherman along with his tears. Jesus probably stooped down and
raised Peter up and assured him that he was forgiven and that He still loved him.

By the time the boat with the fish and fishermen got to shore, Peter and Jesus had accomplished their reconciliation.
But Jesus wanted to help not only Peter, but also the other disciples, understand a most important lesson. Although
Peter’s denial was the most dramatic betrayal, they had all fled when the soldiers came to the garden of
Gethsemane. In fact they all had denied him, except John. Maybe that is why only John records this meeting.

Jesus invited them to bring some fish to a fire he had burning and soon they were eating breakfast. Probably not
much was being said as these men, close friends, sat about the fire eating breakfast. It is very possible that each
was lost in his own private thoughts, not really knowing just what to say. So Jesus broke the silence, turned to
Peter and said: “Peter do you love me?” When Jesus chose the words for this question, He used the Greek
word Agape here that is translated as “love.” Jesus was saying, “Peter do you agape Me?” Do you have divine
love for me? By this choice of words, Peter knew enough about agape love to realize that agape was not a strong
factor in his life. So Peter responded, “Yes, Lord, you know I love you!” But what Peter did was this: he used
the Greek word Philos for love. He really said, “Lord, you know I love you like a brother!”

But that was not what Jesus had asked. So Jesus posed the question again. “Peter, do you agape me?”
Again, Peter did not answer the question, but again professed his brotherly love for Jesus.

Twice Christ had asked Peter if he had learned to love on the agape level. Twice Peter has answered that he “loved Christ like a brother.” But that was not what Christ was asking. His question was, "do you have God's love in your life?"

Now Jesus again addresses Peter, and suddenly the air grows cold and still. The tension was so high you could cut
it with a knife. Jesus said: “Peter, do you love me?” But this time Jesus used the same word Peter had been using, philos, for love. The air grew tense as everyone waited with baited breath for the explosion such a question in this context would have brought from the old Peter. For now Jesus was even questioning Peter’s brotherly love for Him. Up to now it was easy to sidestep the grand standard of Agape love. After all, who is like God? But now Jesus is questioning the philos love Peter had already twice asserted that he had for Jesus. This was like a knife to Peter’s heart. The Bible says; “Peter was grieved because the third time He had said to him, do you philos me.”

Jesus was now questioning Peter’s brotherly love, which was more then Peter could stand.

Tears were close to the big fisherman’s eyes, if in fact they were not flooding down his cheeks and beard. Why
was Jesus being so cruel to him? After all, hadn’t he just been forgiven for his denial of his best friend, Jesus.
Where was that forgiveness Jesus had taught so many times? Didn’t Jesus tell them that when we confess our sins
God casts them into the depth of the sea? But Jesus wanted to press home a truth that was so important that these disciples must never forget it. This dialogue

25 John 21:15
26 The reader will find that some modern translations pick up on this in their rendition of this dialogue between
Jesus and Peter.
27 John 21:17
28 Psalm 103:12; Micah 7:19
29 Matthew 18:22

44
WHAT IS LOVE?

wasn’t just for Peter, but for all of His disciples, both those present that morning and those who would read this account throughout all time.

Unless we love Jesus with this special divine love, our love is just not acceptable. Millions will come to the judgment day and find that they have had high emotional feelings for Jesus and Jesus will declare that He never knew them. Some claim that they have a close relationship with Jesus, but Jesus will not affirm that relationship, for they only had philos love for Him. Some will point to their great accomplishments for Him, but He will affirm that He never knew them. Our salvation is not just dependant upon our having love for Jesus, but in having the RIGHT KIND of love for Jesus. The type of love we have is all important, as those in the parable Jesus told reveals.

When Jesus questioned Peter’s filial love, He wasn’t doing it to hurt Peter, but Jesus did this to help Peter to grow. Peter responded: “Lord, you know that I love you!” Again Peter used the word “philos” but this time it wasn’t any longer to sidestep the question Jesus was asking. Rather it was more of a plea for help from a helpless, but converted, sinner.

Today we might say: “Lord, you know that I love you in the best way I know how.” This acknowledgement of his limitations and great need in not having agape love was in fact an invitation to God to fill him with that divine love. Peter and the other disciples learned an important lesson that morning at the lakeside breakfast. It is not just loving like a brother that is important. It is allowing God to fill us with His love that is crucial to being able to live the Christ-like life and not fall like Peter did when he relied on philos. It is in having the right kind of love that is crucial. Had Peter not learned this lesson, he would have continued to deny Christ in the trying days ahead. But when Peter allowed his heart to be filled with agape love, God's love, then God could use him.

It is the same today. Unless we learn to love on the agape level, we too will fail when the tests come as many are doing today. High emotions (eros) catch the attention of many and pack the meeting halls. A lonely heart seeks to have a relationship, a spiritual family. But even though men believe these are of the highest importance, they are not the primary needs of mankind that Jesus has come to respond to. It is all-important to know this and as Peter did, acknowledge his need and seek the Divine love Jesus was there to give to him.

Before Peter’s fall, Jesus had warned him about his weakness, a warning either Peter didn’t or couldn’t understand because of his own opinion of himself. Jesus had told Peter he needed to be converted. It was here in the early morning hours on the sea of Galilee that Peter was converted as he finally grasped the concept that Jesus presented when He told them that:

“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

The presence and control of agape love in the life is the ONLY sign Jesus gave for discipleship, when He walked on earth. Peter couldn’t be a true spiritual leader in the early Christian church without it. Nor can we today function as a genuine Christian with God’s blessings unless we learn to allow agape to permeate our lives. This is no doubt the reason Jesus was so eager to help those who were to lead out in taking the gospel to the world to understand this need. Apparently Peter got the message, for at Pentecost just a few weeks later he preached a sermon where 3,000 people were baptized.

**QUESTION**

Do you want to be filled with this special Divine Love? ___________________________________

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30 See Matthew 7, 24 and 25  
31 See Matthew 7:21-23  
32 Matthew 7:23  
33 Luke 22:31, 32  
34 John 13:35  
35 (For the story see Acts 2.)
Do you desire to have this Agape Love in control of all your relationships and your emotions?
QUIZ - CHAPTER 4

I  Where does this special love come from?  1 John 4:7

II  How did God demonstrate this agape love?  1 John 4:9, 10

III  How should we respond to this demonstration of agape love?  1 John 4:11

IV  In loving one another with this God-like agape love, what does it show?  1 John 4:12, 13, 16.

V  If we claim to be a Christian and do not love our brother, what does the Bible call us?  1 John 4:20, 21.

VI  What does this agape love cast out?  1 John 4:18

VII  How can we know for sure that we love our brother in the right way?  1 John 5:2, 3.

VIII  What did this agape love cause God to do for you?  John 3:16

IX  If I have great speaking abilities, so that I can sway men, but lack agape, what does the Bible say I sound like?  1 Corinthians 13:1

X  What if I have all knowledge, so I could even foretell the future, but do not have agape?  1 Corinthians 13:2

XI  What profit is it to have such a strong faith so that I can even move a mountain, but do not have agape?  1 Corinthians 13:2.

XII  What gain is it to become a martyr and not to have agape?  1 Corinthians 13:3

XIII  Paul lists some things that love will do.  What are they?  1 Corinthians 13:4-7

LOVE WILL BE -
XIV  Paul lists some things that love will not do. What are they? 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

LOVE WILL NOT BE -

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
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XV  How reliable is this agape love? 1 Corinthians 13:8

XVI  Paul compares three great Christian virtues, Faith, Hope and Love (Charity). Which does Paul say is the greatest? 1 Corinthians 13:13

XVII Which of these Christian virtues are we to pursue? 1 Corinthians 14:1

XVIII What question did Jesus ask Peter? John 21:15 first part

_____________________________________________________________________________

NOTE: The Greek word used here for Love is Agape.

XIX  What was Peter's reply to Jesus? John 21:15 last part

_____________________________________________________________________________

NOTE: The Greek word used here for Love is Philos.

XX  What further question did Christ ask Peter? John 21:16 first part

_____________________________________________________________________________

NOTE: The Greek word used here for Love is Agape.

XXI  What was Peter's reply? John 21:16 second part

_____________________________________________________________________________
What Is Love?

NOTE: The Greek word used here for Love is Philos.

XXII  What was Christ's third question to Peter?  John 21:17 first part

XXIII  What was Peter's reaction to this new question asked by Christ?  John 21:17 middle part

XXIV  What warning had Jesus given earlier to Peter?  Luke 22:31, 32
5. WHAT IS SIN?

Just ask virtually anyone who claims to be a Christian and they will give you the most common definition of what sin is. The author held to this common understanding of the nature of sin for many years. That is until one day it was noticed that instead of there being just one place in the Bible where sin is defined, eventually four were found. Also, instead of the common definition being a whole statement, it is only half of a sentence and the balance of the sentence cast a question on how most people understand the nature of sin to be. This often will happen when we open our minds to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Most people are afraid of breaking with the commonly accepted wisdom of the day when something seems to not agree with it. Yet, the job of the Holy Spirit is to:

“\textit{But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth;}” \textsuperscript{1}

If we are afraid to follow the Holy Spirit when it leads us into a truth that is not commonly held, then are we really allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us? The fact that a concept is commonly held is not one of the tests for truth. In fact, quite often, the commonly held teachings are not the ones held by those who will be saved. Jesus said it this way:

“\textit{Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”}\textsuperscript{2}

So it is with the definition of sin. We must enter into the narrow definition of sin if we hope to continue in the understanding of the plan of salvation. Lets set our opinions aside and see what the Bible has to say about the real nature of sin.

\textbf{HOW THE BIBLE DESCRIBES SIN}

As with most things, going back to the beginning is the best place to start. As Jesus did with two of His disciples, He:

“\textit{Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”}\textsuperscript{3}

Jesus’ way is the best one, so we too will start with Moses and see just how sin began on this earth.

When God created this world, it was very good, to the point that God called it perfect.\textsuperscript{4} Everything was in harmony. Each being knew their place in the grand scheme of things and were perfectly happy to function in that place God had assigned to them. From the mote on the sunbeam to the mightiest animal, each lived to serve. Man was created to be the grand marshal of this parade of wonders God had created. God gave Adam, the first man, a “help mate” or “one who would stand by his side” a co-worker to orchestrate all of these responsibilities. A being that would compliment him, make him complete, as God had pronounced when the race of humans was created. They were created in two parts, part A, man, and part B, woman. It takes both parts to have a human being.\textsuperscript{5} They are to stand side by side in loving complementation in order to be truly human.

All was so very nice that even today, over 6,000 years later, the term “Eden,” brings up thoughts of a most beautiful place and simpler time.

\textsuperscript{1} John 16:13  
\textsuperscript{2} Matthew 7:13, 14  
\textsuperscript{3} Luke 24:27  
\textsuperscript{4} Genesis 1:31  
\textsuperscript{5} Genesis 1:26, 27
However, all of this happiness only irked the “prince of the power of the air” or as we know him today, Satan. He was determined to bring to ruin that which God had created. Of the two beings God had created to rule over this world, Satan saw something in Eve that made him believe that she would be a more willing accomplice to his scheme to take over this world than Adam would be, at least at first. This proved to be a correct assessment and Eve went along with Satan’s suggestions and the end result was that this entire, perfect world that God had so carefully crafted, was moved to the edge of ruin. A ruin so complete that no one could survive it unless God intervened.

But:

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

Before the world was even created, the ruling powers of heaven knew that there would be the possibility of a free moral agent, someday, somewhere, on planet Earth, making a wrong choice. So they had put a plan in place to meet that emergency before it even occurred. So when Eve made that wrong choice and Adam went along with it, this “Plan C(alvary)” as we might call it today, was put into motion. God came down to earth to confront His disobedient children for two reasons.

1. To restore God’s plan for this earth as far as possible after the damage that had been done, and
2. To tell Adam and Eve of this plan Heaven was going to follow for their redemption and salvation.

From the days of Adam and Eve’s encounter with the serpent in the Garden of Eden, our world has been under a cloud of sin. Due to the many preconceived ideas we have been taught, many have believed some strange things about sin. Starting with an incorrect premise, they have come up with some faulty conclusions. Taking just a common meaning about a word, they fail to realize that the author is using a less common meaning, which is the only meaning the context will admit to. For this, and other reasons, they fail to understand many very plain statements God has made regarding the remedy to sin and the goal He has in mind for His people. This can be avoided by understanding sin the way that Heaven presents it in the Bible.

Unless sin is accurately defined, it is virtually impossible to really understand the solution to the sin problem. Once the problem is understood, as the Bible reveals it, then the solution to that problem makes sense and is understandable. So in this lesson we will seek to correctly define just what the problem of sin really is. In later lessons we will study the solution. But first, here are some important rules for studying the Bible.

**SOME IMPORTANT RULES FOR BIBLE STUDY**

When studying the Bible, a safe guide for study is this:

1. **LOOK AT ALL THE EVIDENCE**

Then apply a rule mentioned earlier in the Introduction:

2. **ALWAYS USE CLEAR TEXT TO UNDERSTAND THE UNCLEAR TEXT.**

This should be a given in any kind of study, but it is amazing how many people want to define clear texts by their opinion of what an unclear text says. God never intended it to be that way. God’s desire was to make all things clear. However, Satan has been a master at confusion, and his art only becomes more fruitful with all the thousands of years he has been practicing it.

There is another rule that makers of rifles learned long ago in developing the sights for aiming rifles.

3. **YOU NEED AT LEAST TWO POINTS OF REFERENCE FOR AN ACCURATE SIGHTING.**

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6 Ephesians 2:2
7 There is much here that needs to be examined, but that is being saved for another lesson. It is vitally important.
8 John 3:16
It is also true when studying God's word. You need at least two points of reference for an accurate conclusion. When you have the right two points of reference, all the other evidence on the topic will line up accurately. Sp, when all of what the Bible says on any given subject all lines up in perfect alignment, one can know it is truth.

As we study about sin, we will use as much evidence as possible in our search for truth. Obviously with such a large subject, as sin, we cannot examine every text found in the Bible in this lesson, but we will read all the text that define sin. We will follow Paul's advice to Timothy and attempt to "accurately handle the word of truth."  

**JOHN’S DEFINITION OF SIN?**

Ask almost any Christian, who is reasonably well educated in the Bible, to define sin and they will quote half of a sentence from a letter written by the apostle John. They will say something like this.

> "Sin is the transgression of the law." \(^{10}\)

This comes from the first letter of John to the churches of his day. But the whole sentence in a modern translation says this:

> “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.”  

Before we look at this text, we need to examine the context, or verse 3, which says:

> “And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”  

The first thing that should be noticed is that both texts start out with the word “everyone.” In verse 3 it is everyone who has their hope fixed on Him, Jesus. While in verse 4, the “everyone” is those who are making a practice of sinning (or “commits” as translated in the KJV).

So here John is drawing a parallel. This parallel demands that whatever definition of sin we arrive at will pattern the information given in verse 3. Let’s put it in a diagram.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse (ESV)</th>
<th>Identification</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 – A</td>
<td>Everyone who thus hopes in him [Jesus]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 – A</td>
<td>Everyone who makes a practice of sinning, ALSO</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 – B</td>
<td>Purifies himself as He is pure</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 – B</td>
<td>Practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vs. 5</td>
<td>You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 - A</td>
<td>No one who abides in him keeps on sinning</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 - B</td>
<td>No one who keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him.</td>
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The point that becomes most obvious is that sin is the opposite of keeping our hope on Jesus. Here John compares all of those who have their hope fixed on Jesus with all of those who are practicing sin, or have sin active in their lives. Just as “Hope” is an attitude, so too “Sin” is an attitude. Hope does not fix itself on Jesus; it causes the one who has hope to fix their hope on Jesus. Likewise, sin doesn’t break the law, it causes the person it infects to break the law. This is the value of examining the context, as it supports what can also be seen within verse 4 itself as well as the rest of the evidence we will examine. Verse 6 just furthers that support.

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9 2 Timothy 2:15
10 1 John 3:4
11 1 John 3:4 ESV
12 1 John 3:3
Notice what the respective results of hope and sin are that John points out. Those who have their hope in Jesus will purify themselves even as He is pure. Those who practice sin will transgress the law, any law. That is what sin does; it causes a person to break laws, any laws. The texts that follow verse 4 only support what we are seeing here. Therefore, sin is not the breaking of a law; it is the force that causes one to break a law. Breaking a law is the result of sin, not sin itself. Is that clear? If not, review this information, as this is vital to an understanding of the nature of sin as well as being able to live without sin or a sinless life, i.e. being perfect as Jesus commands us to do.13

Now turn to verse 4 and the common definition of sin will start to raise some questions in most people’s mind. It should be quite obvious by now that we most certainly need to take a more careful look at this text. Notice the first part of the text that says (in the King James Versions)

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; . . ."10

Two words need to be studied here. "Committeth" or “practices” in the NASB and "also."

**COMMITTETH (OR PRACTICES) - THIS MEANS TO DO OR TO PUT IN ACTION, MAKE A CUSTOM OF. [“MAKES A PRACTICE OF SINNING” ESB]**

The Greek word translated as “doing” or putting something into practice or action. So it would literally read,

“Anyone doing sin also does lawlessness, for sin is the cause of lawlessness.”

Now we need to examine a seemingly unimportant word which carries great amount of meaning in this setting.

**ALSO - THIS MEANS: EVEN, LIKewise, TOO, BESIDES, IN ADDITION TO.**

So then, when one sins, or puts sin into action, at the same time, or also, they will be breaking a law. Breaking a law, then is the outward evidence that sin is being put into action in the mind.

Jesus said it this way:

“You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.”14

While God can read our hearts, we as humans, we cannot know that sin is present in our hearts until it raises it's ugly head through the action of transgressing a law, or not doing what God has asked us to do.

Now look at the second half of the text, the “half a sentence” that is the foundation for the common definition of sin.

". . . for sin is the transgression of the law"

or as the modern translation more accurately translates it:

“and sin is lawlessness.”

Now we need to look at the word "lawlessness."

**Lawlessness - the act of being lawless, not obeying the law, unruly, disorderly, or in the Greek language - a stepping aside or ignoring of; not being subject to the law. (Law - a rule of life or conduct, instructions.)**

Some synonyms are: irresponsibility, anarchy, terrorism, insubordination, un-submissive, rebellious (rebellion, rebel), etc.

Dr. Ken Taylor in the paraphrased Living Bible says it this way.

"But those who keep on sinning are against God for every sin is done against the will of God."

Dr, Taylor is coming real close to the heart of the meaning of the passage here. We will see this more clearly if we can fine-tune it yet even more.

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13 Matthew 5:48
14 Matthew 12:34
**SUMMARY**

We can correctly conclude then that when the sin that is in our heart is able to control our actions, it will result in lawbreaking or going contrary to God’s instructions. As you may have noticed, John hasn’t really defined sin here; he has only described what it does. Yes, that is correct, he has only described how we can identify the presence of sin through its behavior or results! The intentional breaking of a law is the result of sin in the heart, not the sin itself.

However, there are many places in the Bible where that differentiation is not always maintained. Some authors, Jesus included, at times consider the action and the motivation as one and the same, and that is correct for general discussion. As we have already noted, Jesus was careful to point out the cause/ effect relationship here in Matthew 12. So we need to realize just what is underneath the surface if we plan to be acceptable students of God’s word.

**JAMES’ DEFINITION OF SIN**

Jesus had, according to what tradition tells us, an older brother named James. Since Jesus was Mary’s first son, this must have been by a previous wife Joseph had married that we are not told about and he had children by her, before he married Mary and Jesus was born. James has a most interesting way of telling us what sin is.

> “Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

Here again we need to carefully examine the words James uses. The main word here is "knows" and the phrase it is found in:

> "Does not do it."

A. Knows - The Greek word translated here is not the more common word for “know.” This word implies that information has come within a person's sphere of perception, or his circle of vision. In other words, it is knowledge that is available to him, something he can and could know if he chose to know.

B. Does not do it - He does not put this available knowledge into action OR he chooses to ignore it or not believe it.

Here is the description of what we saw in 1 John. The wrong action is a result of a choice made in the mind. If “Sin” is residing in the mind, it will cause one to choose to ignore God’s instructions and go contrary to those instructions.

This means that we sin, [read this carefully now] even when A) we are not doing anything, when we know we should be doing something, or B) we could know what we should be, or not be, doing something we could know if we chose to have that information. The knowledge factor is the important point here. If information has come within my sphere of availability, I am responsible for it. To fail to act on a message from God that we could know about, if we choose to, is sin.

Why am I held responsible for that which I do not know when just because it is available to me? In our last lesson we looked at a special kind of love, agape love. This love has as a necessary condition that it reaches up to God and out to others. If we choose to not reaching up to God to know His will for me, it shows that the love we have is not agape love. Part of that reaching up is looking for and wanting to know what God’s will is for us. So to not want to know what God’s will is for us, when we could know, shows that we are not reaching up to Him, therefore we do not have agape love in our lives. We are choosing to do things our way and just ignoring what His will is. James labels this motive as sin.

James goes on to explain this phenomenon. He says that:

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15 Matthew 5:28 is one such example.
16 James 4:17
17 Also see James 1:21-25
BASIC CHRISTIANITY

“But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.”

LUST

Lust is defined as having a very strong, almost overpowering, desire for something. When we want to do things our way that strongly, it gives birth to or shows that sin exists in our lives. It causes us to choose our way rather then God’s way. It causes us to stay ignorant of God’s way so we will not be bothered with that knowledge. This is what happened to Eve in the Garden of Eden. She thought that the suggestion of the serpent was more valid than God’s instructions, so she chose to believe the serpent rather than God. Her desire to be like a god superseded her desire to do God’s will. When that lust, or very strong desire, was given into, she rebelled against God’s instructions. The resulting action was lawlessness or insubordination, the result of sin being in the life.

Some say that the only law referred to in James is the Ten Commandments. Yet the instructions Eve disobeyed are not written in the Ten Commandments. Still, she was guilty of sinning. In fact all of God’s instructions are included here, including all instruction given before and after the Ten Commandments were given on Mount Sinai.

James tells us that we only need to break one of God’s instructions to be guilty of sin. It isn’t the number of times or the flagrancy of the lawlessness, it is the simple fact of not choosing to submit to God’s will that is the issue. Therefore, according to James, sinlessness or keeping the law is fulfilling the royal law, or the law of agape love. He also calls it the “law of liberty.” While this almost sounds like a contradiction in terms, “law and liberty,” it really isn’t.

When we look at the law of God in a latter lesson, we will examine this question more closely. But for now let’s take a look at an example that will help until we get to that discussion.

One of the “Ten Commandments” is this one.

“Thou shalt not steal.”

If everyone obeyed this law, there wouldn’t be any need for locks, since no one would steal from anyone else. Wouldn’t that be a better situation or true freedom? While the basic principles of love are listed in the Ten Commandments, those are not all of God’s instructions. One who truly loves God with agape love will want to conform to all of His will, for they know that this is the best way to live.

The Ten Commandments are just a sample of God’s character, not a complete description of God.

"When one surrenders to Christ, the mind is brought under the control of the law; but it is the royal law which proclaims liberty to every captive. By becoming one with Christ, man is made free. Subjection to the will of Christ means restoration to perfect manhood."

Obedience to God is liberty from the thraldom of sin, deliverance from human passion and impulse. Man may stand conqueror of himself, conqueror of his own inclinations, conqueror of principalities and powers, and the 'rulers of the darkness of this world,' and of spiritual wickedness in high places.” Ephesians 6:12.”

SUMMARY

The conclusion from what James says is this: if we have the opportunity to know, or in fact do know what God wants us to do and we ignore it, this is strong evidence that we have sin in our lives. This means we can sin by not

18 James 1:14, 15
19 See James 1:25; 2:12
20 Exodus 20:15 etc.
21 The Ministry of Healing. page 131
performing any outward action at all. Jesus brought this out in the “Sermon on the Mount.” Therefore sin must be something besides an action that causes us to break the law of God.

**Paul’s Definition of Sin**

Paul is the greatest human theologian of all time. He alone introduces us to some of the details of some of the most important doctrines of the Bible. Not that they were not mentioned before, but Paul is the first one to put them in a more organized way. Some believe that a mark of a theologian is that they are “hard to understand.” Paul certainly qualifies in this area. His writings, even in his own time were considered by some as hard to understand. The main reason for this, both for those of the Jewish nation as well as for us today, is that some very strong opinions about things were and are being held, and Paul’s teachings just didn’t go along with those preconceived ideas. So the main reason Paul is hard to understand is that he is presenting truths that are not compatible with what we want to believe. An example of the phenomena that preconceived opinions are the biggest barriers to understanding truth. Many find it difficult to impossible to open their mind, free of private opinion, to listen to a presentation of truth.

Just because Peter made the comment he did, however, does not mean that what Paul wrote is hard to understand. At least not for those willing to set aside their preconceived ideas. In fact most of what he says is really very plain and easy to understand if a person just follows his reasoning carefully. Beside the problem of preconceived opinions, many today are just not able to follow a closely reasoned presentation. It seems like with many, if the presentation lasts over one minute, they tune out. Few truths can be understood in only one minute, none can be fully understood in anything near that time period. The human mind just is not that attune to grand concepts of truth to be able to understand it in that short of a time period. There are many factors, however, TV and other such entertainment carries a major responsibility for this.

**Gospel to the Gentiles**

God confirmed that Paul had the ability to clearly present the gospel, because God called him to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, the least informed people group, about God’s plan for mankind in that time period. If Paul were really that hard to understand, then wouldn’t it have been a mistake on God’s part to send Paul to preach to the Gentiles? Since most Christians today are Gentiles, it follows that Paul is an apostle to us today too.

No, Paul is not hard to understand, it is those who are blinded by human opinion or the cravings of sin who find the truths God revealed in such detail, through Paul, to be so hard to break through our preconceived ideas. As already stated, when one can really listen to what Paul is saying, it really isn’t that hard to understand.

In my theological studies, one or two professors tended to scoff at the students who went in for the writings of Paul. They suggested, and at times outright stated, that this was to make themselves (the student) appear to be super scholars. In hind sight, it appears that the reason these professors were scoffing was that they were not able to set aside their preconceived ideas and let Paul teach them. They wanted to teach Paul, that has never worked. Many today, even outside the ivy halls, have the same idea, for much the same reasons.

Or to state the situation in a somewhat humorous manner, we tend to want to believe that the smartest people in the world are those who agree with us. Of course the dumbest people are those who disagree with us. RIGHT?

So in a manner characteristic of Paul, he gives the world the clearest statement of what sin really is. 

“For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”

In most English Bibles, this looks like only a part of a sentence, the same as we discussed regarding John’s presentation of the nature of sin. However, as noted above, the English Standard Bible correctly makes this a

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22 see Matthew 5:27, 28
23 Also see James 1:22-25; Romans 3:20; Romans 7:7
24 see 2 Peter 3:15, 16
25 1 Timothy 2:7
26 Romans 14:23 ESV
BASIC CHRISTIANITY

There is a total change in subject matter, which indicates a new sentence. Besides that, in the other translations, there are several clues that, unlike with John’s statement in 1 John, this phrase can stand alone as a sentence, while the John’s statement cannot.

There is a very clear **thought break** here in Paul’s statement, changing from eating to faith, unlike in 1 John where the subject of sin is the subject of the entire text. Many have wondered about this sudden change in subjects right in the middle of Paul’s conclusion. Why does Paul suddenly change from talking about food to talking about faith then sin?

Paul’s comment here is a summary statement. Paul, as a theologian and careful, organized thinker, uses summary statements more than virtually any other sacred writer. An example of this can be seen by looking in verse 1 of this chapter to find what subject Paul is dealing with in this section of Romans.

“**Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.**”

The whole discussion of this chapter is regarding faith and judgment, not sin, as is found in 1 John. Paul presents different scenarios, including

- Faith vs. Opinions – vs 1
- Eating – vs. 2, 3
- Judging – vs 3, 4
- Choice of holy days - vs. 5, 6
- Example – vs. 7 – 9
- Taking God’s place in judgment vs. 10 – 12.
- Don’t be a stumbling block vs. 11- 19
- Opinions vs. faith - vs. 20 – 23 first part.
- Sin is an attitude, not an action. Vs 23 last part.

Here is an example of the value of following the train of thought being presented and carefully analyzing the context.

**STORY TIME**

Just a short story to illustrate. A minister of another denomination from my own, called and asked me to preach in his church one Sunday, since he had to be out of town. I had preached there more than once and I know that he was a very organized man. He had five doctor’s degrees in fields related to theology and had spent some time on the Dead Sea Scrolls. So, I asked him: “I know you have a sermonic year, do you want me to continue on or bring in another topic?” He avowed that either was OK. So, I asked him where he was at in his schedule. He said that he was working through Romans 8 and he had left off at verse 27.

Well, I knew Romans 8:28 was an easy topic to preach on, so I jumped on what I though would be a “slam dunk” sermon. One I wouldn’t have to spend a lot of time on as well as one where my theology and his were not in conflict, if in fact there is such a thing. So, when I sat down to put some notes together, I was brought up short with the realization that verse 29 comes after verse 28. Of course, anyone knows that, but few know that verse 29 is one of those most difficult verses in the Bible and the fodder for many an argument. At that point I fled to God for help. He reminded me of what I have presented in these studies: “Check the context.” So, I did and I made a most wonderful discovery regarding that subject matter. Several came up after the sermon and told me that it was the first time they had understood that subject. I had to be truthful and admit that it was the first time for me too. I had to thank my friend for dropping that challenge in my lap, as I learned more then anyone else did, just by letting the Holy Spirit lead and checking the context.

**BACK TO ROMANS 14**

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27 Romans 14:1

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58
However, in the larger context, the subject is sin. So verse 23, first part, is a final concluding statement on this discussion of food, the last part is the summary of the larger topic of faith and sin and its impact on our relationship with God. This way of writing is typical of Paul and when it is recognized it makes his writings much easier to understand. So in this last sentence in verse 23, we have a final analysis and summary of the whole discussion that ends here in chapter 14. Chapter 15 is a most definite break in the thought Paul has been developing up to chapter 14. Still related to it, but a much different facet of the idea.

In order to help us see just what Paul is trying to communicate, we will examine two words used here in more detail. The two words are: "Whatever" [whatsoever] and "Faith."

**WHATEVER** - means all, everything, an all-inclusive word including anything good or bad. In itself it is not concerned with moral values.

**FAITH** - a firm persuasion, a firm relying, confidence in, trusting, confiding in, an unquestioning belief, complete trust, reliance, etc.

Some synonyms of faith are: belief, credence, trust, hope, confidence, reliance, dependence, loyalty, fidelity, allegiance, etc.

So we could paraphrase this statement by saying:

**“Everything that we do, good or bad, without trusting God, is sin.”**

This now makes the definition of sin very clear, i.e. it is anything we do, good or bad, that is a result of not trusting God. Which brings up a question: “Is it possible to do something bad when trusting God?” Well, not bad in the sense of willfully not obeying God. But there are examples on record where wrong things were done by God’s people, not because they were not trusting God, but because of communication breakdown. As soon as God was able to get their attention and reveal to them what He really wanted, they immediately corrected the mistake they had made. When such mistakes are made innocently, they are not considered as “sin” since they were entered into with the belief that this was the way God was leading.

The next question is this: “How can I do something “good” and yet it is sin?” It does create a conundrum, doesn’t it? A short story will help. One day I stopped at a place of business to drop off some things. I asked my wife to remain in the car since I wouldn’t be there over a couple of minutes. I returned as promised, but she was not in the car. I was getting a little miffed that she couldn’t wait that short of a time period. But then I happened to look over a few cars from the one I was starting to enter and I saw my wife sitting in another car, exactly like the one I was by. That actually happened, but let’s take that situation a little further then it went in real life. Let’s suppose my key actually opened the door and started the car. So, I get in and drive away, just as the owner comes out and sees me driving out of the parking lot. He calls the police and I’m pulled over for grand theft, auto. However, as soon as I show it was an honest mistake, the most likely result would be a good laugh all around, we would exchange cars and go on. Here is an example of something that is normally good, becoming bad. The Pharisees are another such example. They obeyed the law as precisely as they could, but it was on their own, not trusting God and that was rejected by God.

The bottom line is this. Anything that I do, good or bad, that is not a result of trusting God is sin.

Paul has just been discussing the role of faith showing how it is a vitally important aspect of the Christian life. Paul tells us that unless we have faith [trust] in God, we cannot please him. What then is faith? In the beginning of what many call “the faith chapter” he says:

**“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”**

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28 See the discussion in Romans 13 where subject matter is regarding submission to authority, the Christian’s relationship to the Ten Commandment law, relationships and love. So in fact the last half of verse 23 is a summary of the bigger topic, not the immediate one in chapter 14.

29 There are a couple examples in the time of David. See 2 Samuel 7 and chapter 24. There are other examples too.

30 Hebrews 11:1
Literally, **faith is trusting God**. Or to put it in a popular phrase of not too long ago, “If God says it, that settles it for me.” This is faith, taking God at His word, even though it may not make any sense to us at all. The Greek word translated faith is also translated trust and belief. If we have faith in God, we will trust Him and believe what He tells us. When we quibble about what God says, it shows we do not have faith in Him. Faith, trust and belief are all good translation for this word, it is so full of meaning. It seems like the best way to remember its impact today is to understand it as “trust.” So unless we trust God, we cannot please Him. Likewise it is by our trust in God that we are justified.

**FAITH – TRUST - BELIEF**

How does that happen? Doesn’t that undermine the position of being saved by the grace of God? No, in fact the two ideas are really two sides of one coin. Maybe another illustration will help.

A person is standing on the windowsill of a burning building. Below a circle of firemen hold a net ready to catch them when they jump. But the firemen cannot reach the one in the window and push them out. That person has to trust that jumping into the firemen’s net will save them from being burned alive. The same is true with the plan of salvation God offers through His grace. It is working the plan that saves us, but we must trust the author of that plan or we won’t be willing to trust it and totally commit our lives to the plan.

Does that invalidate the law of God or His instructions to us? NO! not at all. In fact our faith in God will cause us to trust that the instructions He has given to us are worthwhile and for our best good. So in fact faith strengthens the claims of the law and establishes it as the rule for our lives.

Another illustration may help. Which child will obey their parents the most closely? The one who loves and trusts their parent or the one who is afraid of their parents and/or does not trust them? Obviously the one who has the trusting loving relationship with their parents will be the one most likely to obey. The same is true with our relationship with God. In fact, in 1 John 3:2, the Greek word translated “know” as in “We know that . . .” carries the meaning of a dynamic relationship. Or we would say today, open communication is happening.

Faith is more than just an intellectual assent to the facts. It is more than just hard wishing. It is a firm confidence in the one who has promised. James tells us that:

> “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.”

They know there is a God but they are unwilling to entrust the control of their lives to Him. Just recognizing the fact that God is God is not good enough. We must lovingly let Him control every aspect of our lives in order to be saved. Our actions will show our love for God much more then all the profession or singing about Him or praying or giving our testimony that we can do.

**SUMMARY**

Paul has given us the most comprehensive definition of sin. He says that anything I do, good or bad, if it is done without trusting God, it is sin. Even trying to make myself good, or doing otherwise “good things” in my own strength, with my own will (or won't) power, is sin. This is the “Achilles heel” of the Old Covenant. More on that in a later lesson.

**JOHN, ANOTHER THOUGHT ON SIN**

John has one more statement about sin that needs to be at least noted in passing. He says that all unrighteousness is sin. Of course that raises the question about what is unrighteousness? Unrighteousness is the opposite of righteousness, so this really doesn't add much information to what we already have. Yet with the examination of John 5:17, you have every text in the Bible that defines sin for us.

Now lets review what we have found.

**REVIEW**

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31 James 2:19
32 1 John 5:17
We have examined three reference points to focus in on the nature of sin.

1. JOHN says that sin in the life will cause us to violate God's law and anything that does not conform to righteousness or obedience, is caused by sin. That is really almost the same thing. So to do anything God forbids or fail to do what He asks us to do would be showing we have sin in our lives.

2. JAMES adds the knowledge factor. God does not hold us accountable for what I do not know, and cannot know. I am held accountable for all the information available to me, no more or no less. If I choose not to know something because it might ask me to make some changes in my life that I do not want to make, it is the same as knowing it in God's sight and our refusal to submit to God’s will is counted to us as sin.

3. PAUL widens the scope even further when he said that anything I do, good or bad, that is not a result of trusting God is sin. This solidly places sin in the area of an attitude, not an action.

**SUMMARY**

Though we find that sin is not an action in itself, it will reveal itself in our actions. Sin is something deeper. Since sin is trusting oneself or someone or something other than God, sin is an attitude. Therefore, Sin, in a word, is the attitude of rebellion. It is doing what I want to do instead of what God wants me to do. It is doing my own thing rather than God’s will. It is choosing to break the relationship between God and ourselves. Sin is what motivates the choice, which results in wrong actions.

Rebellion is natural to the sinful heart. We all want to do things our way. But the natural man is subject to death. This is the wages or natural results of sin. This death is not just the one that comes to all men when they stop breathing. This is the eternal death that comes after the 1,000 years mentioned in Revelation 20. It is the eternal and irreconcilable separation from life. But God is not willing that we should die without any chance so He offers us eternal life as a free gift.

"Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. "With His stripes we are healed."  

All of us must be able to use this choice to either obey or rebel against God in order to really be alive and be free moral agents. Unfortunately, all of us have sinned, made the wrong choice, and come far short of the plan God has for our lives. Since all of us have sinned, we are all under the death sentence. This is not some arbitrary revenge that God gets on those who choose not to serve Him. It is the natural result of ones choice to separate ourselves from God and life. Since God is the source of all life. Since nothing has life without God. When we choose to separate ourselves from God, we are in fact separating ourselves from life. It is the natural result of our choice, not His Vengence.

For example, look at a lamp. As long as it is plugged into the power source, the light will lighten the room. But separate it from the power and all is dark. This is what God is telling us. Everyone, who sins, rebels against any connection or control by God. Refusing to allow God to maintain that relationship with us is in fact choosing to die. But God has made it so very easy to have the life He offers. We only need to believe Him, trust Him, have confidence in Him and His Son Jesus Christ who He has sent to this world and we can live with Him forever.

**PAUL SHARES INSIGHTS**

We have seen how the Bible defines sin as the attitude of rebellion. Christ also has much to say that needs to be considered. Since Christ is our example, no discussion of this most vital subject is complete without noting what He has said about it. But first Paul shares with us some insights from his own experience. Paul was a Pharisee. Pharisees were a group of religious teachers who were extremely careful to keep the law. Paul was a very good

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33 The Desire of Ages page 25  (Isaiah 53:5; Romans 5:10)
Pharisee and he had much to say about sin, other than just defining it as we have already seen. He describes his life as a Pharisee as a life, blameless before the law. This was according to the strict code of that sect. But even in that strict life style, Paul realized that something was missing. When Paul came to know Jesus, he then began to realize that all of his righteousness was like filthy rags. This is worse than nothing when compared with the righteousness of Christ. In his eyes it was as a great loss or pure rubbish. Paul realized that in his own case it was extremely bad, since he had been privileged to have a higher knowledge of God.

"In ourselves we can see nothing but weakness, nothing to recommend us to God, and Satan tells us that it is of no use; we cannot remedy our defects of character. When we try to come to God, the enemy will whisper, It is of no use for you to pray; did not you do that evil thing? Have you not sinned against God and violated your own conscience? But we may tell the enemy that 'the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.' 1 John 1:7 When we feel that we have sinned and cannot pray, it is then the time to pray. Ashamed we may be and deeply humbled, but we must pray and believe. 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.' 1 Timothy 1:5"

But Paul wasn’t discouraged for he had found something far better. He was just comparing the value of the two types of righteousness. He had found the righteousness of Christ, the new source for his righteousness. He found out that he could have Christ’s righteousness as his own but he couldn’t have both. Paul found that his efforts to correct the problems he could see in his life were fruitless without Christ. The more he looked at Christ life and His righteousness, the more problems he saw in his own life. When he surrendered to Jesus and took Him as his righteousness, only then did he truly find victorious living.

**IMITATE ME – THE ONLY TRUE VICTORY**

From that discovery, Paul shares his discovery with us today. He wants us to follow his example of surrendering to Jesus Christ.

“Follow me as I am following Christ” Likewise, we can tell others the same thing, as long as we are following Christ’s example. We can and must ask others to follow us if we are following Christ. For we, like Paul, can have the same source of strength that Paul had. He found that he could do ALL things through Christ, which gave him the strength to fulfill the position He was assigned to. So too, if we choose to be on God’s side, He too will give us the strength to resist sin and do what we have been assigned.

Whether we like it or not, we all imitate someone or something. That is as natural as breathing. The one who says he doesn’t imitate anyone is only fooling himself. The one who thinks that no one imitates them is equally wrong. The choice we have isn’t to imitate or not imitate or be imitated. The choice is who do we imitate and what example do we set for others. Paul counsels us to:

“Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.”

Paul only wanted people to imitate him as long as he was following Christ and that should be our desire too. “But,” one might ask, “How can I imitate Christ? I can’t work miracles, die on a cross, ascend to heaven.” We are not left in the dark on this question. Paul tells us the way we imitate Christ is to have the same mind or attitude that Jesus had. This is the most important single piece of information you may find in this whole series of studies. Note it carefully. The attitude (mind) Jesus had while on this earth was that He did nothing on His own

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34 Philippians 3:4-6
35 Ibid 3:7, 8
36 *The Mount of Blessing* page 115
37 I Corinthians 11:1 KJV.
38 1 Corinthians 11:1. (Also see Philippians 3:17; 4::9)
39 Philippians 2:5
He only did what His Father told Him to do. That must be our attitude in order to really be a real Christian. It is possible, although at this point it may seem like some wild-eyed dream. As you continue to study these lessons, how to do this in practical ways will continue to unfold. This is the theme of the whole plan of redemption. It is the heart of salvation. It is the result of our redemption.

There is a unique comment in the 3rd chapter of Revelation. Jesus tells us that:

”He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”

Let’s look at this text just a moment. It becomes apparent by just using rules of English grammar and switching the parts of this verse around so that the parallelism in the text, like we noted earlier in another passage, becomes clearer. We are being told that:

”He who overcomes, [in the same way] . .as I overcame, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, [just as I have] sat down with My Father on His throne.”

Can you catch the excitement here? If we do nothing on our own initiative, just like Jesus patterned His relationship with God in this life, and only do what God tells us to do, we will reign with Jesus just like God has elevated Jesus to His throne. This is a concept that is too wonderful and tremendous to comprehend. But that is exactly what He wants to do for those who are willing to choose the best way here.

In the next chapter we will examine the insights Jesus left for us to study.

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40 John 5:30; 8:28, 42 etc.
41 Revelation 3:21
# Quiz Chapter 5

I What is the most popular definition of sin? 1 John 3:4 KJV. "Sin is the ______________________
____________ __________."  

II What additional information does James give us about sin? James 4:17

III What does James say is the root cause of sin? James 1:14, 15

IV How much of the law must we break to be guilty of sin? James 2:9, 10

V What names does James give to this law? James 2:8  
James 2:12

VI To what law in the Old Testament (the only scriptures James had available to him) is he referring to? James 2:11 compared with Exodus 20:13, 14.

VII What will be the only motive for keeping God’s law that really makes our obedience acceptable?  
1 John 3:24 ___________________________________________  
1 John 5:2 ___________________________________________

VIII What additional information does Paul add to the definition of sin? Romans 14:23  
"... for whatsoever is not of _______________ is sin"

IX How important is faith in our relationship with God? Hebrews 11:6

X How does Paul describe faith? Hebrews 11:1

XI How is a man justified before God? Romans 3:28

XII What does faith do to the law? Romans 3:31

XIII John gives us another statement about sin. What does he say it is? 1 John 5:17 "All ______________ is sin..."  

XIV What are the results of rebelling against God? Romans 6:23

XV Instead of the results of sin, what does Christ offer to give us? Romans 6:23

XVI How many of us have sinned? Romans 3:23

XVII Who is the source of all life? John 1:4 (NOTE vss. 1-4 and 14)  
Also see John 3:36; 5:24-26; 6:48; 11:25; 14:6.

XVIII How may we have that life? John 20:31

XIX What standard did Paul say that he had attained? Philippians 3:4-6
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>XX</th>
<th>In spite of this attainment, how did Paul see himself? 1 Timothy 1:15</th>
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<tr>
<td>XXI</td>
<td>What value did Paul place on HIS EFFORTS to make himself good? Philippians 3:7, 8</td>
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<td>XXII</td>
<td>What was Paul’s source of righteousness? Philippians 3:9, 10</td>
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<td>XXIII</td>
<td>What counsel does Paul give us? Philippians 3:9, 10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Also see Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 3:9; 1 Corinthians 6:15.</td>
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<td>XXIV</td>
<td>Where did Paul get his strength? Philippians 4:13</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Also see Philippians 3:12-13; Ephesians 5:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:6.</td>
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<td>XXV</td>
<td>Who was Paul following? 1 Corinthians 11:1.</td>
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<td>Also see Philippians 3:12-13; Ephesians 5:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:6.</td>
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<tr>
<td>XXVI</td>
<td>What aspect of Christ’s life are we to copy? Philippians 2:3-8 vs. 5 &quot;Have this ______ BE IN YOU, WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS.&quot;</td>
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<td>NOTE: In modern translations the Greek is translated &quot;attitude,&quot; which is a better translation.</td>
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<td>XXVII</td>
<td>What kind of attitude did Christ demonstrate while He was on this earth? John 8:28, 29.</td>
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<td>XXVIII</td>
<td>What reward did Jesus say would be ours if we demonstrated the same attitude He had while here on earth? Revelation 3:21</td>
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In Matthew 5 through 7 we find the longest, recorded sermon Jesus preached while here on earth. This is of interest here because in the first part of this sermon Jesus attempts to clarify man's misconceptions of sin. He tried to change their thinking from seeing sin as just being a violation of the law to the broader understanding, that it is a heart or attitude problem that needs to be changed.

Jesus starts out His discourse with what some call the “beautiful attitudes.” He made this commented about each one of these attitudes with this appraisal: “Blessed.” This is a good translation, but an even better one is “lucky” or “fortunate” are the ones who have these different characteristics. With the reservation some have about the idea of “luck” today, it isn’t often translated as such, but it still isn’t a bad translation when you understand luck as something good that happens to a person, not the random chance aspect of the world’s concept.

Jesus says,

“Blessed are the poor in spirit (teachable ones), . . . those who mourn (have a sorrow for sin), . . . the gentle (meek, not proud and opinionated), . . . and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (have an intense desire to be Godlike).”

Here in the heart of the list of beautiful attitudes is found the clue for the attitude we should have in order to eliminate the attitude of sin (rebellion) from our lives. This attitude is that:

“We must hunger and thirst for righteousness.”

Jesus goes on to tell about how blessed are those who are merciful, pure in heart and peacemakers (bringing people who are alienated from God to Him), but none of this will happen unless we desire God’s likeness as much as a hungry person desires food.

Later on in the sermon, Jesus tells us why He came to this earth. "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.” Here is THE reason Jesus came to live among men. Many claim that He came to save mankind from their sins and they will quote:

"And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.”
as support for their claim. That is correct, but what is “their sins?” That is what we are looking at. Jesus came to correct mankind’s understanding of the Law (Torah, teachings of God), and Prophets, (human witness about what God has said and taught.

Now back to the “law” that John cites as the demonstration of the presence of sin. We will discuss this more later, but let’s just note one thing here in passing. The word in Hebrew that is translated as “law” can refer to much more than just a code of requirements. It is frequently used to refer to all of the Old Testament scriptures. There is strong evidence for that meaning here.

Christ came to fulfill all the instructions God had given to His people up to that time, in what we call the Old Testament. Since the word “law” is coupled with the word “prophets” we can justify the understanding of the whole Old Testament being included here. But there is more.

The Hebrew term also means: “Instruction,” and this is by far the more common meaning of the Hebrew word “Torah” that is translated “law.”

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1 See Matthew 5
2 Mathew 5:17
3 Matthew 1:21
Many people stumble over this text so let's go to the dictionary to find out what Christ is really saying. No matter which way we understand the word “law”, there are two words introduced here in the Matthew statement that are key to an understanding of this passage. They are: "abolish" and "fulfill."

**Abolish** - to destroy; do away with completely; put an end to; make a law etc. null and void.

**Fulfill** - to carry out; cause to be or happen; to do; obey; to fill the requirements of; satisfy; answer.

Christ came to obey the law to its most precise or complete level. In both the sense of the entire whole Old Testament (preferred) or just the Ten Commandments (included, but they are not really a valid understanding of this passage), He came to show us how to comply with God’s revealed will. He would leave no aspect of the law/instruction unfulfilled. Neither in the sense of fulfilling all that had been written about the coming Messiah and how He would live, or in abiding by all of God’s instructions. He came to set a workable example that we could follow if we choose to.

We must recognize that NO LAW is ever terminated or eliminated by keeping or fulfilling it. The very thought is laughable, yet so many subscribe to it without thinking exactly what they are really saying.

**THE MESSIAH AND THE LAW**

Man had built up many misconceptions as to how the Messiah would come and what it meant to keep the law. Then they had added their own interpretations and as a result had clouded the picture to the point that no one could understand. This caused many people to reject the law, not because it was faulty, but because of man's misconceptions about how the Messiah would come and what God wanted from His people. The same is true today. This is why it is so important to understand how a Christian will live in the way that Jesus came to show to us.

By introducing the topic of law into His discussion, He immediately captured the attention of His whole audience. The Jewish leaders argued endlessly about the law (the entire Old Testament). The people had it preached to them constantly. The list of requirements that one must follow to be in compliance with the “law” dealt with every aspect of existence and many times had nothing to do with what God had said. So into this way of understanding the law, Jesus stated that until all was fulfilled, not one letter or one stroke of a letter would cease to exist in the law. At this point we can readily imagine that the leaders puffed out their chest a little further and the common people slumped a little more. Then Jesus made a statement that could have gotten Him stoned on the spot. "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

In making this statement, Jesus declared that the righteousness upon which the Pharisees had set so great of a value, was worthless . . . .

"A legal religion is insufficient to bring the soul into harmony with God. The hard, rigid orthodoxy of the Pharisees, destitute of contrition, tenderness, or love, was only a stumbling block to sinners . . . .

The disciples of Christ must obtain righteousness of a different character from that of the Pharisees, if they would enter the kingdom of heaven. God offered them, in His Son, the perfect righteousness of the law. If they would open their hearts fully to receive Christ, then the very life of God, His love would dwell in them, transforming them into His own likeness; and thus through God's free gift they would possess the righteousness which the law requires.

Jesus proceeded to show His hearers what it means to keep the commandments of God - that it is a reproduction in themselves of the character of Christ. For in Him, God was daily made manifest before them."  

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4 Matthew 5:18  
5 Matthew 5:20  
6 The Mount of Blessing page 53-55
The leaders came awake instantly, but the common people were probably collectively giving up. They had long since come to the conclusion that they couldn’t even come up to the legalism of the scribes and Pharisees. Now, this teacher was saying that even that level of goodness wasn’t good enough. It was enough to make grown men cry! What did Jesus mean? This appeared to be an impossible standard! If not even the best efforts of the religious elite were able to attain it, what hope did the common person have? You can rest assured Jesus had their attention!

At this point Christ cited several laws that the Jewish people were being taught from the Scriptures. Did Christ enlarge their understanding of them or limit it? Let’s look at them.

"You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell."

Notice how Jesus took (in this case) one of the Ten Commandments and enlarges it to include even the attitude of anger or even the threat of harm as being equal to the act of murder. How many of us have been angry with someone? We are then guilty of murder, right? Impossible! Yet there is more.

Jesus went on to say that:

"And it was said, 'Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce'; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

The word translated “unchastity” here or “fornication” as it is translated in some other translations, literally means “prostitution,” nor a life of immoral living. How many divorces come about because one or the other partner has gone into prostitution? Virtually none, or at least they make up a very small percentage of all divorces. Does that mean that anyone who has divorced is out of the kingdom of God? Don’t give up; Jesus is leading us to something simply wonderful.

In verses 33- 38 He talks about making vows. He takes the practice of taking an oath, that the Pharisees were using and in essence, trash-canned it, as not being worth anything. Just speak the truth, Jesus said. A simple yes or no is sufficient, all of the oaths and vows are unnecessary. In fact, when used too often or too virerously, they can even leave the impression that what is being said cannot be trusted.

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' Jesus said. "But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also."

The concept of an eye for an eye was a centerpiece of Jewish teaching. With this statement, Jesus had struck at the very heart of the teachings of the leaders and at the heart of human pride. How many wars have been fought over this principle? How many people killed to get an eye for an eye? No one knows. But the number is very high, even in Christ’s time. All of this slaughter, just to get even. How much better it would have been if the way Jesus introduced had been followed.

If Jesus didn’t have their attention by then, He certainly would get it with what He is about to say. He says,

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7 Matthew 5:21, 22
8 Matthew 5:27, 28
9 Matthew 5:31, 32
10 Matthew 5:38, 39.
"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' “But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you . . .”\(^{11}\)

With this, His audience knew that Jesus was talking about something totally out of the realm of human achievement, and they were correct. But these wonderful attitudes are not out of the realm of divine achievement. This is what Jesus had come to show them - how they could be achieved. Notice that in every situation Christ shows how that there is much more to the teaching than just the small idea they held regarding the command.

**BE YE THEREFORE PERFECT**

Now Jesus comes to the focal point of His message. \(^{VI}\)

"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."\(^{12}\)

When we read this, no doubt our mind, like the minds of His hearers back then, tends to pass it over as being clear out of the range of possibilities. Today, that is called “information overload.” More information than the mind can comprehend. We read admonition that we are never to claim perfection\(^{13}\) and so we just pass over this as hyperbole and move on. But again, we, like they, are thinking in the realm of our resources and not considering what God can do in us. Another problem is that our concept of being "perfect" may be different from the biblical definition. Unless we stay by the biblical definition of perfect, we can never know when that level of achievement has been met.

This is like when God told Adam and Eve that if they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil that they would die. The word God used meant: “in dying, you shall die.” Or, that they would start dying when they partook of the fruit. Instead if taking what God said, they changed it to mean that they would instantly die, which is not what God said. Nowhere in the recorded history of the Universe has God ever allowed anyone to die without giving them a chance. In fact, Satan, the worst sinner of all time has had the longest period of probation to demonstrate the terrible nature of sin.

So let’s look at how the Bible used the term perfect. Perfect comes from the Greek word:

"Telios" (τελιος), which means - that which has reached its intended end, term or limit, i.e., full, wanting nothing.

In reality, this can be a different goal for each person, yet the same for all. If I could sing and God had called me to be a singer, my being perfect would mean that I could sing to the level God intended for me to sing at. So perfection will be different for each person, depending on the place God has called us to fill for Him. [Just a note here; God will never call us to do anything that He has forbidden in the Bible or given instructions otherwise about.] But it is the same for everyone in that each person must totally submit their lives to be used by God and changed by God into what He wants us to be.

While there is a different standard of perfection for each of us, there is a common one that all must achieve. The Holy Spirit inspired James to give us the Bible definition of what a perfect person is like and how to become that way. \(^{VI\text{H}}\) Here is the most important passages in God’s word on what being perfect means.

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."\(^{14}\)

Because it is so very important, let’s examine this passage more closely. There are some key words that need to be examined.\(^{15}\)

**TRIALS** - “putting to the proof.”

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\(^{11}\) Matthew 5:43, 44  
\(^{12}\) Matthew 5:48  
\(^{13}\) Signs of the Times, May 23, 1895 par. 9  
\(^{14}\) James 1:2-4.  
\(^{15}\) NOTE: Definitions are of the original Greek word but translated into the English word used here.
WHAT IS SIN?

TESTING - “proved, tried, approved after examination and trial, (implied) acceptable”

FAITH - “belief, firm persuasion, assurance, firm conviction, trust.”

ENDURANCE - “a patient frame of mind, perseverance, constantly perseveringly, (habit).”

So let’s paraphrase our passage we are looking at with these definitions.

We are to consider it a joyful experience, a privilege, that when the profession of our faith or our trust in God is put to the proof [test]. VIII Because this testing of our trust in God, will result in produce the habit of trusting in God. IX Then when we get into the habit of trusting God, i.e. choosing God’s way in every situation, God considers us perfect, complete lacking in nothing.

Various translators use different English words here. Notice how The Amplified Bible renders this passage.

"Be assured and understand that the trial and proving of your faith bring out endurance and steadfastness and patience."

Saying it yet another way,

"the testing of our trust in God develops in us the habit of trusting in God."

A Christian who has reached this level will ask only one question when confronted with a decision. “What is God’s revealed will in this situation?” How can we know what He wants us to do? While we will discuss this further in lesson 7, here is James counsel for us now.

“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

This has to be about the best news in the entire Bible. God says that when we are tested and we feel a lack of wisdom regarding how to handle the test, all we have to do is ask Him and He will tell us, or better yet intercede and help us. This is like an open book test. Even better then that, the instructor will give us the answer if we will just ask Him for it.

So when in the sermon Jesus gave on the mountain so long ago, He said that we must be perfect, He was giving a standard that was impossible for man to reach, but not a standard that is impossible for God in man to reach. So the righteousness that was to exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees was not just a better or more vigorous or skillful effort to achieve the righteousness they were working towards. But a totally different kind of righteousness from what they were striving for. Just like the love we will have is a different kind of love, not just a more intense example of the wrong kind of love. Working harder will not do it. But working smarter will. The smart work is in giving up on ourselves and letting God give us the better attitude. So Christ has not set a standard that we cannot reach, but a higher standard that He will cause us to reach in His strength, when He is living out His live in us. All we must do is ask Him and He will tell us how. This can never be reached, however, if we refuse to submit to His instructions in any detail.

Remember what Paul said, if we do anything without trusting God, it is sin. James now tells us that when we trust (have faith in) God in every situation we are counted as perfect.

Jesus made some more comments in this sermon that will help us to see this better kind of righteousness. In chapter 6 (vs. 33), He helps us to get our priorities right.

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you."

When we have the achieving of membership in His kingdom our top priority, we are developing that Biblical perfection.

There is one requirement that nothing can set it aside that is essential for membership in God’s kingdom.

16 James 1:5.
17 Matthew 6:33.
"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."  

Doing God’s will is that essential ingredient. Consider this helpful counsel.

"Many are inquiring, 'How am I to make the surrender of myself to God? You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God it's affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him. Desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God. They do not now choose to be Christians."  

The wonderful part of all this is that Jesus will do the work for us, but only if we ask Him to. Our part is to give up on self and allow Him to do that work. When we allow Him to do the work of making us good, then we will be presented before the Father as being perfect. Thus fulfilling the requirement Jesus set up for us. Perfect in Christ or Righteousness by Faith, that is the pass word that opens the gates of heaven for the believer.

SIN IS . . .

Sin is the ATTITUDE of refusing to allow God to do the work in our lives that He wants to do, the fatal enemy of becoming perfect.

Sin is placing the opinions of humans over God's commands.

Sin is the attitude of independence that is displayed by always doing one's own thing which is displayed by transgressing the law.

Sin is always needing to have one's own way in the control of our life, or in controlling the lives of others.

Sin is refusing to obey God unconditionally, of needing to have everything explained to our satisfaction.

Sin is placing one's own will, idea's and desires above what God asks, no matter what may be.

And sin results in death, eternal death, the natural result of choosing to separate the soul from God, the source of all life.

After studying what sin is, whose will do want in control of your life, yours or God's?

OTHER TEXTS FOR MORE STUDY:

QUIZ - CHAPTER 6

I How great should be our desire for righteousness? Matthew 5:6

II What was Christ's goal in coming to this earth? Matthew 5:17

III How much of the law would pass away before heaven and earth would pass away? Matthew 5:18

IV What kind of righteousness must we have? Matthew 5:20

V Christ cited several laws that the Jewish people were being taught from the Scriptures. Did Christ enlarge their understanding of them or limit it?

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<tr>
<th>CHRIST’S COMMENT IN MATTHEW 5:</th>
<th>COMPARE THIS OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE</th>
<th>DID CHRIST ABOLISH?</th>
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<td>Vss. 21, 22</td>
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<td>Vss. 38, 39</td>
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<td>Vss. 43, 44</td>
<td>Lev. 19:18</td>
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</table>

VI What standard did Christ set up for us? Matthew 5:48

VII What startling statement does James make? James 1:2 "Consider it all ____________, my brethren, when you encounter _______________ ."

VIII What will this testing of our faith produce? James 1:3

IX What is the result of these trials? James 1:4

X What happens if we don't know what to do when we are tested? James 1:5

XI Christ gives us some other qualifications for reaching that standard, what are they?

MATTHEW 6:33 ________________________________________________________________

MATTHEW 7:7-11 _____________________________________________________________

XII What is required for entrance into the heaven?

MATTHEW 7:21-24 _____________________________________________________________

Also see Revelation 12:17; 19:8; 22:14
XIII  How then are we presented to the Father? Colossians 1:28
In a previous lessons we reviewed the facts that God is love and that He gave His Son so we might be saved. Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary who was the wife of Joseph the carpenter, has made one of the most audacious [if it were not true] claims a human being could make. Jesus claimed, in various ways, that He is the one called the "Son of God." For many, this claim is just not one they choose to accept, not even though they claim to be a Christian. To accept this claim on the part of Jesus would logically cause them to place His word above their opinions. This they are not ready to do. However they are more than willing to credit Him with being a good moral person or a great leader. Yet this is not even a viable position. C. S. Lewis, a popular writer from England who became a Christian, clearly understood the situation when he penned this classic and penetrating statement.

"A man who was merely a man and said the things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would wither be a lunatic - on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He had not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

That is the long and short of it. Either Jesus is, or He is not, what He claims to be. Those are the only two options available to us. Our conclusions must be one or the other, there is no middle ground. To fail to acknowledge His divinity is to reject His claim to divinity even if we do not publicly come out against Him. There is no room for neutrality. Those who want to claim to be a Christian, yet avoid what He asks His family to do, is a liar and the truth is not in them. The information needed to reach that conclusion can be found in an examination of the record as described in the Bible.

As we embark on this search, the only assumptions that is made is that there is a God and the Bible is God’s attempt to communicate truth to mankind. Since God is the highest authority for the Christian, that means that if God said it, that settles it for that individual. There is no fancy footwork used in an attempt to circumvent the obvious, by claiming that it is not obvious. Therefore, it should not be any surprise that the Bible would have much to say on this most important subject of the Messiah, the Redeemer, the crucial part of the plan of salvation. There is no salvation without this central figure. That is how important making the right decision about Jesus of Nazareth is. And do not forget, our actions can speak louder then all that we can say, claim, sing, pray or brag about. While what we say can be controverted, what God says and the life He lived on earth is not up for gainsayers.

**IN THE BEGINNING**

When man first rebelled against God in Eden, God made man a promise. Speaking to the serpent, or Satan, God pronounced a curse on him because of what he had done. Here is that promise.

> "The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life; and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."

This is only the first of many passages that are found in the Old Testament that point forward to the coming of the Messiah, or the Christ as the redeemer of this world. Here the Messiah is referred to as the “seed of the woman.”

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3. 1 John 2:4
4. Genesis 3:15
is this “seed” that will give the serpent, Satan, the head wound, which is fatal, even though in consequence He would suffer a superficial wound on His heel.

There is debate about who the “woman” is in this prophecy. Actually there are several candidates and it is not impossible that most or all of them are the “woman” being referred to. Here is a partial list.

- **EVE**, the mother of all mankind. In this case the message is that He would be a human being.
- **MARY**, the biological mother He was born to when He came to this world. In this case it is a reference to how important a privilege was bestowed on her.
- **THE CHURCH**. In Revelation the church is referred to as a woman who bears a child. This child is symbolic of Jesus. This is actually the most common conclusion because of the way John refers to the church.

But if number 3, the church, is correct, does that really eliminate the other two completely?

Does there have to be only one woman who is being referred to here? That will be left for the reader to decide.

The extensive, long-term, accurate foretelling of the future is a unique characteristic of the Bible. No other body of writings comes even close to the precision found in the prophecies of the Bible. So we can expect that the same will hold true in the Messianic prophecies. There is a truism that says: “If a man, living today could accurately and consistently foresee the future, he could have the world under his control.” The Bible has accurately foretold the course of earth’s history as well as many specifics, yet does it control the world? No, because there is a fatal flaw in that truism. People only will listen to what they want to hear. If the message, truth brings, is not to their liking, they will and have turned to error and held it up as truth.

Nowhere is this more true then the challenge to accept Jesus as the Son of God. People are more then willing to accept Him as an equal, but, as one couple said: “We will not submit the control of our lives to anyone.” This is indeed a hard choice, but the rewards are well worth it, both now and throughout all eternity.

**Prophecies About the Messiah**

From the time God first announced the coming Messiah (anointed one) in the third chapter of Genesis, prophet after prophet in the ensuing years reminded God’s people of the coming Messiah (Christ in the New Testament). Some of these prophecies were very specific, others were more general in nature. For Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ, the Messiah, He would have to fulfill ALL of these prophecies completely. So let's see how well this man, Jesus of Nazareth, fulfills the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. In addition, we will examine His own claims about Himself.

**Virgin Birth**

Different Bible scholars have given various high numbers for the number of prophecies about the coming Messiah in the Old Testament. The number of prophecies isn’t as important as the fact that they were all fulfilled. Isaiah made several prophecies about what the Christ would be like. One of the first of these stated that:

> **“Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”**

Many make much about the fact that the mother of Jesus must be a woman who had never had a child before, since that is what the term “virgin” commonly means today in the English language. However, this was not the exclusive meaning of the word used in Hebrew in the time of Isaiah. In his day, the term meant “a maiden,” or “a female of marriageable age.” As a tribute to the inspiration of the Bible, in fact Mary, the mother of Jesus, fulfilled all three possible meanings, even though in Isaiah’s day the word he chose didn’t limit the mother of the Messiah to what we consider a virgin to be today.

One of the most well known of the Messianic prophecies is this prophecy that was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit visited Mary, the woman that was engaged to be married to Joseph, before there had been any relationship between Mary and Joseph. Mary was asked by the Holy Spirit, before she became “with child,” if she would be this new

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5 Revelation 12. the whole chapter.
6 See Isaiah 7:14
baby’s mother. To which she agreed, even though it would not be well accepted by society, since she and Joseph were not married yet. This special baby that every Jewish woman had hoped for would be her child. This happened so that, as Matthew says it,

“Now this took place that was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled.”

This is just the first event in the life of Jesus that was in accord with what had been prophesied about Him.

**BETHLEHEM, EPHRATHAH**

Another Old Testament prophet foretold where the Messiah would be born. He said that it would be in Bethlehem, Ephrathah.

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”

There were several towns named Bethlehem in Palestine. There are at least two, one called Bethlehem which was located in the area given to Zebulon, about 10 miles north of Megiddo. Another, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, was near Jerusalem. This is the one where Jesus was born. This one became the “Bethlehem of Judah,” when the nation of Israel was divided in the time of Jeroboam and the other Bethlehem’s were included in what became known as the nation of Israel. Meanwhile the area where Jerusalem was located was in the nation or “land” of Judah. Therefore, the Bethlehem that was located in the nation of Judah, which Micah specifies, was the place where Jesus was born.

**CALLED FROM EGYPT**

But another prophet, Hosea, had written that God would call His Son from Egypt.

If Jesus was born in Bethlehem, how could God call Him from Egypt? Jeremiah foretold that a disaster would force Jesus’ parents to flee to Egypt. This was fulfilled when Herod, after hearing from the wise men who had journeyed from the east to see the new king, erupted in a jealous rage and he ordered all of the children in Bethlehem, under the age of two, to be killed. So everything happened just as God said it would through the prophets. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but had to flee to Egypt because of Herod’s jealousy, from where God called Him to return to Palestine.

**VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS**

The prophecies of the coming Messiah included many things, including who would announce His arrival. Isaiah, and also Malachi, said there would be a “voice” with a message to “clear the way for the Lord in the Wilderness.”

“A voice is calling, “Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God."

This referred to the preparation made for a visiting Roman Monarch. When such a visit was scheduled, the host country would clean up and smooth out the road he would be arriving on, so his passage would be unimpeded and as smooth as possible in those days. John the Baptist, who appeared in the wilderness of Judah, was giving exactly that message just at the right time; therefore he fulfilled this part of the first advent.

**ISAIAH’S PROPHECIES**

Isaiah had more prophecies about Jesus’ ministry while here on this earth. In a cryptic statement, Isaiah said that the:

7 Matthew 1:22  
8 Micah 5:2  
9 Hosea 11:1  
10 Jeremiah 31:15  
11 Matthew 2:16-18  
12 Isaiah 40:3 Also see Malachi 3:1
“Galilee of the Gentiles would see a great light.””13 XII Since the Jews did not associate with the Gentiles unless they could turn a profit, the sharing of the Messiah with them was not a popular concept. But Jesus didn’t come to support the isolationist ideas of the Jewish people, but He tried to get them to expand their vision as to what God wanted them to be. XIII So when Jesus came, He went to the Galilee of the Gentiles and shared the news of the kingdom of God with them too.14

There were other things the coming Messiah would do. He came, not to showcase heaven, but to show what heaven wanted people to be like. In order to accomplish that goal, the Messiah had to become “one with us.”15 XIV He had to share our grief and sorrows in order to be one of us. XV He came and cast out demons, healed the sick and knew life like humans had to live it.16 In a detail packed prophecy, Isaiah stated eight specific things the Messiah would be or do. XVI

He would be upheld by the power of God.
He would bring delight to God by doing as had been planned for Him to do.
He would have the Spirit of God on Him.
He would bring forth justice, something that has always been in short supply in this world.
He wouldn’t “cry out” or “raise His voice.” In other words, He wouldn’t draw attention to Himself.
But He would deal gently with those who were damaged like a bruised reed.
He would administer justice to them
and not become disheartened or crushed no mater what man might do to Him.

Did the Jesus of Nazareth fulfill all of these things?17 XVII He fulfilled all of these and more.

REJECTED BY HIS OWN PEOPLE

But while there was much longing for the Messiah, it was foretold that His own people would not readily receive Him.18 XVIII They would not listen to what he had to say. One of the sadder statements in the Bible is this one.

“**He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.**”19

Jesus, the protector of the nation of Israel, the one who had brought them out of an obscure family in the Palestinian wilderness and rescued it many times over the years. The one who came to save them from themselves as well as the death sentence that passed on all mankind when Adam failed the loyalty test in Eden. The one they had professed to be looking forward to, for over 1,000 years. He came to them, His own people, and they did not receive Him. How sad of a picture can you imagine?

THE GREAT COMMUNICATOR

In the first chapter of John, referred to above, Jesus is called “the word.” Today we would say: “The communicator.” He was the one who came to communicate with God’s people on this sin sick earth. So, to try and communicate to a people who’s ears were hardened and to prevent the people taking truth and making a mockery of it, Jesus had to speak in parables, or stories which illustrated the point He was trying to communicate. 20 XIX Then the Holy Spirit would help the honest in heart to understand the veiled message. This became sort of a coded message that only the Holy Spirit could decode. That is important to realize today, as we seek to discover truth in

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13 Isaiah 9:1, 2
14 Matthew 4:12-17
15 Isaiah 53:4
16 Matthew 8:16, 17
17 Matthew 12:15-21
18 Mathew 13:10-17; John 1:11
19 John 1:11
20 Matthew 3:10-17, 34, 35 etc.
WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

The sayings of Jesus. The truths of the Bible are only opened to those who submit their opinions to the Holy Spirit to be changed as He sees best. Those changes will ALWAYS be in harmony with what the Bible says.

Another problem Jesus would face would be that some would give lip service to serving Him, honoring Him and publicly worshiping Him, but their hearts were not with Him. The same is true today. Many give lip service to being a Christian, but few really are willing to make the sacrifice demanded in order to really be a part of the Kingdom of God. This is in fact taking the name of God in vain. More on this latter.

For some today, it is just like the religious leaders did back then. They clouded the issues and made the gospel “mysteries.” Those who didn’t study for themselves, but just took what they were told, rejected Jesus and missed out on the chance of a lifetime. But those who searched the inspired writings of their day, forsook all and followed Him and in so doing they took their place with the faithful of all ages who have allied themselves with heaven. In Jesus’ day, there were thousands, maybe millions of Jews, all looking for the coming of the Messiah. But how many really accepted Him? The numbers were very small, not unlike today.

Of course there were the twelve disciples, but even one of them betrayed him and they all forsook Him to save their hide. There were three groups, in addition to the 12 disciples, who followed Jesus which are mentioned in the Bible.

There was a group of 70, one of 120, plus a group of women who followed and supported Him out of their means.

That composed the majority of those who stepped out in support of Jesus during His earthly sojourn, only a little over 200 people. There are a few individuals, like Nicodemus, who believed, but there were not many who would a stand for Jesus before His death. After the resurrection, there were 5,000 who responded to the sermon of Peter at Pentecost. But even then, that represented a very small percentage of those who claimed to be seeking for the Messiah to come.

The same is true today. Millions claim Christianity as their religion. Millions claim to have the “truth.” Yet, all indications are that there is no greater percentage today, who are genuine in their commitment, then Jesus found when He walked this earth in person.

**TRIUMPHAL ENTREE**

Just before Jesus was betrayed, He did something most unusual for Him. All of His life, He had walked wherever He went or rode in a fishing boat when on the water. But just before His final visit to Jerusalem, He made a grand entry, in royal style, into the capital city of the Jews, Jerusalem. Up to that point He shunned the spot light. But now He stepped boldly into its glow.

In preparation for this grand entry, He sent his disciples to find a donkey. Today, we certainly wouldn’t consider a donkey as luxury transportation today. In fact few today have even ridden one, much less the so-called “great” of this world. But in that time, it was the custom of a conquering king to enter his capital on a donkey, much like later, kings would use a war horse, or a limousine or armored limousine today. But, Zechariah the prophet had foretold even this surprising shift in strategy.

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21 See Isaiah 29:13
22 See Luke 10:1
23 See Acts 1:15
24 See Luke 8:1-3
25 See Acts 4, especially verse 4.
26 See Zechariah 9:9
ALL OF THE MESSIANIC PROPHESIES ARE NOT PRETTY

The rest of that prophecy is not too pretty. Zechariah goes on to say that the shepherd (Messiah) would be struck and killed.27 The sad thing would be that it would be a professed friend who would betray Him to His enemies.28 To add insult to injury that “friend” had accepted a bribe to do that dastardly deed. How much did he receive for the King of the Universe? He only received 30, paltry, pieces of silver, the going price of a slave. That was the value “His own” placed on Jesus who gave up all the wealth and happiness of heaven for them. Oh what blind eyes we humans have when we refuse see things in framework of eternal values. But some might protest and say, “Not so!” But the record says it did happen that way.29 Jesus was sold by one of His disciples, Judas, for 30 pieces of silver.29

This is what the religious leaders of the nation, paid Judas for the life of their Messiah. They were the very ones who claimed to be looking for the coming Messiah, yet they plotted to put Him to death when He did come. Do we today; sell out and destroy the answer God sends to our prayers because they do not come in the way we believe they should come in? It is the principle that inspires this idea. “I prayed for patience, instead God sent me trials to develop my patience.” If we moan about our trials, we could be, in fact, “killing” the answer to our prayers.

THE FOCAL POINT

If one event is more important then another, the most important event of Christ's sojourn on this earth would most likely be His death on Calvary. While the plan of salvation was dependent on a number of things, the whole plan of salvation hung on the choices Jesus made as He left the waters of the Jordan and the divine acceptance of His submission and approached the seeming disgrace of Calvary. The success or failure of the whole plan hinged on whether Jesus would go through with this ignoble death on a tree, or would He take back His Heavenly powers, abandon the project and return to heaven. All heaven watched with baited breath to see the events that unfolded during those fateful hours. Not only heaven, but all the forces of evil also watched. For they knew that their very existence hinged on the choices Jesus made there. This demonstration was the supreme example of just how “other’s centered” agape love really is. Also it was the supreme example of how total our obedience to God must be and a demonstration of the extent of the submission of one free moral agent’s will to God that is needed to be safe to save. We will look at this aspect more, later in this study.

Since it was such an important event, we would expect to find prophesies about it in the Old Testament. There are several prophecies made about the crucifixion, but here we will look at only a few of them. While the true nature of the death of Christ will be discussed later, let’s now look at some of the events that lead up to and transpired on Golgotha’s hill that Friday afternoon, long ago, that fulfilled the Old Testament prophesies.

PROPHESIES OF THE CRUCIFIXION

To human eyes it appeared that His Father had forsaken Jesus on the cross. In a way, that is exactly what did happen. But only on a temporary basis. For the death Jesus sufferer on Calvary, was not the death mortals experience at the end of their days here on earth, or the “first death.” Rather the death Jesus suffered is called the “second death,” which is complete and eternal separation from God. This is the death, i.e. separation from His Father, that is the penalty of sin. So in order to pay the penalty for our sin and suffer the second death, Jesus had to be separated from His Father. This was without question the worst part of the whole experience of the incarnation.

REFRESHMENT OF OUR MEMORIES

To understand this more clearly, lets look back at the real issues that were and are at stake in this battle between righteousness and sin, Christ and Satan. The whole issue is: “Who will we serve?” There is no neutral ground in this conflict. We either make an active choice to do things God's way and accept Him as the ruler in our life. Or we choose to do things our way, which is the same choice that Satan and all his angels made, and by default we make when we chose to serve Satan, even though we may not see it that way at the time.

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27 See Zechariah 13:7
28 See Zechariah 11:11-13
29 See Matthew 26:14, 15
Everyone will be a slave of either Christ or Satan. When we choose one, we must separate ourselves from the other. If we “choose” to serve Christ, but still do what Satan is telling us to do, in fact we have not chosen to serve Christ, but Satan. Such a choice separates us from God, not Satan and we will be included among those who have given their allegiance to him.

Paul said it this way.

“You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.”

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Jesus spells out the reason for this. Although Jesus was talking about wealth, the same principle applies to all choices between Christ and Satan.

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other.”

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So at the cross, Jesus had to choose whether He was going to submit to the agreement made before the foundations of the world was laid, or whether He would choose to do things His way, avoid the physical suffering and admit that Satan was right. This could never be, for the love His heart was filled with could admit no such confession to that which is not true. So, Jesus suffered separation from His Father for a short time that we might be with Him and His Father for an eternity.

THE CROSS – WHERE IT ALL CAME TOGETHER

When the people sneered at Jesus, when they saw Him hanging, suffering on the cross, facing shame and death. They mocked Him and made fun of Him and His teachings. Goaded on by the devils of hell, they heaped all kinds of shame upon Jesus. Satan had a purpose for all of this inhumanity. This purpose was to try and get Jesus to abandon this battle and save Himself. What Satan did not understand, nor in fact did the entire Universe understand, was that this was not something His great love for mankind would allow Him to do. The impact of divine love is something that Satan can’t comprehend, either then or now. The concept of divine love goes right over his head. How a being can love with a selfless love is not in the realm of Satan’s ability to understand.

It was important for the entire universe to experience this demonstration of the depths of God’s love for His creatures. Satan had cast doubt on God’s love and only a demonstration, such as the cross was sufficient to forever erase any sympathy for Satan that might possibly exist in the mind of any free moral agent anywhere in the Universe. For here, the extreme cruelty of Satan was demonstrated in contrast to the height of divine love. While words are wonderful, there is nothing like a demonstration.

When all intelligent life saw the extent of the hatred Satan possessed for his creator, they no longer wanted anything to do with him and he lost all sympathy and his cause lost all validity to lend any weight to any questions they may have had about the great controversy between Satan and God’s Son. When in the future, these people who were serving Satan at the Cross, will see Jesus coming in the clouds of glory as king of kings and Lord of lords, as Jesus promised He would, they will not be mocking then. That scene will be very much different. It will be the same for those who have mocked God’s servants through all ages of time.

When Satan saw that Jesus was not going to capitulate and “save himself,” Satan knew that his doom was sealed. He had put to death the Son of God and that meant that he had stepped over the line and this murder would have to pay for what happened at Calvary with his own life. Satan had sealed his own fate for eternity and he knew it. This means that today Satan is:

30 1 Corinthians 10:21
31 Matthew 6:24
32 Ephesians 1:4
33 Mark 14:62
34 Luke 23:35
“Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

In order to “hang” Him on the cross, they nailed Him to the cross with nails, driven through His hands and feet. However, this physical pain was far surpassed by the mental strain He was under. Our Redeemer was carrying the sins of the whole world on His shoulders. This was a much greater burden and brought far more pain than the physical suffering. He chose death so that we might choose life! By allowing Satan’s followers to attempt to take His life as much as they possible could, they became criminals and lost all rights as individuals. Even though they couldn’t take His life, their actions demonstrated that they would have if they could have. No longer could Satan automatically claim each human being that was born as part of his kingdom. Now it would only be those who were of the age of accountability and chose to obey Satan and their children, who would be his slave.

But all of this was lost on most of those surrounding the cross. This often happens. The solders cast lots and gambled for his clothes. The careless crowd only saw a criminal, being put to death. How frequently this happens in life. The most important events in life transpire right before their eyes and those who are not in tune with what is happening will be playing games. We must be sure that playing games and the pleasures of this world do not lure us into the same trap.

Today, too many are playing games that will cause their loss, just as at the cross. Many are playing church, seeking church growth, demanding the highest places, all in the erroneous belief that great numbers indicates that God is blessing His people. Many are playing at being a Christian, unaware that they are oblivious to the impressions of the Holy Spirit. They have lost their love for the truth in the rush to gain worldly acclaim, and now God is causing them to believe a lie. Many are seeking what they perceive to be honors here, not realizing that in the process they will sacrifice eternal honors in heaven as a result as well as discover their earthly honor is hollow. These are playing games just as surely as the soldiers who were casting lots at the foot of the Cross.

**WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?**

Why did Jesus have to die? That is a big question and no short, pat answer will do. At the end of this lesson there are a number of reason listed, and even that list does not include all of them. But the short answer is that it was necessary for Him to die, because of our choice to rebel against the government of heaven, our sin.

We rebelled against the authority of heaven and the penalty for that choice is death. He took that death upon Himself, in order that we might have the opportunity to again choose to live. But, while He could make a way ready for us, it is only our choice that can make that offer of any value for us.

Last but not least, David, the sweet singer of Israel, the second king of God’s people, had inspired insight into the last part of the life of the Messiah on this earth. This is another of those cryptic prophecies about the Messiah. David speaks of “not leaving “thy Holy One” to see the pit.” Many commentators feel this is a direct reference to Jesus. And in fact that is the case. Jesus’ body did not lie in the grave (pit) long enough to see corruption or decay. He was only dead for something over 27 hours. He died at the ninth hour, leaving 3 hours remaining in that day. He rested over the Sabbath, which would be 24 hours. He was called to life before the sun rose. This is an unknown time, but it would have been anywhere after sunset Saturday night. Most likely at about the 9th or 10th century AD.

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35 1 Peter 5:7
36 Luke 23:34
37 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12
38 See Isaiah 53:4-6, 2 Corinthians 5:21 etc.
39 Psalm 16:10
40 Matthew 28:1  The phrase translated “after the Sabbath” is literally: “Late of the Sabbath,” or just after the Sabbath had ended. The event just missed the Sabbath. This could mean that Jesus rose shortly after sundown Saturday night.
hour of the night, just before sunrise. It would not be possible for any decaying to have started during this short time period.

With this overview of just some of the Messianic prophecies. These and the others demonstrate that the man called Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled all of them. This is a 100% accuracy ratio. Some claim there are over 300 prophecies fulfilled in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The evidence seems conclusive that Jesus was the man pointed forward to by all the prophets.

THE CLAIMS JESUS MADE

Jesus made many claims for His being the Messiah. Most of them were not out and out claims, but to the one who know the Jewish traditions, they were quite clear. Also, His disciples, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit validated those claims. In addition there are the comments made by those who witnessed His life. All these testimonies add up to a solid, eyewitness verification of the claim He made to be the Christ, the Messiah of the Old Testament. In addition, the fact that the Bible, which we agree is the inspired word of God, has preserved these claims and that book has been preserved down through the ages for us today by the Holy Spirit. This is even further testimony to their accuracy. This all adds up to a volume of evidence that in fact this Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Son of God, the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of the world. Now to examine the claims that Jesus made about Himself.

John uses a unique, but very descriptive name for the Son of God to introduce his record of the life of Christ on this earth. \textsuperscript{XXXI} The name John introduces for Jesus is the “Word.” In doing so John introduces a most important function of the incarnation. We first see this application in the very first verse of the gospel of John. John uses this term to convey to us an important aspect for this member of the Godhead coming to this world.

The term “logos,” the Greek word translated as the “word,” means, in essence, “communication,” or “the communicator,” in this setting. Jesus came as the embodiment of the communication heaven desired to have with the inhabitants of this earth. He came to show us, in the most powerful way possible, what type of being God really is. Satan has been lying about God ever since he first became disaffected in heaven and started spreading lies among the angels. Have you ever noticed that when people reject truth, they resort to lies about the one who brought truth to them? He continued that approach with his first recorded contact with human beings in the Garden of Eden and he continues it today. But Jesus, the Word, came to brush aside all of Satan’s lies about God and to communicate to us the real nature of God. To show us who God really is, and not what the lies about Him portray. This “Word” has existed forever. \textsuperscript{XXXII} He pre-existed all created matter. This is a concept that is impossible for the human mind to grasp but that alone does not make it untrue. There are many things which are true that human minds can’t understand. Not even the wisest human has ever even come close to comprehending this mind-boggling fact about Jesus. \textsuperscript{XXXIII} He created this world and everything in it. \textsuperscript{43} He also created the Universe and there is nothing that has ever come into existence that He did not have a hand in its coming into existence. He is the source of all life. \textsuperscript{44} In Him everyone lives and moves and has their being.

So for the unfallen beings of heaven and other worlds to see the creatures He has made hang Him on a cross and try to kill Him is completely incomprehensible. As John said;

\textit{He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.} \textsuperscript{45}

This is one of the saddest texts in the entire Bible. When you come to your own family, you normally can expect to be loved and cherished. This is especially true if there has been a long separation such as there had been with fallen

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41} Luke 24:1  Luke places the resurrection as just before dawn. This is not in conflict with Matthews account, just two different ways of saying that Jesus rose after the Sabbath had ended and before the dawn of the daylight part of the first day of the week.
\item \textsuperscript{42} John 1:1, 2
\item \textsuperscript{43} John 1:3 and 10. Also see Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; 11:3
\item \textsuperscript{44} John 1:4
\item \textsuperscript{45} John 1:11
\end{itemize}
human beings from open, face-to-face, heavenly contact. But such was not the case when Jesus came to His family here on earth; the ones who claimed to be looking for His coming. Satan had so poisoned their minds about God that they could not even receive the source of their own life. For Jesus is the source of all life, for both humans and any other living creature. Yet the very recipients of that life didn’t recognize Him, much less receive Him.

**The Well at Sychar**

One day, Jesus was traveling with His disciples on the way to Jerusalem. They were passing through the region of the Samaritans and had come to Jacob’s well, just outside of a little town called Sychar. The Jews hated the Samaritans and the feelings of the Samaritans was more or less mutual. The Samaritans were really Jews who had intermarried with other nations. So they were close relatives. But because of this intermarriage and the exclusiveness of the Jews, they had a difficult time being civil to each other.

In addition, a Jewish man did not talk to any women in public, not even their own wives. So when on this trip, Jesus and His disciples stopped at Jacob’s well for a drink. Jesus sent His disciples into the nearby Samaritan city of Sychar for food, while He waited at the well. While He waited there, a woman of this little town came to draw water. Midday was not the ordinary time for the women to draw water. Drawing water was usually done in the morning and evening. But for reasons, which will be seen, this woman had chosen to come at midday. When she arrived Jesus addressed her. He asked her for a drink. It was a law of the desert, that no one could refuse a drink, on request, not even from an enemy. So Jesus could properly open the interview this way. In the ensuing discussion, she received the first one of the several clear statements from Jesus as to who He really was. He said that He was the Christ or the Messiah. This is only one of several occasions where He claimed to be the Messiah. So, if this Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah, He was one of the world's greatest liars and fakers. However, if He is God’s Son who was sent to earth for our salvation, then we need to take what He says seriously. Jesus not only claimed to be the Messiah, He claimed that His real Father was in heaven.

**A Common Claim**

Many, over the centuries have made this claim to deity. In fact the Bible tells us of some others, we will only look at one as an example. The author of these lessons has met people who have made that claim in this generation; so hearing this claim is not unusual. What is unusual is for the one making the claim to be able to substantiate it. When Jesus was taken before Pilot, Pilot gave the Jews a choice between Jesus and a criminal named Barabbas. While we know very little about this Barabbas, his name tells us much. Bar, in Greek, means “son,” and “abba” means “father,” or “pappa.” Thus his very name makes the claim to be the “son of the father,” or the Messiah. He had been the leader of a group of zealots and had caused a lot of dissension with his claim to be the coming Messiah. His approach, a military one, was exactly what the Jewish leaders wanted to see. They wanted to militarily throw off the rule of the Romans forever. So Barabbas was right in tune with their thinking.

Sometime later, John the Baptist had some questions about who Jesus really was. John the Baptist had boldly proclaimed Jesus to be the Lamb of God when he had baptized Jesus at the Jordan. But then Jesus did not act like John the Baptist expected Him to act if He was the real Messiah. Even John the Baptist had misconceptions about who the Messiah would really be. In addition John the Baptist had gotten in trouble with Herod because he condemned the King for taking his brothers wife. Jesus, instead of coming to his rescue, had disappeared for over a month. Herod had had John thrown into prison and as he languished there in the hot prison, he began to wonder if indeed his proclamation of his cousins Messiahship had been correct or not. So he sent his disciples to find Jesus to check Him out and see if he was in fact who he had proclaimed Him to be. When the disciples arrived, they asked.

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46 John 4:25, 26
47 John 8:24. Also see the same claim being made under the label of “Son of Man,” in John 9:35-37
49 Luke 23:19

84
Jesus the question they were sent to ask, but Jesus didn’t answer them. Instead He went about His work, healing the sick, teaching the crowds and carried on His ministry as if the question hadn't been asked.  

**WORDS VS. ACTIONS**

There is a saying that “Actions speak louder than words.” So it was with Jesus. His life was the loudest proof for His claim of His real identity. Barabbas’ life could not support his claim in any way. The things he claimed could not be supported by the prophecies of the coming Messiah. They only fulfilled the misconceptions the people had about the Messiah. The same is true today. Many have bad misconceptions about truth and reject it because it doesn’t fit into their preconceived idea. There are many today following the human son of papa instead of the Divine Son of God because his message appeals to their dreams for greatness.

Jesus told many people several times who He was, but the real proof of His identity is in what He did and the life He lived. He later gave as a test of the messengers to mankind, is that we should look at the fruit seen in their lives. Claims are not good enough. The common denominator of all false messengers or prophets is that they claim to be true. What really counts is performance. So in fact, Christ offered the disciples of John the supreme evidence of His Messiahship, performance.

This was not the only time Jesus responded in the manner He did to John the Baptist’s disciples. There were other people who saw His works and believed that He had to be the Messiah. At a later time, temple guards, sent to arrest Jesus said:

> “Never a man spake as this man.”

Then, finally, Jesus made the most exalted claim of all when He said that He and His Father were one. In harmony with John’s evaluation of Jesus as the “Word,” Jesus also claimed to be the “Way, the truth and the Life.” In addition He also properly claimed that He had all authority. Jesus of Nazareth made some strong claims for Himself, however, the strongest were made by what He did, not what He said about Himself.

**LET’S ASK THOSE WHO KNEW HIM**

Another source by which facts can be verified about people is to ask those who knew them well. While it is true that human testimony is not the most solid proof of His divinity, if it is in harmony with the other evidence, it makes the panel of evidence unanimous. Let’s ask four people who knew Jesus of Nazareth who they knew Him to be.

**PETER**

First let’s ask Peter what He thought of Jesus of Nazareth. “Peter, Who is this Jesus of Nazareth?”

His reply is:

> “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

Peter sure sounds positive enough about who he believes Jesus of Nazareth to be. So let’s now ask another one of His followers.

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50 Matthew 11:2-6  
51 John 6:14  
52 John 7:46  
53 John 14:7-11  
54 John 14:6  
55 Matthew 28:18  
56 Matthew 16:13-16
MARThA

She was the older sister of Mary and a sister of Lazarus, the one Jesus raised from the dead. She certainly should know about these things. XLIV

“Martha, Who is the person called Jesus?”

Her response is:

“He is the Christ, the Son of God.”57

What could one expect from someone who had witnessed the life giving power of Jesus that He had bestowed on her brother Lazarus. It is obvious that these two were already convinced of the fact. Let’s turn to some who were not so convinced at one time, who didn’t jump to conclusions but weighed all the information first.

THOMAS

He has earned the title of “Doubting Thomas” as a result of his questioning of Jesus after the resurrection. He was one who had to have all of the evidence in hand before making a decision. So:

“Thomas, who do you believe Jesus of Nazareth is?” XLV

Thomas said:

“My Lord and My God.”58

Could it be that the answer Thomas gave should be our answer too? The evidence certainly seems to support such a conclusion.

But these are all Jewish people who were already looking for the Messiah. They had their hopes up and might be allowing their dreams to tint their opinions. So let’s turn to a Roman and see what He has to say.

MR. CENTURION

This man had seen many people die in his service for the Roman Emperor. This tends to harden a person. Also he is not a Jew, therefore his response is most valuable. XLI

“Sir, Who do you say that Jesus is?”

He answers with conviction:

“Truly this was the Son of God.”59

He certainly didn’t have any questions about it, did he? The true character of a person is not hidden when they face death. At that point, all the masks are taken off and the real person emerges. This Roman had seen that many times and when he witnessed Jesus on the cross and how He acted, the actions of Jesus spoke louder then any claims He made. This Roman witnessed those actions and had no question about the fact that Jesus was the Son of God.

Now let’s bring one more authority into the picture. He is the highest authority in the Universe. God in Heaven

Let’s see what the God of Heaven says about who Jesus of Nazareth really was. XLVII At the baptism of Jesus, God spoke from heaven and said:

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”60

WHO DO YOU SAY THAT JESUS OF NAZARETH IS?

My friend, this is just part of the evidence of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, the long looked for Messiah, the Savior of the world. All the evidence points the same way and is consistently clear. So in our investigation lets ask you, the reader, in the face of all this evidence:

57 John 11:27
58 John 20:24-28
59 Matthew 27:54
60 Matthew 3:17
“My friend - Who do you say Jesus of Nazareth is to you?”

Recognizing that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God is one thing. Applying that fact to our lives is yet another thing. James put it this way:

“You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!”

The demons recognized who Jesus was, but it didn't help them because they didn't respond in the correct way. They chose instead to believe the father of all liars and believe that they were equal with God, not the created beings they really were. The temptation to do things their way was too strong and they joined Satan in his rebellion against God.

We have the same temptation today. Satan has not stopped using that temptation when he used it on Eve. And it still works today just as good, or better, then it did back then.

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61 James 2:19 ESV
QUIZ – CHAPTER 7

I Is it correct to claim that Jesus is just a “Good man?”

II What does Isaiah say about the Christ? Isaiah 7:14

"BEHOLD A _____________ WILL BE WITH CHILD AND BEAR A SON, AND SHE WILL CALL HIS NAME ____________.”
Also see Isaiah 9:6, 7

III How was this prophecy fulfilled? Matthew 1:18, 22, 23.

Vs. 18 "When His mother Mary had been betrothed (engaged) to Joseph, before they ________________ ________________ she was found to be with child."
Vs. 22, 23 "Now all this took place that was ________________ by the ________________ through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which translated means, 'God with us.'"

IV Where did Micah foretell that the Messiah would be born? Micah 5:2 ____________

V Where was Jesus born? Luke 2:4-7

Also see Matthew 2:5, 6

VI From where did Hosea say God would call His Son? Hosea 11:1

VII How was this accomplished? Matthew 2:14, 15 ________________

VIII What disaster was foretold? Jeremiah 31:15

IX What event fulfilled this prophecy? Matthew 2:16-18

X Who was to introduce the Messiah and prepare the way for His coming? Isaiah 40:3

"A ____________ IS CALLING, 'CLEAR THE WAY FOR THE ____________________ IN THE WILDERNESS.'"
Also see Malachi 3:1

XI Who fulfilled this prophecy? Matthew 3:1-3 ________________
Also see Matthew 3:10-14

XII  What other prophecy did Isaiah make about the Messiah? Isaiah 9:1, 2 ____________

XIII How was this fulfilled? Matthew 4:12-17

XIV Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would do what? Isaiah 53:4

XV How was this fulfilled? Matthew 8:16, 17

XVI  Note the eight things Isaiah said about the Messiah? Isaiah 42:1-4
   
   A. "BEHOLD, MY SERVANT, WHOM I ____________
   
   B. MY CHOSEN ONE IN WHOM MY SOUL ____________
   
   C. I HAVE PUT MY _______________ UPON HIM;
   
   D. HE WILL BRING FORTH ____________ TO THE NATIONS;
   
   E. HE WILL NOT _______________ OR _______________ HIS ______________
      NOR MAKE HIS VOICE HEARD IN THE STREET.
   
   F. A BRUISED REED HE WILL _________ _________ AND A DIMLY BURNING WICK HE
      WILL NOT EXTINGUISH.
   
   G. HE WILL FAITHFULLY BRING FORTH _______________ 
   
   H. HE WILL NOT BE _______________ OR ____________________________.

XVII Did Jesus of Nazareth fulfill this prophecy? Matthew 12:15-21

XVIII Whose prophecy was fulfilled by the attitude of the people toward Jesus?
Matthew 13:10-17 compare Isaiah 6:9, 10.

XIX Why did Jesus use parables? Matthew 13:10-17, 34, 35 compare Psalms 78:2 ____________

XX What problem did Jesus meet that was foretold by Isaiah? Matthew 15:1-9 compare Isaiah 29:13
XXI Just before Jesus’ betrayal, what form of transportation did Jesus use to enter Jerusalem? Matthew 21:1-3

XXII Who prophesied this? Zechariah 9:9

XXIII What would happen to the Messiah? Zechariah 13:7

XXIV Who would do it? Zechariah 13:6

XXV What would be the price that would be paid? Zechariah 11:11-13

XXVI Was this fulfilled? Matthew 26:14-16, 31, 47-50

Also see Matthew 27:9, 10

XXVII What happened while Jesus was on the cross? Psalms 22:1, 7, 16, 18

<table>
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<th>VSS.</th>
<th>WHAT WILL HAPPEN?</th>
<th>COMPARE</th>
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| 1    |                   | Matthew 27:46  
Mark 15:34 |
| 7    |                   | Matthew 27:39  
Mark 15:29 |
| 16   |                   | John 20:25    |
| 18   |                   | Matthew 27:35  
Luke 23:34  
John 19:24 |

XXVIII Why was it necessary for Christ to die? Isaiah 53:4–6

Also see 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24, 25 See end of lesson.

XXIX What did David say about staying in Hell or the grave? Psalms 16:9, 10

XXX Did Jesus come forth from the grave? Acts 2:30-32

XXXI Who is the "Word" mentioned in John 1:1? John 1:4
XXXII How long has the "Word" existed? John 1:1,2

XXXIII Who created the world and everything that has been created? John 1:3, 4, 10 ______

Also see Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; 11:3.

XXXIV Who is the source of all life? John 1:4

XXXV Who did Jesus of Nazareth claim to be? John 4:25, 26 ________________________

Also see John 8:24; 9:35-37

XXXVI Who did Jesus claim was His Father? John 5:37, 41-45

XXXVII John the Baptist had a question about Jesus and sent some of his disciples to check Him out. How did Jesus answer their question? Matthew 11:2-6

XXXVIII Later, who else was convinced by His works? John 6:14 _________________

Read the whole story in vs. 1-14

XXXIX What temple officials also were convinced by His words? John 7:30-32, 46

XL What supreme claim did Jesus make? John 10:30-33

Also see John 14:7-9

XLI What did Jesus say He was? John 14:6

XLII How much authority did Jesus claim to have? Matthew 28:18

XLIII PETER, who was this Jesus of Nazareth? Matthew 16:13-16 ___________________

XLIV MARTHA, who do you believe Jesus of Nazareth is? John 11:27 _________________

XLV THOMAS, you believe that seeing is believing. Who is this Jesus of Nazareth to you? John 20:24-28
XLVI MR. ROMAN CENTURION, you and your soldiers have guarded this Jesus of Nazareth when He was crucified. You have seen many men die. Who do you say Jesus of Nazareth is? Matthew 27:54

XLVII Who did God the Father say Jesus of Nazareth is? Matthew 3:17

Also see Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:21, 22
Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth for several reasons. Jesus did not come for a vacation, or to do an inspection of His domain. He did not come to show off how powerful He was to the human race, or how glorious. No, Jesus had far more important reasons to visit planet earth. Also, He did not come just for a visit, rather He came to join the human race. For all eternity He will be bound to the human race with ties that will never be broken. We need to examine these reasons, for they are very important for us today. His death on the cross was only one of the reasons for coming to this world. An understanding of the other purposes for his coming is essential for us to partake of eternal life as well as a satisfying and truly successful life here.

**Save His People from their Sin**

The very first reason given in the New Testament for His coming is to save His people from their sins. The term, "His People" carries many possible meanings, depending on the context in which it is used. Here in Matthew, it refers first of all to the Jewish nation. The Jewish nation, for a few more years, still held the unique position of God’s chosen people. In a very real sense, Jesus came to give them one last opportunity to keep from losing that special relationship. But that was not to be, they wanted to do things their way more then to retain their special relationship with God. It was by their choice, not God’s, that they lost this special honor that they valued so lightly.

But that is not the only meaning it carries in the context of all of God's word. In a general sense, all of the people on the whole world are "His People" since He created all mankind. However, this was not a saving relationship, only a factual one. Most of mankind has chosen to not continue in that status of being a “child of God.”

In a more accurate sense today, His people consist of those who choose to belong to Him and have given their lives to Him. Those are the ones who are truly His people. So we can read this to mean that He came to save all who will accept Him and what He has done to rescue them from their sins.

**Jesus Begins His Mission**

As a child Jesus became separated from His parents in the temple. Three days later, they found Him dialoguing with the priest and religious leaders in the Temple. When his parents questioned Him about his activities, He told them that He must be about His Father's business. (Some translations read, "In my Father's house.) But in this statement He reveals the overall purpose or reason for coming to this world. He had come to do His Father's business.

"At a very early age, Jesus had begun to act for Himself in the formation of His character, and not even respect and love for His parents could turn Him from obedience to God's word. "It is written" was His reason for every act that varied from the family customs. Even in His youth He had to learn the hard lesson of silence and patient endurance."

Later in His ministry Jesus revealed this to John the Baptist. When Jesus went to John to be baptized, John hesitated. In a clear recognition of the real relationship between them, he told Jesus that in reality he, John, was the one who needed to be baptized by Jesus. But Jesus let John know that while in the larger picture, that would be true, such was not the case then. For in the role Jesus had taken on, He needed to live just like all mankind must live who are in conformity to God's will. He too needed to be baptized to fulfill all righteousness.
Many today have a totally wrong impression of what Jesus came for. The same was true back in His day. In His most famous sermon, the one we call today “The Sermon on the Mount,” Jesus tells us what He did not come for as well as what He did come for. There was much stress placed on keeping God's law in His day, but much of that was not correctly presented. So Jesus came to set it straight. He was clear that He did not come to abolish the law, but rather He came to fulfill the law.\(^5\) \(^{\text{iv}}\)

Jesus had an interesting job to do. Today, people claim that we do not need to keep the law. The Bible, on the other hand stresses the need to keep God’s instructions. In Jesus’ day, the stress was to “keep the law” and Jesus had to try and point out how the ways man claimed to be keeping the law was in fact breaking the law. So, His message to them seemed like He was teaching law breaking. Both now and then the problem is and was that people did not know just what heaven meant. So, Jesus came to try and clarify and bring in a balance.

Jesus did not come to terminate the law, but in fact He came to achieve the fullest satisfaction of that law. He came to demonstrate what keeping the law really meant and how to do it. A fact we must not forget is this: “KEEPING ANY LAW DOES NOT TERMINATE IT.” Driving 55 mph in a 55 mph speed zone does not mean that the next time I can drive as fast as I want to, just because I “fulfilled the law” one time. This also applies to the law of God. Any person or even God Himself, keeping it once, does not mean it is now extinct. In fact just the opposite is true. The keeping of the law by Jesus, sets a precedent of keeping the law that we are expected to follow if we are His disciples.

"His mission was to 'magnify the law, and make it honorable.'" Isaiah 42:21. He was to show the spiritual nature of the law, to present its far-reaching principles, and to make plain its eternal obligation.\(^6\)

When one comes to realize that the law is a transcript or written description of the character of God.

“In setting aside the law of God, men know not what they are doing. God's law is the transcript of His character. It embodies the principles of His kingdom. He who refuses to accept these principles is placing himself outside the channel where God's blessings flow.” \(^7\)

The life of any human being that doesn’t match up to that written description of the character of God, demonstrates that either:

such a person is not allowing God to make them good, or

God has not taken over that area of their life yet.

It is only reasonable to expect that the Son of God would live a life just like that described in the law of God.

**THE REAL GOSPEL**

The summation of why Jesus came to this world is this. He came to help those who could not help themselves. This is the gospel, the good news.

“**JESUS CAME TO DO FOR US WHAT WE CANNOT DO FOR OURSELVES.**” \(^V\)

What better news is there for a person who is lost in sin and has no other way out to hear?

When on this earth He invited a tax collector by the name of Matthew to come and follow Him. This is the same one who wrote the first book in the New Testament. Matthew was so thrilled with the call that he threw a big feast and invited all of his tax collecting friends to come and celebrate with him and to meet Jesus. This infuriated the religious leaders and they complained to His disciples about the company He kept. When this came to Jesus' attention, He reminded them that it isn't the well people who need a doctor, but the sick. So too with His mission to planet earth, He came to help sinners. \(^VI\) Sinners know that there is much they can’t do. They know they need help outside of themselves. So those who realized their need heard Jesus gladly, for He was offering to do for them

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\(^5\) Matthew 5:17  
\(^6\) Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing Page 49  
\(^7\) Christ’s Object Lessons, page 305.3
WHY JESUS CAME TO EARTH?

what they could not do for themselves. While those who think they are pretty good, find no value in such a message.

Then later when those same disciples got into an argument about who was greatest He reminded them that His mission was to save those who were lost, not to save the greatest.\textsuperscript{VII} The greatest often do not feel any need, at least not enough to humble themselves and come to Jesus. Jesus cannot help those who feel no need. So to seek to be the greatest is to seek a position where God cannot help them. Most certainly this is not a position worth seeking.

One time when Jesus was teaching the people, the disciples of John, by his instruction, came to see who Jesus really was. Doubt had overtaken John the Baptist and he wanted a confirmation that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.\textsuperscript{8} After the messengers left, Jesus started berating the actions of the people in the cities where He had been teaching. He told the people that it would be more tolerable for Sodom then for these cities,\textsuperscript{9} because they had rejected the Son of God. Then He issues an invitation again to them.

"Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."\textsuperscript{10}  

This was yet another reason why Jesus came to this world, to give us rest from our efforts to make ourselves good. But He did not come to rest. He knew what lay ahead of Him and He wanted His disciples to know what would happen too. He would have to go to Jerusalem. There He would suffer many things. And He would be killed. But that wasn't the end of the story. On the third day, He would be raised up.\textsuperscript{11} His disciples didn't want to hear anything about dying. They wanted a fairytale ending, where they, with Jesus, would live happily ever after as rulers of the people of God and conquer all of their enemies. But that was not part of the script that Jesus had in mind in coming to this earth. Instead, He came to set an example of serving others.\textsuperscript{x} Oh yes, Jesus came to give them the "fairy tale" ending, but not the way they saw it. Yes, He wanted them to live happily ever after. He wanted to place them on thrones with Him. He wanted them to conquer all their enemies. But, what they had a hard time recognizing the idea that they were their own greatest enemy.

One way for Jesus to serve was to tell the people about the nature of the kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{XI} The King of the Kingdom of God was among them.\textsuperscript{12} They needed to know this so they would come to Him in order to find salvation from their sinful state. He did not come to dwell on how bad they were, but to show them a better way. He didn't come to condemn people for their rebellion, but to save the whole world from being part of the rebellion, at least all who would accept that salvation, from their sin.\textsuperscript{13} The relief from physical suffering He offered many was only a sample of the relief He wanted them to accept from the sin problem that held them captive.

"In the excitement which then pervaded Capernaum there was danger that the object of His mission would be lost sight of. Jesus was not satisfied to attract attention to Himself merely as a wonder-worker or as a healer of physical disease. He was seeking to draw men to Him as their Saviour. While the people were eager to believe that He had come as a king to establish an earthly reign, He desired to turn their minds from the earthly to the spiritual. Mere worldly success would interfere with His work."\textsuperscript{14}

Jesus fulfilled His part of the rescue mission to planet earth when He died, was raised again and returned to heaven. Now the question for us is:

"What must we do to avail ourselves of the provisions He made for our salvation? What must we do to be saved?"

\textsuperscript{8} You can read the story in Matthew 11.
\textsuperscript{9} See Matthew 11:20 ff
\textsuperscript{10} Matthew 11:28
\textsuperscript{11} Mark 8:31
\textsuperscript{12} Luke 10:8, 9; 17:20, 21
\textsuperscript{13} Matthew 1:21
\textsuperscript{14} The Ministry of Healing page 31
John revealed that secret to us when He said:

"But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."\(^{15}\)

First we must practice the truth, then we must believe on or trust in Jesus. \(^{13}\) It was Jesus’ plan to live the same way we must live so we could copy His method and find salvation. The way He did this was to do nothing on His own initiative, but only what His Father told Him to do. \(^{14}\)

"Jesus prayed for us, and He asked that we might be one with Him, even as He is one with the Father. What a union is this! The Saviour has said of Himself, 'The Son can do nothing of Himself;' 'the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.'" \(^{16}\) John 5:19, 14:10. Then if Christ is dwelling in our hearts, He will work in us "both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Philippians 2:13. We shall work as He worked; we shall manifest the same spirit. And thus, loving Him and abiding in Him, we shall 'grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.' Ephesians 4:15." \(^{17}\)

Jesus did not act on His own authority as so many people insist on doing today. He set an example for us by the total submission of His will to that of His Father in heaven. \(^{15}\) That must be the way we live our life too. So many try to amend and change the instructions of God that they find in His word. That is not allowing God to control their will, that is being their own boss, the very opposite of what God had in mind. That is the same thing Satan did successfully in the beginning with Adam and Eve and what he tried to get Jesus to do in the wilderness. But we must resist that temptation and surrender our will to His supreme knowledge and follow His leading if we expect to reign with Him in heaven for eternity.

To have eternal life and be one with Jesus, we must believe and obey Him. Therefore, if Christ received the pattern for His life from God, and if it was God's will that governed Christ's life then the life pattern of Jesus must be our pattern too and we must turn over our will to the control of heaven daily.

**WHO'S WILL SHOULD CONTROL OUR LIVES?** \(^{18}\)

The whole purpose of Jesus coming to this earth, then, can be summed up in this one statement. Jesus came to glorify His Father by only doing what His Father told Him to do. \(^{19}\) Therefore, whatever good came from His life here was a result of His Father's doing. \(^{16}\) Likewise the reason for the written record of Jesus' life was to reveal how we too might trust God, believe in Him and allowing Him to control our lives. \(^{17}\)

"God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures.

"And bring forth fruit." Those who, having heard the word, keep it, will bring forth fruit in obedience. The word of God, received into the soul, will be manifest in good works. Its results will be seen in a Christlike character and life. Christ said of Himself, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart." Ps. 40:8. "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." John 5:30. And the Scripture says, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." 1 John 2:6.

"The word of God often comes in collision with man's hereditary and cultivated traits of character and his habits of life. The good-ground hearer, in receiving the word, accepts all its conditions and

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16 John 5:30, etc.
17 Steps to Christ -Page-75
18 Also see John 8:26-32; 15:4-14
19 John 8:28; 12:49
requirements. His habits, customs, and practices are brought into submission to God's word. In his view
the commands of finite, erring man sink into insignificance beside the word of the infinite God. With the
whole heart, with undivided purpose, he is seeking the life eternal, and at the cost of loss, persecution, or
death itself, he will obey the truth."  

After all, since we were designed and made by heaven, who better will know what is best for us and what will bring
us the most happiness? There is no one better one to govern our life then the one who loved us so much that He
died to rescue us from the tyranny of slavery to Satan.

A LOOK AT THE NATURE OF JESUS OF NAZARETH

How could Jesus be both the Divine Son of God and the Human Son of Man.

The unique combination of Divinity and Humanity in Jesus has been the topic of much discussion, and often much
more. Some claim that He had power that we do not have, so, it is argued, it would be expected for Jesus to live a
sinless life. But in fact Jesus used no power that we cannot have.  He came to live on this earth as a human being,
not as a God.

Others argue that since He had a sinless nature, He didn’t experience the power of the temptations we face. In fact
just the opposite is true. Prior to the incarnation, Jesus was the supreme commander of the heavenly host. He had
to set aside all of that power and authority and not use is while in His human form. When provoked, it is much
harder to be meek if we have the power, then if we have never had that power. So, for Jesus, in fact, the
temptations were much, much harder then anything we can ever face.

The problem isn’t that He had extra power; the problem is that we do not go about trying to gain the victory over
sin in the right way.

An example would be, if I were trying to mix up some chemical mixture, say I wanted to make some water. Water
is a mixture of 2 parts of hydrogen and 1 part of oxygen. Any other combination of the basic elements will just not
be common water. If I take my two parts of hydrogen and put it in one container and my one part of oxygen in
another, do I now have water? Or if I take one part of hydrogen and 2 parts of oxygen, do I have water? No, I
must mix the two in exactly the right portions to gain the correct results. The same is true with salvation too.

Some will then argue: “How about someone who doesn’t know how to make these chemical mixes?”

What does God say?

“*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be
given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is
driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;
he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*”

How simple is that? All we must do is ask, trusting (faith) that God will help him to find the right answer, and it
will be given to him. But, we must trust God and follow the answer when He shows it to us in His way. Any
doubting or quibbling about what we find in God’s word will make it impossible for us to ever know the truth. In
fact, it will be even worse then that.

“The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and
with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.
Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be
condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

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20 Christ's Object Lessons-Page- 60
21 The Desire of Ages, page 24.2
22 James 1:5-8 ESV
23 2 Thessalonians. 2:9-12 ESV
BASIC CHRISTIANITY

God has made it as simple as it can possibly be. It is the lack of love for truth that is the problem. So, if we want to know the truth, we first need to love Jesus and be willing to accept anything He asks us to do and follow the example He gave us in His own life.

In addition, we do not fully understand the issues involved and we do not ask for power to gain the victory over sin (choosing to do things our way). The issues were far more critical with Jesus than they are with us. The salvation of the whole world hung in the balances with every decision that He made. The Power He had is available to each of us today if we will just avail ourselves of it to make the right choices. So the intensity of the struggle is not the deciding factor, it is the way we go about our effort to be free from sin that makes the difference.

It wasn’t the power He had as much as it was the fact that He understood the issues at stake. Satan has done a masterful job at clouding the issues and getting us to fight our battles on issues that are really not that important, and we ignore and set aside the really important issues, claiming that they are not important. Jesus didn’t fall for that. Not only that, Jesus has made it possible for us also to not fall for Satan’s lies.

With Christ this did not happen. He understood the real issues. Therefore, we too can study the approach, the method He used and learn how we must also approach temptation and the job of becoming Christ like. When we look at the temptations He resisted in the wilderness, we will see that He really did understand. When we really understand the issues involved, the Christian life becomes much easier and we too will have more victories and more power against sin.

“In the desolate wilderness, Christ was not in so favorable a position to endure the temptations of Satan as was Adam when he was tempted in Eden. The Son of God humbled himself, and took man's nature, after the race had wandered four thousand years from Eden, and from their original state of purity and uprightness. Sin had been making its terrible marks upon the race for ages; and physical, mental, and moral degeneracy prevailed throughout the human family.” Redemption pg 30

“Christ is called the second Adam. In purity and holiness, connected with God, and beloved by God, He began where the first Adam began. But the first Adam was in every way more favorably situated than Christ.”

In this lesson we will explore the real issues at stake so we too can have the power and victory Christ had.

THE ALL-IMPORTANT ISSUES INVOLVED

While there are several issues involved in the conflict between good and evil, heaven and hell, Christ and Satan, there is one overriding issue that surprisingly is not noticed as it should be. Which is just as Satan would have it to be. Actually it is referred to in many different ways in inspired writings, but only one clear statement in Paul’s letter to the Romans brings it to the forefront of importance that it deserves. If you notice just how Paul states it, it is quite obvious that Paul considers this as one of the most logical and obvious facts in life.

Paul states this important principle in his letter to the Romans in this way.

“Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?”

In short, when we choose to obey a master, we become his or its slave. There are only two sides in the moral area of life. Everyone will be a slave to either the Master of evil, Satan, or to Jesus Christ. Just what could be more simple then that? This principle is so very simple, yet so very vital to our Christian walk. Notice how a modern writer described this principle.

“Every soul that refuses to give himself to God is under the control of another power. He is not his own. He may talk of freedom, but he is in the most abject slavery. He is not allowed to see the beauty of truth, for his mind is under the control of Satan. While he flatters himself that he is following the dictates of his own judgment, he obeys the will of the prince of darkness. Christ came to break the shackles of sin-slavery from

24 Manuscript Release vol. 8 page 39
25 Romans 6:16
WHY JESUS CAME TO EARTH?

The concept of being a slave is beyond our imagination, just as is the worshipping idols and total submission to a deity. However, this is not a new problem. The Jews of Christ’s day had the same problem. When Jesus offered them freedom, they insisted that they had never been enslaved to anyone. Yet they were bound in the worst kind of slavery, slavery to self.

“So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

“They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free’?”

“Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.”

Just as in Palestine, under the rule of Rome, the Jews were a group of people who had been in slavery over and over again, starting with Egypt, then Babylon, now Rome. Yet, they were able to look the Son of God in the face and claim they had never been in slavery. This concept is something that is not well understood especially today in America, “the land of the free.” Yet, even now, more then with the ancient Jews, probably more people experience slavery today in America than at any time or place in earth’s history. The reason modern slavery is not recognized as such is because it comes packaged as freedom.

The southern, Afro-Americans of yesteryear knew that they were in slavery. They were reminded of it every time they had to obey “Ole Masses” orders. Today, just because we do not have that same situation, people fail to see that there are very few people who are truly free. True, they do not have to jump when a slave owner cracks a whip they can see, but the slavery is just as real. Why? Because today the “slave driver” comes wrapped in a well designed cover and passes itself off as freedom and success. Instead of carrying a whip, it uses forces that are far more enslaving. The fact that the whip is missing doesn’t mean it is not slavery. One is in captivity just the same. But God offers a way of escape.

IN THE BEGINNING

The real nature of the problem Jesus came to free us from, can best be seen if we go back to the very beginning. Just taking a text near the end of the Bible doesn’t give us the history of the problem nor its real implications. So, in order to see just how the death of Christ on Calvary could solve the slavery problem we just spoke of, it is absolutely necessary to go back to the Garden of Eden. When God placed Adam and Eve in the perfectly beautiful garden, He gave them authority over the new world He had just created. Note that word: Authority, as it is a key word in this problem. For slavery is after all a question of authority and choice.

The hierarchy of authority that God established in the beginning was that Adam was to be in the senior position and Eve was his helper or second in command. OR lets look at it another way. God described what a human being really is in the first chapter of Genesis. God did not make males and females, He made humans. A human is a male and female in cooperation. Just like water is 2 parts hydrogen, one part oxygen, so a human is 1 part male and 1 part female. They can only be truly human and function as God intended when this formula is recognized and followed. Humanity is not male vs. female, but male and female equals a human. Actually humanity is even then not complete. There is another most important part of the formula that must be in place for them to be truly human. We will being that in later.

While they were perfect in every way, their abilities or qualifications had nothing to do with the position God gave to them. Just like today an expert NASCAR driver and a purebred horse jockey can otherwise be equal, yet they are very much different.

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26 The Desire of Ages 466.3
27 John 8:31-34
28 Genesis 1:26, 27
Isaiah made a comment on this situation when he wrote:

“You turn things around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, That what is made would say to its maker, “He did not make me”; Or what is formed say to him who formed it, “He has no understanding”?  

Being “second in command,” has nothing to do with value or abilities. It was just that God saw that He needed them in the individual positions and they alone could fill that position in the best way. No matter what the wisdom of this world may say, God alone knows where we will fit best in His grand design for His people.

However, we divert slightly, so now back to the situation of authority. Satan, the old serpent the devil, who had been cast out of heaven, down to this earth, had no authority at all on this planet. Notice how the Bible describes this sequence of events where Satan was thrown out of heaven:

“And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”

Not only did Satan not have any authority on this earth, he was an enemy of God seeking to do all he could to destroy what God had made. So the choice Adam and Eve had to make was: “which side would they be on?” “Whose authority would they submit to?” Would it be that of the God who loved them more than anyone, or Satan the enemy of God? OR in another way: Who would they choose to be the third part of the human triangle. Who would they choose to complete their being? God or Satan? Before Adam and Eve sinned, God was the third part, the top angle of this triangle, but a change was underway.

In Eden, after God created the two parts of mankind, the chain of command looked like this.

1. ADAM – Given Dominion over the earth
2. EVE – The compliment to Adam, one who was a “helper” in having Dominion
3. SATAN – A nobody

(Satan had no authority except, as Adam and Eve might choose to share it with him as the third leg on their triangle.)

YOU SHALL NOT EAT

God had given specific instruction to Adam and Eve regarding just what limitations they were to abide by. The recorded list is not a long list, just one thing. That is really no different then it is today, even though most people may believe otherwise. Here is the only thing God required of Adam and Eve that is recorded in God’s word.

“The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

That is it. They could eat from any tree in the garden EXCEPT one. Yet, as today, it was that one which caused Eve to be curious about it.

As to just how much time passed by between the Creation of mankind and the part of history we now turn to, the Bible does not reveal. It might have been a few days, more likely longer then that, even into the years. All is speculation in this area and the author has no idea at all just how long it was and there is no statement or even a hint in the Bible as to how long it was. But the Bible records that the time did come when Eve did wander away from the side of Adam (or when Adam allowed her to wander away) and shortly she found herself near the forbidden tree. To her amazement there was a “talking snake” there to greet her. As Eve approached the forbidden tree, He posed a question to Eve in order to draw her into dialogue with him.

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29 Isaiah 29:16
30 Revelation 12:7-9. Also see Luke 10:18
31 Genesis 2:16, 17
WHY JESUS CAME TO EARTH?

“*And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’*”

In her response, Eve responded with a variation of what God had said to them. In the command according to Eve, she added three little words to God’s instructions.

*The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’”*

God did not say they were not to “touch” the fruit, only that they were not to eat of it. By adding this prohibition that God had not made, she set herself up for the Devil’s deception. All the Serpent now had to do was to merely take a piece of fruit from the tree, hand it to Eve. This would convey the non-verbal message that touching it did not bring death. Then when Eve obeyed Satan’s suggestion and took of the fruit and ate it, she became a servant of Satan. Satan caused her to focus on one thing, while he got her to fail on another. Just like he does today with those who are not careful to know and share what God has said.

**A STORY**

It is like what happens in a story that has many variations, that goes something like this. This man worked in a wheelbarrow factory. At the end of one workday, on his way home he approached the guard at the gate with a wheelbarrow full of sawdust. The guard searched the sawdust carefully and finding nothing there except sawdust. Since there was nothing wrong with taking sawdust out of the gate, the guard waved him on through. This happened day after day, each time with the same results. The guard knew that the man was stealing something, but he couldn’t figure out what.

One day they met in a social situation and the guard asked the man: “I know you are stealing something when you roll that wheelbarrow full of sawdust out every day. If you tell me what it is, I’ll not stop you or turn you in.”

“OK,” the man responded, “I am stealing wheelbarrows.”

This is exactly the trick Satan pulled on Eve, who couldn’t see past the tree and the fruit. Satan was seeking to get her allegiance, he wanted to be the third angle of her triangle, so he involved her in a discussion that raised questions about God. In doing so, she went beyond what God said and “painted herself into a corner.”

Many today make the same mistake Eve made in going beyond what God has said. They go beyond what God has said and in so doing they “paint themselves into a corner,” just as Eve did. When this happens they set themselves up for Satan’s deceptions, just as Eve did. A most common example today is the idea of equality. This is not a biblical concept for Christians, in fact just the opposite of biblical plan. Heaven’s plan is that everything God has created is here to serve the rest of His creation. It is only the selfish heart of man that lives to itself and covets equality. 34 Going beyond what God has said places those Christians in very strange positions, just like Eve found herself in.

After Eve obeyed Satan, the chain of command on planet Earth had not changed because Eve’s choice had to be ratified by Adam, the other part of the human family. Adam still had God in his triangle. So, even though Eve had made a different choice, her choice would not be valid for the human race unless Adam validated it. Unfortunately, he validated Eve’s choice. Now the chain of command on Planet earth was turned totally upside down. The human triangle now included Satan at the top point of the triangle instead of God.

1. SATAN – Given Dominion over the earth
2. EVE – Now second in command
3. ADAM – no authority at all.

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32 Genesis 3:1
33 Genesis 3:2, 3
34 The Desire of Ages 20.2
Genesis 3 contains the record of how Eve chooses to not follow God’s instructions and the result was that Eve was now Satan’s slave. Eve bought into the idea that one could be equal with God and not be under the authority of Adam. Eve bought into Satan’s lie that everyone is equal and we do not have to submit to anyone. This idea has caused more problems then almost any other idea there is today. So, instead of wanting God’s arrangement to be what she had to live under, she choose Satan’s arrangement. But, the change would only affect all humanity unless Adam also voted God out of the third and top place in the human triangle. Adam went along and the change was complete and has been passed on to all in the human race up to the cross.

**EQUALITY**

Satan has made this concept of everyone being equal sound like a wonderfully high and noble concept. However, it is not a biblical one, at least not one that God supports. In fact, all juvenile delinquency is a direct result of this lie being believed and passed off as a Christian idea. All unhappiness in the home and society is a direct result of this concept. The violation of the tenth commandment, “Thou shalt not Covet,” is the motivation for the desire to be equal with everyone else. Here is just one text that is an example of many more.

> “But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.”

That hardly seems like a prescription for equality. As we read before, who are we to tell our maker what we should be? The only place that humans are equal in is their opportunity to come to God and be saved. No one has any advantage over anyone else when it comes to being forgiven and being saved. Each person chooses who is in the third and top position in their triangle, God or Satan, just like they choose who will be in the second part of their triangle in order to be fully human. In all other areas we are each made for a different purpose. If we fail to perform the job we were born to do, another cannot do that job; it will go undone and that person will be at fault.

It all boils down to who’s authority we will submit to, who will be the top position in our human triangle. Will it be that of Jesus, who loved us so much that He came and died for us, or Satan who has done nothing good for us, but instead has brought all of the sorrow we have today, into this world. It seems like an obvious choice. But far too many make the wrong choice here and it affects their entire life, just as it did with Eve.

**SLAVES OF SATAN**

After Eve chose to be Satan’s slave, he sent her on her first missionary trip. She took some of the fruit of the forbidden tree and went to find Adam in an attempt to get him to ratify her choice to put Satan in the top position in the human triangle. When Adam saw Eve with the forbidden fruit, he knew what had happened, that she had come under the death sentence God had pronounced. Adam lost sight of the fact that God had created Eve for him to begin with and God could most certainly create another helpmate for him if something happened to Eve. What God was doing was testing Adam to see if he would remain faithful. God could have destroyed Eve when she touched the fruit, but then Adam would not have been fairly tested. But all Adam could see at that point was his spending eternity without his lovely Eve. She was most precious to him, at that point, and everything else sank into oblivion.

So Adam took of the fruit and ate it, thereby obeying Eve and becoming her slave and consequently a slave of Satan. Satan was now in the top position of the human triangle. Now the chain of command looked like this.

1. **SATAN** – Now in complete command
2. **EVE** – no authority at all and a slave of Satan.
3. **ADAM** – No authority and a slave of Satan and Eve

While Adam knew better then to eat the fruit Eve offered to him, he couldn’t bear to go on living without Eve, so he choose to join her in the triangle she wanted instead of waiting for God to create another woman to take Eve’s place in the triangle of humanity. With this choice, Adam showed that he did not trust God to take care of the situation. By Adam’s joining Eve in rebelling against God, Satan was able, through mankind, to turn God’s order of authority completely upside down and replace God as the supreme authority on this earth. Now Satan had gained his purpose of destroying what God had made. It is amazing how we mortals will forget God, who only does

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35 Mark 10:31 Also see 1 Corinthians 12
why Jesus Came to Earth?

what is good for us, and willingly serve Satan, who only hurts us. It doesn’t really make any sense does it? But many today who make strong claims to being a Christian are making the same mistaken choice. Some person we love chooses the wrong way. Because of our deep love for them, we go along, even though we know better. Like Adam, we choose to change and make Satan the top authority in our triangle with our chosen mate, instead of God being in that top position. Here is what Jesus said:

“A MAN’S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. “And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. “He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.”

Through all of the talk of equality and unity, we set aside the clear statement Jesus made just a few verses earlier in this same presentation.

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”

Our salvation is just as much dependent upon our placing our love for Jesus above our love for anyone or anything else, as it was for Adam and also as important as Calvary itself. Anything or anyone that we find more important or who holds a higher place in our lives then total surrender to Jesus demands, will keep us out of heaven. God had visited with Adam and Eve each evening. God had created Adam and Eve and given them the best of everything. God had spent much time walking, talking, explaining how sin had entered heaven and that they did not have the power to deal with the great deceiver on their own. God gave mankind everything they needed in order to gain the victory over Satan. However, Eve’s curiosity and lack of trust in God, set the stage for her own fall and it made it easier for Adam to follow her in the pathway of rebellion. How is it with us? Will our lack of trust in God cause others to also lose eternal life, even if we turn back to God before it is too late?

“PLAN B”

This turn of events didn’t surprise God for He had what might be called a “plan B” and now it swung into action.

In the evening, it was God’s custom to come and walk and talk with His new family members, Adam and Eve, in the garden. But on this sad evening, they were not looking forward to that meeting, so they hid from God. When they finally responded to His call, God gave them an opportunity to confess their sin and repent. Instead they started casting blame; to the point that they cast the blame for their rebellion on God Himself. Eve said that the Serpent God had made caused her to sin. It was His entire fault. Yet who made the serpent? Adam claimed that it was the woman that God gave him that caused him to sin. It was His entire fault. Yet who made the woman? Also, who did not trust God to provide him with another wife. Instead of taking the blame themselves, they cast the blame for their wrong choices on God, the very one who had done everything for them. People still do this today.

Again, there are parallels today. Those who claim to be serving God, when they are in the presence of one who they perceive to be more in harmony with God then they are, will start blaming everything else, except their own bad choices. It is a relatively safe rule of thumb, that if someone starts blaming their falling short on others, that they know they are really at fault, but are afraid to face up to it. It may not be always true, but if we find ourselves doing this, it is high time to examine ourselves to see if we are in the word or not. God says it this way:

“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?”

If we fail to honestly examine ourselves, we can be sure that in the judgment, God will be honest in His examination of us. It will be much better to divest ourselves of our infatuation with doing things our way, before

36 Matthew 10:36-39
37 Matthew 10:34
38 See Lamentations 3:40; 1 Corinthians 11:28; Galatians 6:4
39 2 Corinthians 13:5
that day comes, for then it is too late and God will not be fooled, like we think people will be. Look at what happened when God called the three principles in this affair into court.

On the Serpent/Devil God pronounced a death sentence, which would be meted out by “her seed” which Paul identifies as Christ.

“The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as referring to many, but rather to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ.”

This is the same Satan who has been attempting to destroy Christ and those who identify with Him every since before he was thrown out of heaven. Notice how, in the resulting punishment that God took Eve’s desire to rule (be like a god) and put her in submission to Adam, at the bottom of the authority structure. Note this comment on this action taken by God. [While addressed to Eve, the principle applies to all who are not satisfied with the role God has given to them to function in.]

“Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband’s side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it. A similar result will be reached by all who are unwilling to take up cheerfully their life duties in accordance with God’s plan.”

“Modern Eves” have been used by Satan to attempt to reverse the arrangement God established every since. Not all of these “modern Eve’s” are of the female gender either. The women have no corner on this market at all. Men are just as guilty and need to learn from Eve’s mistake just as much as the women need to learn. Most heathen religions have tried to reverse the order established by God in various ways. Either through making women, high priestess, or giving them an equal position with men as the male and female gods of some heathen deity structures, and many other ways too.

Another part of this problem, but far from the least, Satan has caused the male part of humanity, to so misuse the authority that God gave them that they lost the right to use it by their misuse of this right. Causing another to sin is not much different then sinning ourselves.

Adam’s punishment was that his work would cease to be a pleasure to him as it had been. Now he would have to work by the sweat of his brow to get the ground to produce its bounties. The worst result of this sad choice was that all of Adam and Eve’s offspring were to be born as slaves of Satan. Not until Jesus came; could mankind again enjoy the greatest gift heaven had given mankind, the freedom to make moral choices, or “free moral agency.”

Paul comments on this where he says:

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

Notice the way this comment is worded, it is important. It doesn’t say, “sin spread to all men.” No, it says that “death spread to all men.” Why? Because all mankind has inherited the position of being a slave of Satan as a result of Adam’s choice. The human race became a race of walking dead men. Note some things the text does not say. It does not say:

that all inherited sin, or
that all were guilty because of who they were born to.
or there is some kind of “original sin.”

While it is true that everyone has rebelled, i.e. followed the example of their parents, peers and the pressures of their slavery to Satan, this was because they choose to.

While it is true that everyone born before the incarnation were born as slaves to Satan.

40 Galatians 3:16
41 The Adventist Home, page 115.2
42 Romans 5:12
WHY JESUS CAME TO EARTH?

While it is true that there is a kind of “original sin.” It is not in the way it is often presented.

In contrast, we inherited death as the natural result of Adam’s choice to sell the human race into servitude to Satan, and the resulting separation from the source of all life. It was the situation of slavery to Satan that brought death onto all men, not primarily because all have fallen short of God’s plan for their lives. Of course this is almost a mute question, because it has become a fact of life that everyone has chosen at least sometime in their lives to obey Satan rather then God. So for that reason, in addition to the one above, we are all guilty of sin and worthy of eternal death.

While God severely punished the sinful pair, He did not leave them without a ray of hope. He unfolded to them the Plan of Salvation that had been in place long before there ever was a sinner. “Her seed” would crush the head of the old serpent, Satan. Thus his slaves could be rescued from the slavery mankind had chosen. And once again, they would be free to choose who they would serve.

SLAVE VS. FREE

Both in the Bible and the practices of secular society, slaves have been treated different from freeman. The Bible gives insight into how the customs in Bible times treated the slave. This does not say that God condoned all the cruelty practiced on the slaves, either in Bible times or more modern times. But Christ came to set us free from this far more heinous slavery that we are born into, slavery to sin.43 In fact, this is the gospel, the good news Jesus came to reveal to mankind. The gospel is:

GOD DID FOR US WHAT WE CANNOT DO FOR OURSELVES.

Jesus inaugurated a plan whereby we can choose to avail ourselves of His freedom so that we can be free from slavery to Satan, something only someone equal to the law could do.

In society, in some cases, servants were treated almost the same as freemen. Notice in the Bible the laws of circumcision where every male was to receive this rite, no matter whether he was born a slave or free.44 Also the Passover bread was available to slaves who had been circumcised but not to strangers or foreigners who had not been circumcised, even though they were free.45

God made provision for male Hebrews who had sold themselves into slavery to be released on the seventh year. He was to be set away with enough to start out on his own.46 In the event that the servants wanted to remain as a slave, he would go through a ritual where an awl was pierced through his ear and then he would become a servant forever.47

The provisions made for female slaves were different. With a female slave, the owner had more strict guidelines, especially if her owner had taken her as a wife. If he didn’t like her, she could not be sold to foreigners, but she could be redeemed or in some cases set free without any payment.48

In the area of punishment also there was a difference. If a freeman murdered another freeman, the punishment was death.49 However, if a freeman slave owner killed one of his slaves, he was just punished as determined by the judge.50 Likewise if a freeman disfigured another freeman, the law was an eye for an eye - a tooth for a tooth.51 But if he did the same thing to his slave, he had to give the slave his freedom, which in reality was a fine, not

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43 John 8:36
44 Genesis 17:10-14
45 Exodus 12:48, 49
46 Deuteronomy 15:12-15
47 Exodus 21:6
48 See Exodus 21:7, 11, etc.
49 Exodus 21:12
50 Exodus 21:20, 21
51 Exodus 21:23-25
physical disfigurement. The same difference happens in the case of sexual wrongs. If a man were to force a free woman to lie in a sexual manner with him, he was to be put to death. But if the same thing happened with a slave woman, he only had to take a guilt offering to the priest to atone for his sin. It was still a sin before God, but not one deserving of death.

There are also differences in the status of the children depending upon the status of the parents. We see an illustration of that in the story of Abraham. God had promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. Yet Abraham had no children. When old age was creeping up on both him and Sarah his wife, she suggested a way to help God fulfill his promise. They attempted to help God by Abraham lying with Hagar to bear a child for Sarah. The problems this scheme caused are still with us today in the fighting going on between the Jews and the Arabs. The point we want to note here is that Ishmael; the product of this union between a slave mother and a free father was a child who was a freeman. This is important to note, as we will see later.

The principle is that slavery or freedom is inherited through the father with one exception, the case where a free woman was given in marriage to a slave of her father. Then because the children were considered to be the children of the grandfather, they are considered to be free. This is the only recorded exception to this practice.

**WAS CHRIST A SLAVE OR FREEMAN?**

When Satan rebelled against God in heaven, he occupied the highest position a created being could have, one of the covering cherubs. When he was thrown out of heaven, one third of heavens angels chose to believe his lies and throw their lot in with him. When Adam obeyed Satan’s emissary, Eve, and ratified her choice to be on Satan’s side, Adam and Eve became slaves to Satan. Therefore every person born to that sinful pair were born in sin, or in rebellion against God, or as a slave of Satan. This all happened because of man’s choice to obey Satan rather than their Creator.

But when Christ came to this earth as a baby in Bethlehem, He was a different kind of baby. Jesus’ father was God the Holy Spirit, the ruler of the universe. Therefore Jesus Christ was a freeman even though His mother was a slave to Satan. Here we find the answer to a question that is hotly debated, i.e. how Jesus could become the second Adam after 4,000 years of sin. It is in this way Jesus was able to be the “second Adam.” He, like the first Adam, had God as His Father and was not a slave of Satan. So, Jesus was like Adam before the fall. He was also like Adam after the fall, in that He took on the nature of fallen humanity, a body that carried the characteristics of 4,000 years of sin, inherited from Mary. So He inherited the free status of the Son of God as Adam did before he choose to rebel against God, yet He had the infirmities of mankind, with the influences of sin, inherited from his mother Mary. This is very important to remember.

**THE ISSUE IN THE WILDERNESS**

After John baptized Jesus in the Jordan, the Holy Spirit led Jesus out to the wilderness to be tempted. The sole issue Christ dealt with, when He was tempted in the wilderness was as well as all of His life, was: “whom would He obey.” Had Christ in any way obeyed any of Satan’s temptations or even his suggestions, He would have fallen under Satan’s power and become a slave just like Adam and Eve. Jesus understood the issues and therefore when Satan asked Him to do anything He never failed to say, No!

Jesus did not come as a sinner, a subject of Satan. He came in the sinless nature of Adam before the fall. He came knowing that His mission was to wrest the rulership of the world from Satan, but He wouldn’t be tricked into taking, what was advertised as, “the easy way.” If He had worshipped Satan, Satan might, although highly unlikely, have given him what he promised. But what good would it have been to rule the whole world while He

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52 Leviticus. 20:10
53 See an example of this in Genesis 31:25 – 44, especially verse 43.
54 Matt. 1:18
55 John 14:30
56 Matthew 4:1
57 For the temptations see Matt 4:3-10
WHY JESUS CAME TO EARTH?

Himself would have been under the control of Satan? Jesus understood the issues and refused to have any part of Satan’s kingdom. He came to offer something better to mankind, not to just regain the control of the world for Himself.

This is why it is important for us to know the issues, so that we too can make wise choices, instead of being deceived by the Evil one, as he tried to deceive Jesus. Likewise, as we understand the problem, we can understand the solution more clearly.

MAN’S CONDITION TODAY

When Jesus cried out with a loud voice and said “it is finished” Satan knew that his doom was sealed. He had just caused the death of a free man. But not just any Freeman, but a member of the godhead and this meant that now he had a death sentence hanging over his head. Satan could cause the death of as many of his slaves as he wanted. They had chosen to be his slaves and subject to his will. But when he caused the death of a free man, he brought the death sentence upon himself. From that day, Satan has had no inherent right or authority to command our obedience. Now, we are free to choose who we will serve, we are no longer bound by the choice Adam and Eve made in Eden. By His life on this earth and His death on Calvary Jesus took away from Satan the right to rule this world that Adam had abdicated to him. Now we only serve Satan if we choose to. He cannot force us to serve him any more.

JESUS OF NAZARETH WAS FULLY HUMAN AND FULLY DIVINE

Because of Christ’s death, we have the privilege of having eternal life. We too can have in our life the mixture of the human and the divine just as Christ had when He was here on earth. We too can tap into the resources of heaven in our fight against sin. Today, everyone is free to serve whichever master he wants to serve. The only question anyone needs to address today is this:

“What does God want me to do.”

Now the chain of authority on earth is this.

1. CHRIST – The true Owner of this world, but only the supreme authority for those who choose Him.
2. MANKIND – Modern Adam’s and Eve’s, who can choose who they will serve and submit to.
3. SATAN – Satan only has authority over anyone if they choose to obey him.

When Jesus came to this earth, He did not come as a king, or even a common man. He stepped down to the lowest possible human position in society, so no one, no matter how low on the ladder of life, would not be able to claim the Son of God had not experienced what they have experienced. Since there is and has been a lot of discussion about this, a few lines will be devoted here to attempting to make this puzzling question more understandable.

1. HUMAN - HE CAME IN THE LIKENESS OF HUMANITY AFTER 4,000 YEARS OF SIN SO HE COULD BE OUR EXAMPLE IN THE BATTLE AGAINST SIN.

On this point there is more or less unanimity of belief. Jesus looked just like anyone else walking around in Palestine. He became hungry, thirsty and tired. He craved human companionship and love. In every way except one, Jesus was indistinguishable from any other male walking the roads of Palestine back then. Which is a warning today to not trust what we see, feel and experience. This is why so many failed to recognize Him, they were: A) relying on the wrong indicators, B) listening to the wrong authorities. Because they did not take the scriptures as their basis of choice, taking instead what humans said about the Messiah, they missed out knowing Him. Human opinions, feelings, trusting what we see instead of what God says, will always cause us to miss out on the most important things in life.

The confusion comes in as soon as we start to examine His Divine Nature and how it interacted with His human nature. He didn’t deal with the sin problem as God or even as an angel. Jesus came to our earth to show how even

58 Romans 6:1-11; 8:2, 3; etc
59 Isaiah 53:2, read the whole chapter.
the weakest of the weak, the one who has the lowest IQ, the one who is a “90 lb weakling,” can be saved if they
follow the plan He has shown us through His life on Planet earth. Now we can be more than conquerors through
Christ Jesus our Lord.60

Now let’s move on to His Divine Nature, and this is where we will really have to set aside preconceived ideas and
allow the Bible to speak to us.

2. DIVINE - HE CAME IN THE NATURE OF ADAM BEFORE THE FALL, THEREFORE HE WAS A
FREE MAN.

Since the only sacrifice for sin that would be acceptable to the law was that of a sinless person and then only one
sinless person, one who was equal to the law. The ONLY way that Jesus could accomplish the goal He came to
accomplish was to come Himself. See, Satan had challenged the Son of God. He had made war with the Creator of
all that was created. Therefore, the face-off had to between the Son of God and the being who had at one time been
the highest created being in the Universe, Lucifer, now known as Satan or the Devil. Lets see how He managed
this seeming impossibility.

Slavery is transmitted through the father, not the mother. Mary had to be a sinner in order to make the
demonstration of how a sinner could live a sinless life a valid one. Demonstrating how a sinful human being, living
in a body degenerated by 4,000 years of sin, can live a perfect life, was the second major reason Jesus came to this
earth. This is why the doctrine of immaculate conception is fatally flawed. For had that been true, then since Mary
was also sinless, then Jesus was not on the same level as a sinner and therefore He could not be our example.

As we have alluded to earlier, the father of Jesus was the Holy Spirit.61 The Holy Spirit was a freeman, He had
never been enslaved to Satan in anyway at any time. Therefore, Satan had no control over the Holy Spirit for He
was not Satan’s slave. So, even while Jesus was a “sinner,” in that He took on a body typical of one born on this
earth after 4,000 years of sin, never-the-less, Jesus was a freeman and therefore not under Satan’s control. This too
was necessary for His sacrifice to be acceptable to deal with the sin problem. So, Jesus was in a very real way a
unique being in that until that point no one had been born on planet earth who was not born of a slave Father. On
the other hand, Jesus was just like us in that He took all of our infirmities and met temptation just like we have to
meet temptation.

So, the dual nature of Jesus consisted of a body, suffering the effects of 4,000 years of sin in every way. But a
divine nature that was not subject to the control of Satan. A nature that had never sinned and therefore had never
obeyed Satan in any way, shape or form.

Therefore, by allowing Satan to cause His death, the death of a freeman, Jesus won the right to destroy that old
serpent the Devil/Satan.62 Since Satan is now a convicted felon, he has no authority over anyone, unless they
choose to give it to him. The only ones he can still command are those who foolishly choose the side of a defeated
leader.

Today is the day. Today we can choose to be on the winning side or the loosing side. When we choose to be on
Christ’s side, we have no need to be concerned about the nature of Christ. We can be confident that whatever
nature He came in, it was the correct way to secure our salvation. That is the only really important thing we
need to know. He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him against that day.63 That is the only
important part that we need to know.
If you do believe, do you accept His life as the pattern for your life in your struggle against sin?

With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is consecrated to Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.

Steps to Christ
Page 58.2
16 Reasons Christ had to Die!

1. **TO GIVE MAN A CHOICE.**
   
   See Romans 5:12 thru 6:14.

2. **TO GIVE HUMANKIND ETERNAL LIFE IF THEY SO CHOOSE.**
   
   See 1 Corinthians 15:20-26; 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14; 5:9; Romans 6:23; John 5:24

3. **TO DEMONSTRATE GOD'S LOVE**
   
   Romans 5:8

4. **TO RECONCILE MAN TO GOD.**
   
   Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19

5. **TO MAKE RIGHTEOUSNESS AVAILABLE TO HUMANKIND.**
   
   See Romans 4:24; 25; 2 Corinthians 5:21

6. **TO CLEANSE MAN FROM HIS SINS.**
   
   See Ephesians 5:25-27

7. **TO TAKE THE PUNISHMENT FOR OUR SINS.**
   
   See 1 Corinthians 15:3; John 1:29; Matthew 1:21; 20:28; Galatians 1:4; 1 Peter 2:24

8. **TO GIVE MAN THE RIGHT/ABILITY/POWER TO BECOME SONS OF GOD.**
   
   See John 1:12, 11:52

9. **TO DEMONSTRATE HIS FAITHFULNESS.**
   
   See John 10:11-18

10. **TO ABOLISH DEATH.**
    
    See 2 Timothy 1:10; Revelations 20:14

11. **TO CLARIFY THE ISSUES IN THE GREAT CONTROVERSY IN THE MINDS OF THE HEAVENLY BEINGS, ALSO THOSE ON EARTH.**
    
    See Revelation 12:9

12. **TO ANSWER SATAN'S ACCUSATIONS AGAINST GOD.**
    
    See Revelation 12:10; 14:6

13. **TO RENDER THE DEVIL POWERLESS OR TO DESTROY HIM.**
    
    See Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:2; John 12:31; Revelation 19:20

14. **TO BECOME OUR JUDGE.**
    
    See John 5:21-29; 9:39; Acts 10:42; 17:31

15. **TO DEMONSTRATE OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WILL AS REVEALED IN THE LAW AND PROPHETS.**
    
    See Hebrews 5:7-9

*16. **TO SHOW HOW COMPLETELY WE MUST OBEY GOD'S WILL IN OUR LIVES.**
    
    See John 8:28; Romans 14:8; Philippians 2:5-8
QUIZ – CHAPTER 8

I What is the first reason given for the coming of Jesus? Matthew 1:21

II As a child, what reason did Jesus give for His coming? Luke 2:49-52

III What reason did Jesus give John the Baptist for His coming? Matthew 3:15

IV In His sermon that is called today The Sermon on the Mount, what did He say He did NOT come to do? Matthew 5:17

He did come to ____________________________________________________________

V What is the summation of the real gospel? ___________________________________________


VII Who did He come to save? Luke 19:10 or Matthew 18:11

VIII What did He come to give? Matthew 11:28

IX What did Jesus tell His disciples must happen? Matthew 16:21

A. GO TO ________________________________________________________________

B. AND __________________________ MANY THINGS

C. BE ________________________________

D. AND BE ___________________ ON THE THIRD DAY.

Also see Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22

X What examples did Jesus set? Mark 10:43-45
XI What activity was He sent to do? Luke 4:43 ___________________________________________________
Also see Mark 1:38, 56.
XII God sent Jesus into this world, not to judge, but for what reason? John 3:16, 17
XIII What must we do to be saved? John 3:21, 36
XIV From whom did Jesus get His pattern for life? John 5:19, 36, 8:28 _________________
XV Whose will then controlled Jesus' life? John 5:30
XVI What then was Christ's work on earth? John 17:3, 4________________________________________
Also see John 18:37; 12:46, 47; 13:14, 61.
XVII What is the purpose of the written record of Christ's life on this earth? John 20:30, 31; 21:25
9. WHAT IS A BORN AGAIN CHRISTIAN?

You will often hear people claim to be a "Born Again Christian." Others might say that they are “living under the New Covenant” or they have “a New Covenant Relationship with God.” The first person is focusing on the new birth experience where a sinful person becomes a child of God. The second is focusing on a covenant or contract between God and man. Both are claiming that the old is done away with and that they are now a new person and part of the family of God. The two experiences that are being claimed are really two different aspects of the same experience. But what is the “Old Covenant,” the “New Covenant” and “My Covenant” agreement/contracts we find in God’s word and what were they contracts about? These are questions that are vitally important for the Christian and the answers will make your experience richer and help you gain the victories in your life that you are seeking. There is much misunderstanding in these areas that can be corrected with just a careful examination of God’s word.

YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN

Nicodemus\(^1\) was a prominent person in Jerusalem. In today’s terms he would be a member of Congress, a member of the Fortune 500 (Joseph of Armethea and his personal wealth equaled 1/3 of the wealth of Jerusalem) and a seminary professor, all in one person. Needless to say, he was a very important man in his day.

One day he begins hearing reports, possibly from questions his students were asking, or from reports coming into the Sanhedrin, about a person who the people were calling a new prophet named Jesus of Nazareth. There were also rumors that this in fact was the long looked for Messiah. Then he heard that this itinerant preacher was in town and had created a real scene at the temple. Just who was this preacher who was causing waves in the Jewish community? Was he just another zealot with more zeal than sense, or could it possibly be that he was in fact the Messiah that all the Old Testament prophecies spoke of? The time and place was right, just could it be that the prophecies were being fulfilled right before his eyes? With some discreet questions he found out where Jesus was staying.

In contrast to Nicodemus’ wealth and position, Jesus was a nobody in the Israelite economy. He came from Nazareth, a town with a bad reputation. He had no advanced degrees, his formal education ended at the 8\(^{th}\) grade. He was broke, He did not even have a place to lay his head. A ragtag group of misfits had taken to following Him, certainly not the credentials of the conquering king Jewish folklore spoke of. This certainly couldn't be the Messiah, but the things he was teaching were rocking the religious world, especially in the land of Israel. Nicodemus began to wonder if just maybe the credentials that were expected just might be wrong and that this was the long looked for Messiah.

So on this never to be forgotten night, the honorable Nicodemus sought out this itinerant preacher, Jesus of Nazareth, so he could see for himself what all the commotion was about. He came by night because what respectable person of his rank would be seen seeking advice or even giving an audience to an itinerate preacher? Furthermore he didn’t want to be considered as giving credence to this movement until he knew more about it. Locating Jesus in some secluded place, possibly in the garden of Gethsemane, on the Mt. of Olives, where Jesus often went, Nicodemus sought an interview with Jesus.

OUTWARD APPEARANCES DO NOT DETERMINE WHO A PROPHET IS

This can be an example for us today. God doesn’t always send truth to us through polished people.\(^2\) Sometimes He will use channels that we really don't like so we can learn some needful lessons about pride, arrogance, preconceived ideas, etc.

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1 Read the story in John 3.
2 Read the description of the Messiah in Isaiah 53.
So, when Nicodemus found himself face to face with Jesus, he was not just a little uncomfortable. After all, what if this itinerant preacher really was the “son of God?” The terminology he used to greet Jesus would have swayed the head of a lesser person than Jesus, but it also opens a door into his mind and to what he was really thinking.

Let’s examine the terms he used. Nicodemus addressed him as “Rabbi,” a most honored term in that day. This would be equivalent to the title of an “eminent scholar” today. He also called him a “teacher” which would be a professor of higher education. Then he said that he believed that Jesus was from God, an allusion to being the Messiah. This was very possible a reaction to a rumor that this might be the Messiah, because of the signs and miracles He had been doing. In all, these are some heady compliments if they were addressed to someone other then the Son of God.

It is of interest that Jesus did not acknowledge any of his compliments, not even with a “thank you.” Instead Jesus cut right to the point that He knew had brought His distinguished visitor to seek Him out at this hour of the night. Jesus response to the approach by Nicodemus was: “You must be born again.” There was probably no statement Jesus could have made that would have stopped this teacher as cold in his tracks, as this one did. It most certainly got his attention. While we do not give this statement much thought, here is why Nicodemus would be set back by it so much.

The Jews believed that they were a chosen nation, which they were, and that they had special favor with God, which they did have at one time. The term “born again” itself was one he was most familiar with. For whenever a non-Jew decided that they would like to serve God, they would ask to join the nation of Israel, much as a person would ask to be baptized into a church today. These inquirers were sent to the rulers, usually the priests, and when the request was made the priest was instructed to say: “No.” If the petitioner pressed the request the priest would again decline. If they pressed the issue a third time, the answer they received was “Why?” Only if they were sincere in wanting to belong to the family of God would they be permitted to even study to learn about the God of Israel. If at the end of their study period they still wanted to be a Jew, then they could become a Jew by the rite of baptism, being immersed in water as Jesus was by John the Baptist. They went into the water a Gentile, they symbolically died and came out of the water as a child of God, which was called “being Born Again.” More on this later.

Nicodemus, because of his position in the nation of Israel, and his wealth, felt that he was most favored by God. To have this young, upstart preacher suggest that he, one of the most influential men in the nation of Israel, needed to go through this "Born Again" experience was almost more than he could take. It would be like a young man who had just read the Bible for the first time telling the president of the General Conference that he needed to be rebaptized. This is why he answered the way he did. To paraphrase his response, “What! must a person be born of a Jewish women a second time? Isn’t once enough?” Nicodemus must have been almost in a state of shock at this point, as his response indicates.

"There are thousands to-day who need to learn the same truth that was taught to Nicodemus by the uplifted serpent. They depend on their obedience to the law of God to commend them to His favor. When they are bidden to look to Jesus, and believe that He saves them solely through His grace, they exclaim, "How can these things be?""

Jesus had most surely gotten his attention. Now Jesus could continue on with a presentation of truth.

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3 John 3:2  
4 John 3:3  
5 Deut. 7:6; 14:2, etc.  
6 Mark 1:4-11 etc.  
7 John 3:3  
8 John 3:4  
9 The Desire of Ages - Page 175
"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and 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."  

Both an inward, (spirit) and outward, (baptism) change is necessary to be part of the family of God. Furthermore, being born by the Spirit is not a reference to a return to the human birth process. It takes a different kind of a birth to accomplish the “born again” experience. Just as the physical birth didn’t solve the sin problem the first time, it most certainly will not solve any problem if indeed it were possible to go through it a second time. What is needed is a new family line, which can only come through being born again, only this time with the Holy Spirit as our Father, just like what happened to Jesus.

Remember when we discussed the slave issue? A person is born of a human woman and a human father and they become part of that human family. However, what is called for is a renunciation of the human patronage and being baptized as a child of a new Father. Only when we change our patronage can we truly become part of the family of God. However, this does not write the human father out of the script, no not at all. For as Joseph, while not Jesus blood father raised Jesus as his own son. So earthly fathers today are called to do the same for their offspring, standing as proxy fathers for their father in heaven. A very high privilege indeed.

Nationality or earthly blood lineage is not what is important. What is born of flesh is flesh, but what is born of spirit is spirit. Our fleshly birth gives us an inheritance of sin. But through His upcoming death Jesus was planning to make a way for us to be born of the Spirit. This is the important birth, the second birth. As the prophet Isaiah said, by His strips we are healed.

"Nicodemus knew that Christ here referred to water baptism, and the renewing of the heart by the Spirit of God. He was convinced that he was in the presence of the One whom John the Baptist had foretold."

"The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit."

A rebirth is necessary, even for Jews, because, by the first birth we inherited slavery to Satan, a sinful heritage. Through our earthly father, we are born as a slave of Satan. In order for us to inherit the kingdom of heaven we must be of a bloodline of heavenly origin, of imperishable seed, just as Jesus was.

Now stop and carefully consider what you are about to read. Just as when we are born into our earthly parents family, we inherit their nationality, their characteristics, their temperament, their attitudes, their customs and eventually their estate. When we are born again, we enter a new family. We become sons of God and we inherit His nationality, temperament, attitudes, customs and eventually He will give us an estate.

With this new birth we in fact become a new creature.

"Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

Up to the time of Christ, we were all born into slavery to Satan by virtue of the choice of Adam and Eve. They could only become part of the family of God by faith in the promise. Only when Jesus ratified the New Covenant

10 John 3:5, 6  
11 Matthew 1:18  
12 1 Peter 1:3  
13 Isaiah 53:5  
14 The Desire of Ages -Page 172  
15 1 Peter 1:23  
16 Revelation 3:21, Psalms 69:36, Matthew 19:29, 25:34, etc.  
17 2 Corinthians 5:17
did they become in reality part of God’s family. But when Christ was born He was a new creature. His Father was God and therefore He was not a slave to Satan like all the human babies who had been born before. By His death He makes it possible for all who believe in Him, both before and after, to also be new creatures in Him.

"A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or trace all the chain of circumstances in the process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted. (John 3:8. quoted). Like the wind, which is invisible, yet the effects of which are plainly seen and felt, is the Spirit of God in its work upon the human heart. That regenerating power, which no human eye can see, begets a new life in the soul; it creates a new being in the image of God. While the work of the Spirit is silent and imperceptible, its effects are manifest. If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact. While we cannot do anything to change our hearts or to bring ourselves into harmony with God; while we must not trust at all to ourselves or our good works, our lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are. The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts."

VI By this plan, God could reconcile the world to Himself, a world that had rebelled and sold itself out to the arch rebel.

"Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

VII God was not willing to let things stand as they were, so He gave mankind a second chance. Included in this provision God wants to make us ambassadors of heaven.

"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

It is a high honor when someone asks us to be their representative. When a country makes that request, it is even a higher honor. But to have the God of heaven extend that offer to us, this is the highest honor a person can have. Yet that is exactly what God has done. He has made that offer to anyone who is willing to become His servant and allow Him to make us good. It is up to us to accept His high offer. The fact that He even makes that offer is totally incredible.

VIII We come into this world with nothing. Everything we have, our bodies, the ability to choose, the spark of life, the air we breathe and the food we eat, all comes from our Fathers bountiful hand. Yet He has chosen us to represent Him. We came into this world without any choice in the matter. We had nothing then. Everything we have now came because of the life God has given to us. So we have inherited what Adam, the father of the human race, left us, an inheritance of slavery to sin. God proposes a solution to this problem. That is, He offers to enter a covenant relationship with those whose hearts are turned toward Him.

THE COVENANT MAKING AND KEEPING GOD

The mighty God of the universe is known as a covenant making and keeping God. There are references to covenants of many kinds in scriptures. Most of the about 300 references to covenants are of those made between God and man. As could be expected, far too many of these references are to the fact that man has broken the covenant made with God. Many of the others are telling about God's efforts to renew that same covenant with man.

In Hebrew, as in English, the word covenant refers to a:

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18 Steps to Christ Page- 57
19 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19
20 2 Corinthians 5:20
21 John 3:27
22 Nehemiah 9:32; Psalms 89:34
"binding and solemn agreement made by two or more individuals, parties etc. to do or to keep from
doing a specified thing; i.e. a compact."$^{23}$

It is a binding together of two or more entities by mutual agreement. Some synonyms would be: pact, contract, stipulation, understanding, bargain, treaty, alliance, arrangement, etc. Of all of these variations, the English word: “arrangement” is probably the most all inclusive meaning of this word.

Let's look for a moment at a covenant and how it comes into being by following the process of selling a piece of real estate as an example.

1. A proposition is made by one of the covenanter, e.g. a seller sets a price on a piece of property.
2. A prospective buyer comes along and makes a counter offer.
3. If the seller accepts, then the financing organization looks at the deal and states conditions for the loan.
4. When all offers and counter offers are acceptable to everyone, then papers are signed and it becomes a contract or covenant.

$^{IX}$ God originally set up a covenant, or arrangement, that He calls “My Covenant” to establish a relationship with mankind who had fallen into slavery to Satan through sin.$^{24}$ This covenant was first referred to when God spoke with Adam and Eve in the garden after the fall.$^{25}$ When the arrangement that God had first established, having Adam and Eve taking care of His garden, was broken, a new arrangement needed to be set in place. Therefore, God called all the parties in this situation before Him and established this arrangement that was the foundation for what later became known as “My Covenant,” or even later in the New Testament, the “New Covenant.”

Sin is the main problem that the covenant dealt with. Re-establishing a relationship between God and man that had been broken at the fall, was the prime goal of this arrangement. So God offered to be a God to those who would have Him as their God and to their descendents.

"And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you."$^{26}$

This covenant was set up to last forever.$^{X}$ Therefore among its other names, it also was called “the everlasting covenant.” A logical descriptive name for it.

$^{XI}$ The title of “My Covenant” was first recorded in the Bible when God spoke with Noah.$^{27}$ Whenever you see this name, with only one or two exceptions, and the context will show you the difference, it is a referral to this offer by God to establish a contractual relationship with mankind. Because Noah entered this covenant relationship with God, God in turn protected Noah and his family in that terrible worldwide flood. It was to Noah as the second father of the human race that God promised never to flood the entire world again.

$^{XII}$ Abraham is the next person the Bible records that God approached with this offer to make this covenant with.$^{28}$ It was at that time that the arrangement that God called “My Covenant” was also given the name of an “Everlasting Covenant.”$^{XIII}$ Later God approached Isaac, Abraham’s son, with the same offer, which Isaac accepted. Then after that, God approached Isaac's son Jacob. At this point a change came into the picture. More on this later. $^{XIV}$ God had reestablished His covenant with each generation up to and including Jacob. But when Israel came out of Egypt there had been a lapse of about 400(430)$^{29}$ years since the time of Jacob and since this covenant had been renewed.

$^{23}$ Webster's New World Dictionary.
$^{24}$ Genesis 17:7 last part
$^{25}$ see Genesis 3:14-16
$^{26}$ Genesis 17:7 first part
$^{27}$ Genesis 6:18; 9:9.
$^{28}$ Genesis 17:7
It was high time to renew this arrangement with the human race. So God now attempted to reestablish this covenant relationship with Jacob's descendants, who were soon to become known as the nation of Israel. As they journeyed out of Egypt, they had many wonderful experiences where God's power was most evident, including being trapped at the Dead Sea and being rescued by having the sea opened in front of them. Then they watched the whole Egyptian army drown before their eyes. Those that they had feared, they would fear no longer. Then they journeyed through the desolate Negeb finally coming to the broad plain guarded by Mount Sinai. Their food and water had always been there, even though more then a million people were traveling through a desolate land. God was leading in a most marked manner, but not all believed. Some people can find something to doubt about, no matter how clear the evidence may be. In Revelation they are described as being Laodiceans.

The Nation of Israel

Before we go on with the story, we should look at what nationalities of people made up the soon to be formed nation of Israel. As with the United States, there is no one race of people that comprises the citizens of the United States of America, like with some other nations like Germany, Norway, Italy, Africa, China, India and many of the other world’s nations.

Included in this new nation was obviously the descendents of the sons of Israel, from which it received its name. The majority of the people were of this race. But there was a group of people who were called: “a mixed multitude,” who had joined the sons of Jacob as they left Egypt. When they saw the power of the God of Israel and saw the difference between their God and the Egyptians gods, they chose to throw in their lot with Israel instead of remaining in Egypt.

At the time when Israel was in Egypt, Egypt was the greatest nation on the earth. As was the custom of conquering kings at that time, when they overran a nation, they would bring back captives from their conquest to build up their own nation. These people who had been taken captive and brought to Egypt may have seen this as a chance to escape from Egypt and return to their lands.

Another reason they were called a mixed multitude is because the Hebrews had intermarried with the non-Hebrews. In some cases, these non-Hebrews had truly learned to believe in God and wanted to remain with God’s people. Then there were some others who just wanted to escape the plagues of Egypt and they opted to come along too. So this large mixed multitude could conceivably have had representation from every nation in existence at that time. The importance of this will be seen later.

As they camped at the foot of Sinai, God communicated with Moses that something special was about to happen. He told them that if they would accept the offer/covenant, He was about to make to Israel, He would do three things.

First. He would make them His own possession. Or today we would say He would adopt them into His family. At that time, everyone who was born into a family belonged to the patriarch of the family.

Second. He would make them a kingdom of priest. A priest is one who is a channel for God to speak with man through and to return the messages from man to God. This is like being an ambassador for a country.

Third. He offered to make them a holy nation. Or to say it another way, He would make them a whole nation of good people. As we have already noted, we can not make ourselves good, only God can do that.

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30See Genesis 15:13; Exodus 12:40; Acts 7:8; Galatians 3:17
31The name: “Israel,” means one who has wrestled with God and prevailed.” See Genesis 32:28. Israelites are not primarily descendants of Jacob, they are those of all nations and people’s and ages of the earth who have wrestled with God and overcome. While it was not always the case that those who carried the name Israel in fact had overcome, for many took this name in vain, just like many take the name Christian in vain in the same way today.
32Revelation 3.
33Exodus 12:38
WHAT IS A BORN AGAIN CHRISTIAN?

So this was indeed a wonderful offer. What did God ask them to do in return? He just asked them accept His offer, (obey His voice) and continue (remain) in the Covenant that He had called "My Covenant" and allow Him to be their God. Israel was quick to seize this opportunity, but they wanted to change the arrangement in order to reflect their terms. More about this latter.

When they gave tacit agreement, God called them up to the mountain to reveal to them the type of persons He wanted to make them into, i.e. the standard for a good person. When the day came and God came down on the mountain, the mountain was rocked with thunder and lightning. It was a scene that none who saw it would ever forget. The crashing peals of thunder seemed to just drive a person right into the ground. Closing ones eyes and covering your head did not close out the light from the flashes of lightning nor the sound of the thunder. It was so powerful one could actually feel it!

A friend and neighbor from the West coast moved back to the Great Lakes area, where I also had moved to. One evening one of the thunder and lightening storms for which that part of the nation is known for hammered the area for an hour or so. Such storms are virtually unknown in that part of the west. The next day when I happened to see them, I asked them how they liked the thunder and lightning. They said: “It was OK, but did it have to get so enthusiastic about it.” Indeed, the crashes of thunder just seemed to pound one right into the ground, they were so powerful. Since I had grown up in that area, I was use to it. But to someone from a more protected area, it was quite a new experience.

The thunder and lightning at Mt. Sinai was probably even worse then that experienced in the above story. However, it finally ended, and God’s voice boomed out over the trembling people.

REVIEW

The nation of Israel consisted of the descendants of Abraham, Egyptians, and the good possibility of most if not all of the people groups of the world at that time.

The contract God calls "My Covenant" was a proposition God made to “be their God and have them for His people.”

God wanted three things to be accomplished. He wanted them to be:

A. His own possession, i.e., part of His family, sons and daughters of heaven.
B. a kingdom of Priest, i.e., represent Him to other people, an ambassador of the God of heaven.
C. a Holy Nation, i.e., a whole nation of people who would be an example of what a good person really is like.

In order for God to be able to make them His own possession, it would mean that He would make them His people or part of His family, i.e., sons and daughters of God.34

In light of these facts, think about these following questions. What is your answer.

THOUGHT QUESTION

Can you make yourself someone's son or daughter?

God wanted to make them part of His family. No more than you can legally adopt yourself into another family, than can we, or anyone at anytime in the history of the world, make ourselves part of the family of heaven by our own efforts. This is something only God can do and have us legally part of His Family, the Family of the Universe. We sometimes may forget that this is not just dealing with you and I, or our family or circle of friends, or our neighborhood, church, nation or even this world. This is a universal problem. It goes far beyond the circle of this earth in scope.

34 See Isaiah 43:6; Hosea 1:10; Romans 8:14-17, 19: 2 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 4:4-7 etc.
THOUGHT QUESTION
Can you make yourself a representative of anyone else or an ambassador of a nation? ______________

God wanted someone to represent heaven to the people of the earth. This is the main function of a priest. In political language we would call that person an ambassador. Only the decision and action of the nation sending the ambassador can determine who will fill this position. Likewise, the position of a priest, or today we would call them a minister, is one filled by the decision and action of God. Someone who forces himself into that position is an impostor. One who is not qualified, according to the Biblical qualifications, is subjecting themselves to a death sentence. This is not something to be taken lightly. Only one who fits the qualifications of an ambassador of heaven, one called by God to represent Him, can legitimately fill this position.

A THOUGHT QUESTION
From our study of sin, can you make yourself good? _____________________________________________

God not only wants legal representation, but He wants people who He could make into walking examples of the type of person He originally intended for a human to be. As Jesus was when He came to earth. Just as Jesus did nothing on His own initiative, so those who seek to be God-like, they too must not do anything on their own initiative, but only what God tells them to do. God wants to make His people a Holy People, a unique treasure in all the world. They were to be an object lesson to the Universe, to show the heights that man will be elevated to, when they surrendered themselves wholly to God.

A BETTER PLAN
God wants to work with man. That is why He proposes to enter into a covenant relationship with him. Since He knows human beings, He knows what is best and what will work and won't work for us. Therefore, when He led Israel out of Egypt, He offered to continue the Everlasting Covenant or the arrangement that He called: "My Covenant" with Israel that He had entered into with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

"God spoke to Moses and made this proposal to him to pass on to the people. "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My Covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." 35

Many people have stumbled over the word "obey" in this passage. When they read this word, "obey," in Exodus 19, they immediately jump to the next chapter and say; "See we must ‘obey’ the Ten Commandments." They forget that while the precepts of God were in existence from the foundations of the earth, they had not been codified until after the people had responded to God's proposal to enter into the “My Covenant” arrangement. God does not ask us to sign a blank contract and then fill in the blanks later. Which is what this idea suggests.

No, the word “obey” carries the idea of “continue in,” or “follow the example of” or “have the same relationship.” The issue that was being discussed was whether they would continue to be children of Jehovah or would they choose to change gods.

However, when Israel said that: “all that the Lord had said” they would do, they took the initiative out of God’s hands. Since they wanted to do what God was going to do, God had to give them a “specification list” of what kind of a person one would be like if God were to make them good. Since God never changes, this list will never change either. God is still seeking to make people today who want to enter into this contract with God, into that same kind of a person.

A LAW IS NOT A COVENANT
To say that the Law of God, the Ten Commandments, is the covenant is incorrect in two ways:

35 Exodus 19:4-6
WHAT IS A BORN AGAIN CHRISTIAN?

1. The “Ten Commandments,” or The “Law of God,” is a law, not a covenant/contract.

A law is something a superior tells an inferior what to do whether they agree to it or not. In this case, God is offering to make Israel good, and this is the description of what a good person is. Israel had fallen short in this area of coming up to the standard of goodness, established by God’s “law.” Therefore, this is in fact the issue that is being agreed upon in both covenants. The “My Covenant” that God proposed, and the one Israel proposed: “All that the Lord has said, they would do.” The only difference is: who will do the work. The law of God, the standard of a good person does not change. What changes is who will try to conform to that standard.

2. “My Covenant” is a covenant or an arrangement, not a law.

A covenant is an agreement between two people, equal or otherwise, regarding an issue that has come up between them. The “My Covenant” arrangement is the arrangement dealing with the problem caused by the separation that had occurred between God and His people and how it could be resolved. One part of that problem is that they had picked up some characteristics of sin that had to be changed. These are areas if their lives that humans cannot change on their own. The principles enunciated in the Ten Commandment law were the areas that needed to be corrected. More specifically, the My Covenant agreement addressed the question of who will do the work in bringing humans into conformity to the principles presented in the law of God.

To say that the “My Covenant” agreement that was agreed to in Exodus 19, is the Ten Commandments that are found in Exodus 20, is like saying that it is appropriate to write the contract, see chapter 20, after everyone has agreed to it, see chapter 19. This is hardly the way a God, who wants His children to be free moral agents, would operate. No, God was spelling out what He had proposed to do and what they subsequently had proposed to do. This was placing all of the information out for all to see before the covenant was signed and sealed.36

A commandment or law is different from a covenant or contract or an agreement about a law. The word "obey" in this setting carries the meaning of "do what I ask you to do." What God was asking them to do in Exodus 19, was to "keep (continue in) the ‘My Covenant’ arrangement He had had with Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is the same arrangement as we found in Genesis 17:7. It was the people’s agreement to allow God to be their God and as such they would be willing to be His people. This is borne out in the balance of what He says as He spells out the terms of the covenant in verses 5 and 6 of Exodus 19.

XVIII Either the people did not understand, or were not willing to accept, these terms. So they countered with their own covenant:

“All the Lord has said we will do and be obedient.”37

XIX The problem was that there was no part of what God had said that they could do. It would like my offering you $20,000.00 for a car worth maybe $100.00. It would be a great deal for you, wouldn't it? But since I do not have the money to pay the $20,000.00, would it be a good offer? XX The same is true with this response the people made to God’s proposal. They were not able to hold up their part of the agreement, so it was in fact a bad response.38

This same problem exists today. People who want something better are still trying to make themselves good. The idea that “all the Lord has said, we can do” is the basis of every false religion. All that the Lord has said, we cannot do, but we still try. Israel wanted to do what only God could do in their lives. So the attempt by God to reestablish "My Covenant" with them resulted in a counter proposal from Israel that is now known as the Old Covenant. They proposed that all God had said, they would do. The problem was, they could not do it, and their attempts were doomed to failure because of man's inherent weakness, along with other things.

36 See Deut. 5, which is sometimes called: “The second giving of the law.” Here Moses and God recall what happened at Mt. Sinai and some additional information is brought out in verses 28, 29. God had heard, but knew that they couldn’t do what the had promised. They didn’t have the heart to do what they claimed to be able to do. As a result, their promises were not good promises. See Hebrews 8.
37 Exodus 19:8
38 See Deuteronomy 5, where the Ten Commandments were repeated in a sermon Moses gave near the end of his life, see verses 6-21. Notice God’s response in verses 28 and 29, to the response of the people.
To see the real problem, let's review the things God had promised for them:

1. He would make them His own possession (part of His family) on earth and in heaven.
2. He would make them His priest (His representatives) on earth.
3. He would make them good (a Holy nation), fit to live in heaven.

None of these things were in the realm of possibility for the Israelites, or for that matter, anyone else in the human race. The only one that might have appeared to be possible was for the people to try and make themselves “look good,” i.e. look like a holy nation. There are a lot of people today, as there have been in all ages, who are good at making themselves look good. But looks without substance is worthless. So in response to the people saying that they would do all the Lord had said, God gave them the criteria or standard for what a good person is in Heaven's sight, i.e. the Ten Commandments as recorded in Exodus 20. These were ten precepts that they would have to have in their lives in order to carry out this part of what God had said He would do.

This "Old Covenant" agreement the people of Israel proposed was ratified a few days later with the blood of bulls and goats. Since the covenant called “My Covenant” was not ratified until the death of Christ many years later, this covenant at Sinai became known as the first or "Old Covenant." But the Covenant referred to, is the arrangement found in Exodus 19, not the law/standard found in Exodus 20. Like most of man’s promises this one lasted for less than four weeks. Just forty days later, when Moses returned from a long talk with God, the people had already broken the agreement they had made in solemn covenant language to conform to the standard of goodness God had given to them.

They, however, are no different than people today. One of the most notorious features about new years resolutions is that they are often broken before the day is out. Humans are not known for being able to keep their promises very well. But God had a back-up plan. He again offered to renew “My Covenant” with them, which they did; this time.

In Hebrews, Paul gives us the best record of this covenant. In this arrangement, God will put His laws in our minds and write them on our hearts. So both intellectually and emotionally we will know His will. Then He offers to be our God and make us His people. This covenant was ratified, but not with the blood of bulls and goats as the Old Covenant was, but with the blood of the Son of God which ratified the New Covenant. At the cross, the New Covenant was finalized. Now today we too can join into a working covenantal agreement with God that will really work.

**The Only Difference Between the Old and New Covenant**

The only difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is this: **who does the work.** The children of Israel said;

"all the Lord has said, **WE** will do." When God was looking for was permission from them so HE could do the work. The New Covenant is:

"all the Lord has said **HE** will do." He alone can make us good, however, this can only happen IF we will let Him. Notice that there is only one letter difference between the two covenants, but there is a universe of difference in the results. As much difference as there is between a created being and their creator, between life and death.

In reality, this New Covenant, the one that is called “My Covenant” in the Old Testament, is the covenant God had made with Adam and Eve, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was the covenant He wanted to

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39 See Exodus 24
40 See Exodus 34:27-34
41 See Hebrews 8
42 Exodus 19:8
43 See Hebrews 8:10, quoted below.
make with Israel, but they changed it. They wanted to be responsible for doing the work instead of God being responsible. They failed miserably, as God knew they would.
The New Covenant is called “new,” not because it was proposed the most recently. In fact it was proposed long before the "Old Covenant" was proposed, but because it was ratified last. The New Covenant was promised back in the Garden of Eden, but it was not ratified until Christ died on the cross. In contrast, the Old Covenant was proposed in the time period recorded in Exodus 19 at Mt. Sinai, and ratified not many days afterward, then broken within 40 days. We too will experience the same results if we try to make ourselves good. We most likely will not even last out the day, as is common with New Years resolutions.

In his letter to the Hebrew Christians, Paul spelled out the New Covenant very clearly. He wrote:

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts. and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

Notice the similarity with what we have already found in Exodus 19. This leaves no question about the nature of this New Covenant. God did not intend for us to be in the dark about this most important arrangement. The confusion has come in because Israel wanted to be in control, just like today, where we want to be in control and do things our way.

Paul also is quite clear as to when this New Covenant were ratified.

"But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption."

It was when Jesus died on Calvary that this New Covenant was ratified. The blood of the Creator of the Universe which was better then the blood of bulls and goats, ratified the New Covenant. In addition, this Covenant is based on better promises. It is based on God’s promise to make us good, not on human promises to make themselves good. Not on flimsy human efforts, but on the matchless power of the promises of Heaven. In every way possible, it is a better arrangement. It is not just a better covenant, it is in fact the only possible arrangement that will make it possible for sinners to be saved from their rebellion. But that is another story.

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44 See Genesis 3:15
45 See Genesis 24; Hebrews 11:5 and Jude 24. While the word “covenant” is not mentioned in any of these passages, the principle of the New Covenant is most definitely here. E.g. we can’t please God unless we have a right relationship with Him, which is the New Covenant relationship.
46 See Genesis 6:18, the first time this covenant is named. Notice, this is a different covenant then the one mentioned in Genesis 9, as the one in chapter 9 is categorical for all flesh, while the one we are looking at, we have to choose to enter into this covenant.
47 Genesis 17:7, the first specific mention of the substance of the covenant, “My Covenant.”
48 Genesis 17:21
50 Exodus 19:5
51 Deuteronomy 5:28, 29.
52 Hebrews 8:10
53 Hebrews 9:11, 12
ONE WHO WRESTLES WITH GOD

The name Israel carries a special meaning. When Jacob, (a deceiver or supplanter) wrestled with the angel by the brook Jabok, he received a new name, Israel, which means one who has wrestled with God and overcame. So an Israelite today is one who has wrestled with God and overcame. This is not limited to Bible times. Paul gives the name of “Israel” yet another meaning, i.e. children of the promise. Which promise? The one found in the My Covenant arrangement. We too can be Israelites, no matter what our genetic heritage might be, if we enter into this New Covenant. Then we too can be counted as one who wrestled with God and overcame.

Another thing that should be noted here is this. There is a vast difference between being a “Jew” and being an “Israelite.” A Jew is a descendent of the tribe of Judah. When the civil war between the 10 tribes and the tribe of Judah and Benjamin created separate nations. The term Jew also came to included those from the tribe of Benjamin and Levi and is now applied to all of those who claim to be descendants of Abraham through Isaac. In contrast, an Israelite can be a descendent of the twelve tribes of Israel, the ten tribes of Israel (depending on the time period under discussion), or since the incarnation, it can be from any people group, as long as they believe in Jesus as their savior.

There is something that is much more important than the sign of circumcision, which set people apart in days past. Again, as Paul is known for doing, he helps us understand the true meaning of circumcision just like he helps to clarify other points in the history of Israel.

"For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God."

While in the past it was a sign of membership in the nation of Israel, today it is a sign of a heart that has had pride cut away, which is the sign of a new creation. That is a much more important sign and it is necessary whether a person is circumcised or not.

TWO VITAL STEPS

For the person who chooses to follow Jesus today, there are two steps that are important.

FIRST:

We must put on the robe of Christ’s Righteousness.

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

We must be clothed in Christ in order to be seated with Christ.

SECOND

We must be baptized into Jesus Christ

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

54 Genesis 32:28 "And he said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed."
55 Romans 9:6 ff
56 See Genesis 17:7; Jeremiah 11:2 - 5
57 Galatians 6:15, 16
58 Romans 2:28, 29
59 Galatians 3:26, 27
60 See the story of the wedding garment in Matthew 22.
This is being submerged into Christ and He becomes our all in all, our Father, our Savior and our Friend. Nothing else is important other than being like Christ. Christ-likeness must be the goal of our life. By this sign we choose to belong to Christ. The first sign, the wedding garment, is an indicator as to how far we have grown in that experience. The second sign, being like Jesus in our words, deportment and practices, tells the world that we have made a change in our allegiance. We are no longer in Satan’s camp, now we march under a new general, Jesus Christ. The last sign, at the end of the world will be whether we will obey God, even if makes no sense to us or not, just because we love Him. One sign of this being the case in our lives will be worshipping Him on the Seventh day of the week. However, there will be other signs too. Any issue where God’s instructions come in conflict with human desire will establishes a testing issue to show whether we are indeed servants of the Most High God, or whether we are still seeking to do things our way. If we choose to do things our way, or follow the guidance of humans, this shows that in fact sin still remains in our lives. No trace of sin will enter the world created new. Sin will be forever destroyed, along with all who cherish it and allow it to remain in their lives. Who do not allow Jesus to remove it and make them safe to save.

TWO WEDDING GARMENTS

In a parable that Christ told, there was a king who prepared a feast. He called all of the guests on his list. In response to this honor of being a guest of the king, they all made excuses and wouldn’t come to the marriage feast of His Son. So the King sent his armies out to the ungrateful guests and destroyed them with all they had. Then the King sent His servants out into the highways and byways and compelled the ones they found there to come in. When the hall was full, the king went to greet his guest. There He found one who had refused to accept the kings wedding garment. This person was thrown out into destruction just like the ones who refused to accept the invitation. WHY? Because he was consulting his own desires instead of what the king wanted him to do. He was placing his opinion of what constituted “proper dress” over the will of the king. He was living under the Old Covenant” arrangement that “all that the Lord has said we will do.” However, when God’s will and his will collided, he did not do all the Lord has said. Such will be the case of all who refuse to totally submit their will to God’s instructions, no matter what the excuse may be.

The wedding garment in this parable is symbolic of the robe of Christ’s righteousness. If we fail to seek His righteousness in the way He has outlined, if we fail to avail ourselves of His righteousness and attempt to get by with our “righteousness,” we too will be thrown out of the kingdom of heaven, no matter how good we may seem to be. The only ones who will be there are those who are a product of His workmanship. Their goodness will not be the result of their own efforts to make themselves good.

“But,” some loudly proclaim, “This is not reasonable.” Since when does God have to conform to our standard of what was reasonable? Being good is not conforming to what we believe is logical or reasonable. Rather it is submitting to what God asks us to do even, yes especially, when it makes no sense to us. Nor is it necessary for God to explain why something is right. That is why it is called: “Righteousness by faith.” We accept the righteousness that God offers us, trusting/faith that it will be OK. This is the heart of the New Covenant.

This provision is not limited, except that the conditions must be met. The call is to “whosoever will, may come.” But, when they come, they leave their opinions and their attempts to make themselves good behind. When they come, they testify that nothing good do I bring, only to thy cross I cling. Then God makes them into the kind of person who is safe to save.

61 Galatians 3:28, 29
63 See Matthew 22
64 Ephesians 2:10
65 Romans 7:18
"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."  

Note this carefully. As many as will:
- receive Him,
- believe in Him
- are born into the will of God,
- may avail themselves of this salvation.

So the terms for salvation are simple, the hardest part is giving up on wanting to do things our way. The interesting, or maybe more correctly, the hardest part is for those who have become set in their “righteousness.” Change is hard. The longer we walk in a particular way, the harder it is to change. One reason so few of the spiritual leaders of Jesus’ day confessed Him to be the Messiah was because, change is so hard. Even the honest in heart, Nicodemous, almost waited too long. As it is, he waited until the last moment. Just how much more he might have had if he had chosen to walk with Jesus for those three and one half years instead of being with the ones who believed Him not? We do not know, but he lost out on much, that is for sure.

POWER/RIGHT/ABILITY

In the King James Version, the word "power" is used where the New American Standard Bible, quoted above uses the word “right.” Other translations use words such as "right"(as used here) or "ability." In reality the Greek word means all three, but we have no English word that incorporates all three ideas, so different translators choose different words to represent the Greek word. Christ gives us not only the power, but also the right and the ability to become sons of God. Heaven has left nothing to chance. All we must do is play the game by the rules Heaven has established. We choose, Heaven works for us. All we can and must do is to exercise the free moral agency, the right to make moral decisions and choose to avail ourselves of that transformation. Also we must not circumvent what God wants to do in our lives by refusing to accept certain changes when they are revealed to us. For we are just as accountable for what we could know, if we refuse to know, as for what we do know.

The counsel today to us is the same as that given to Timothy of old.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth."  

We can be that kind of workman if we are accurate in handling God’s word. Another qualification for being a good workman is:

"Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."  

As a punster once said; “the only difference between men and boys is the price of their toys.” From observation, it appears that the male gender is not the only one with that weakness. The female gender seems to also find that a temptation too. The youthful lusts do not seem to die away with age, rather they strengthen. In fact in some cases they seem to grow stronger. It is only something God can handle, so we need to learn to turn those over to Him too.

Another part of being a good workman is to be willing to know truth. Our willingness is all important. Jesus told us:

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64 John 1:12, 13  
65 James 4:17 The word translated as “know,” carries the idea of being able to know as well as knowing.  
66 2 Timothy 2:15  
67 2 Timothy 2:22
"If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself."\(^{70}\)

Willingness, in fact, is a basic criterion. Unless we have a willingness to do what God asks us to do, none of our others talents will help us know truth.

Another way to be a good workman is to test it with the instruction that have gone on before and learn from the examples of others.

"To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn."\(^{71}\)

The Hebrew word, "torah," found in Isaiah 8:20, that is translated as "law" in the King James Version, is better translated as "instruction." This is a concept that many of us have had a hard time adjusting to, however, it is more accurate. While the meanings are not that much different, it does help us to understand the intent of the passage better in today's English. When the word "law" is used, we tend to look for a particular legal code, and the Ten Commandments is the most popular one, found in the Bible, that people turn their attention to. But the counsel in Isaiah is much broader than just what is found in Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5. This test includes ALL the instruction God has given us through any heavenly inspired source. God does not change, so when He gives instruction, it is for all time. So, all of God's instruction, whether given before Jesus came to earth, during His lifetime or after, as found in the New Testament. Yes, and any instruction given since that time that meets all of the tests that are laid down in the Bible. Any instruction from God is included.

The testimony referred to here is the witness of those who have gone before. This includes the stories of some who have chosen to follow God and the good results that followed their making that choice. In other cases, some have chosen to not follow God's instruction and the results of that choice should be a warning to us too. The testimony of those who either failed for not following God or succeeded by following God is preserved so we can learn from them.\(^{72}\)

To paraphrase what Isaiah is saying:

"according to all of the instruction God has given and what we can learn from the examples preserved for our help, if it isn't in accord with that body of evidence, it is because there is no truth in them."

There is one more factor here we need to note here. A messenger of God may be presenting something they feel is true according to all they have learned to that point. However, when a better way is pointed out to them, after testing the new information, they will accept the new information the Holy Spirit has been pleased to show them. Furthermore, if they refuse to accept the new information, they have closed the door for the Holy Spirit to lead them into any further revelations of truth.

We must remember that truth is a journey, not a destination. So, it is to be expected that we will constantly be called upon to change as we learn more accurately the way of truth.\(^{73}\) Reread the above quote of Isaiah 8:20 as it is more accurately translated by the translators of the English Standard Version. In translating it this way, they have caught a meaning being presented here not captured in other translations of the Bible, as testified to in Acts 18 in regards to Apollos. One must not only be presenting truth to the best of their knowledge, but when the Holy Spirit leads them into more truth, they must be willing to change, even if the Holy Spirit may use two old tentmakers. There is no channel excluded from being used by God to make it possible for truth to come to them, even if may be through their spouse, a child or even an enemy. All teaching must be tested by God’s word and if it passes the tests for truth found in the Bible, the honest in heart will follow it.

\(^{70}\) John 7:17

\(^{71}\) Isaiah 8:20 ESV

\(^{72}\) Hebrews 12:1

\(^{73}\) Acts 18:24-28
BASIC CHRISTIANITY

**DO THESE TESTS STILL APPLY?**

Any further revelations must agree with what is already given, tested and proven to be truth, or it is not acceptable. Jesus practiced this when He walked this earth. In doing so, He demonstrated how we must present truth. If any teaching cannot be presented in this manner, it should be very carefully checked out, for it’s likelihood of being truth is very slim, if in fact it is even possible to be truth.

Jesus met up with two of His disciples returning home from Jerusalem after His crucifixion and resurrection. These two discouraged disciples were mournfully walking along, sadly reflecting on how their hopes for Jesus being the Messiah had been dashed to pieces. Jesus joined up with these two disciples, incognito, as they walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus. He joined in their conversation, which was about the recent events that had left them discourages, agitated, with feelings of betrayal, all tumbled together with reports they couldn’t verify that Jesus had been raised from the dead. There are many things we could talk about here, but the point we want to note in this setting is the approach Jesus used with His sad and confused friends. The reason is that this is the pattern He has left for us in presenting all truth.

>“Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”

Notice the sequence of authorities that Jesus presented. He started with Moses, and then He called in the witness of the later prophets, as they were in harmony with what Moses wrote. This is the sequence we need to follow today. If any teaching is not supported by Moses and the Prophets, it is suspect.

So, when presented with any teaching, we should seek the earliest mention of that teaching, situation or doctrine that we are testing, in the Bible. The very first thing to do is to go back to Moses if possible. Then trace the teaching and references to the topic under investigation all through the Bible from the first mention, right down to the last one, even if it goes through to Revelation. If it is not mentioned by Moses, or the prophets, or even found in the Bible, we need to distance ourselves from it completely.

Just a side note that must not be forgotten. The common feature of all false prophets, teachers, disciple, preachers, etc. is this. They all claim to be true prophets. So, their claim means nothing. They must be tested by God’s word. Note this counsel.

>"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, [2] and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' [3] you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. [4] You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him. [5] But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery, to make you leave the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

>"If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter or the wife you embrace or your friend who is as your own soul entices you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which neither you nor your fathers have known, [7] some of the gods of the peoples who are around you, whether near you or far off from you, from the one end of the earth to the other, [8] you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him. [9] But you shall kill him. Your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people.”

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75 Luke 24:27
76 Deut. 13:1-9 (ESV)
Just because someone is a member in good and regular standing, or is on the payroll, this is no guarantee that they are presenting truth. Likewise, if a person may have no standing at all in the church, this is no guarantee in itself that what they are presenting is false. Each must be tested impartially by God’s word and tested accordingly.

Likewise when any person comes along and claims to have a new message from God, we must test their message in the same manner, starting with Moses and all the prophets. Only if they pass the closest investigation of God’s word should we accept what they have to say as truth. Today more messengers fail this test than those who pass it. Yet the way they are accepted is virtually the opposite ratio. This is especially true if it is something that our sinful heart wants to hear. But in the search for truth, our opinions must carry no weight at all when compared with what Moses and all the prophets have to say, despite what some people want to believe.

**XXXII THE SCRIPTURE IS MAN’S UNERRING GUIDE.**

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;" 78

The plan of Salvation as portrayed in the Bible is simple enough for the youngest child to understand, yet so deep that the deepest thinking theologian will constantly be finding new facets of truth. It is perfectly simple, yet profoundly deep. It presents eminent logic, yet defies human comprehension. It can be encompassed with the three little words: “God is Love,” yet all the books this world could contain would not come close to revealing all of the love of God. There is no need to go to any other source, other than “Moses and the prophets” to find truth.

**XXXIII A major barrier to understanding truth is the traditions of men.**

"'But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' " 79

While the opinions of the so called “wise of this world” may be accurate for their unique situation that they were dealing with, it may not have any application to our situation in any way, unless they are sharing what they have found in God’s word. If we rely on their opinions then we are not open for the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. On the other hand, if we refuse to listen, when what they are teaching is in harmony with the plain statements of the Bible, we set ourselves up for being deceived and lost. It is always more comfortable to run in a crowd then to stand-alone, but far too often the crowds are wrong. What we need to rely on is our own relationship with God, not the approval of humans, no matter how highly we might regard them.

That is not to say that we cannot learn anything from others. In many cases they can furnish wonderful examples as to how not to do things. But only as their teaching is submitted to what is presented in inspired writings, dare we give them credence in such important areas of our lives. Scripture tells us that in a multitude of counselors there is safety. But choose them wisely and keep them as counselors, not as absolute authority figures. The Holy Spirit is always to be our final authority and He will always agree with what has gone on before and has been revealed through the pen of inspiration in the past.

**SUMMARY**

The only plan for salvation consists in turning over the old for the new. This is only accomplished by and through the power of the Holy Spirit through the provisions that Christ has made. This is for everyone who will accept. It is for those who have faith, not just those born to a certain race of people. When we make this choice, we commit ourselves to study, to discover what is God's will for our lives and choose to let God make any changes that study reveals should be made.

What is your choice? Do you want to enter into this New Covenant relationship with God?

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77 2 Timothy 4:3-5  
78 2 Timothy 3:16  
79 Matthew 15:9  
80 Proverbs 11:14
NEW COVENANT AGREEMENT
between

Your Name and the God of Heaven

"Behold, Days are coming, says the Lord, when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."
"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts, And I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Hebrews 8:8, 10

BECAUSE I recognize that I have been a sinner and separate from the family of God,

BECAUSE  I recognize that I cannot of myself correct my desperate situation,

BECAUSE  I recognize Christ's great love for me and I choose to respond to that love.

BECAUSE  Christ through His great love for me has prepared a way whereby I may become part of His family,

I hereby choose of my own free will to accept this New Covenant as proposed by the great God of the universe as set forth above. Recognizing that, I agree to:

1. Search the Bible for truth.
2. Be willing to obey what He asks me to do.
3. Maintain a daily communication with Him as an essential part of receiving the help He promises in this agreement.

Witness my signature this _____ day of _________________________________ 20____.

SIGNED _____________________________________________________________________________

WITNESSED BY:__________________________________________________________________________

ACCEPTED BY:  _The God of Heaven_____
QUIZ – CHAPTER 9

I When Jesus was visited by Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, what did Jesus say was important to be able to see the kingdom of God? John 3:3 ____________________________________________

II In what areas is this experience necessary? John 3:5, 6 ____________________________

III Who makes this experience possible? 1 Peter 1:3 _________________________________

IV Why is this birth more valuable than the first one? 1 Peter 1:23 ____________________________

V What do we become then? 2 Corinthians 5:17 _________________________________

VI What is the purpose of this new birth? 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19 ____________________________

VII What great honor then becomes ours? 2 Corinthians 5:20 ____________________________

VIII How much do we have on our own? John 3:27 ____________________________

IX What is the covenant or contract God calls "My Covenant"? Genesis 17:7 last part.

X How long will this covenant be in force? Genesis 17:7 first part ____________________________

Also see Jeremiah 11:4; 24:7; Zechariah 8:8.
XI Who does the Bible first record this covenant was made with? Genesis 6:18 and 9:9.

XII Who was the next person the Bible records God entering this covenant relationship? Genesis 17:1, 2

XIII After Abraham, with whom did God enter this covenant?

GENESIS 17:19, 21
Also see Genesis 26:2-5
PSALMS 105:9, 10
Also see Genesis 28:13-15

XIV When God brought Israel out of Egypt, what was the first major stop on the way to Canaan? Exodus 19:1, 2

XV What nationalities, or people groups comprised the soon-to-be-formed nation of Israel? Exodus 12:37, 38

A. VS. 37

B. VS. 38

XVI What proposition did God make to the Israelites? Exodus 19:5 last part, 6

"THEN YOU SHALL BE __________ _________________ ___________________________ AMONG ALL THE PEOPLES, FOR ALL THE EARTH IS MINE; AND YOU SHALL BE TO ME A _________________________________ OF ______________________ AND A _____________ __________________________."

XVII What were the conditions attached? Exodus 19:5 first part.

"NOW THEN, IF YOU WILL __________ ______ ________________ AND ________________ ________________ ______ __________________________."

XVIII What was the people's response to this proposition? Exodus 19:8 ________________
XIX  From your point of view, is this a good response to God's proposition?

XX  If not, what was wrong with this response?  Deuteronomy 5:29

   Also see Psalms 81:13; Isaiah 48:18; Hebrews 8:6

XXI  How was this covenant ratified?  Exodus 24:3-8

   Also see Hebrews 9:11-15, 22, 24-28

XXII  How long did Israel keep their promise to do all the Lord had said?  Exodus 24:7, 15, 18 and 32:1, 7, 8

XXIII  What was God's response to this rebellion?  Hebrews 8:8, 9

XXIV  What is God's "New Covenant?"  Hebrews 8:10

"FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD, _____ WILL PUT _______________ INTO THEIR _________ AND _______ WILL _____________ THEM UPON THEIR _____________ AND I WILL BE _____________ _________ AND THEY SHALL BE ____________ _____________."

   Also see Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hosea 2:17-23

XXV  When was this covenant ratified?  Hebrews 9:11, 12, 15-17, 26-28.

XXVI  Who is considered "Israel" today?  Romans 9:6-8, 2:28, 29

   Also see Galatians 3:7-9

XXVII  What is more important than circumcision?  Galatians 6:15, 16
28. **XXVIII** What two things are required to become Christ’s and an offspring of Abraham’s? Galatians 3:26-29

A. ___________________________________________________________________________

B. ___________________________________________________________________________

29. **XXIX** How many can realize the benefits of this arrangement? John 1:12, 13

______________________________________________________________________________

XXX What counsel is given to Timothy and is appropriate for us today?

2 TIMOTHY 2:15 ___________________________________________________________________

2 TIMOTHY 2:22 ___________________________________________________________________

XXXI How can we know what doctrine is correct?

JOHN 7:17 _______________________________________________________________________

ISAIAH 8:20 ______________________________________________________________________

XXXII 32. Where do we find sound doctrine? 2 Timothy 3:16 _________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

XXXIII What doctrine should be avoided? Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7 ___________________

______________________________________________________________________________
A manner of living that will cause a person to be called a “good person” can be represented by totally opposite life styles, depending on what standard is used to designate a “good person.” What makes a person a “good person” lies virtually solely in the eyes of the beholder, just like beauty. Those who stand to profit by his acumen may consider a sharp businessperson as being “good”. While in contrast, those who have lost to his sharpness, will perceive his reputation as being something quite different. In some cases people will even go on to say that such a person is "better than those who go to church." By human standards this may be very true. Unfortunately, we all have seen “Christians,” or at least those who claim that designation, that none of us would want to be like. Sometimes we even see that person in our mirror. If we were really honest with ourselves, we will find that we, ourselves, without Christ in our lives, will be in that group too.

There are many fine moral people who make no claim of Christ being in their lives or even to be a Christian. Yet nowhere in the Bible do we find that being good qualifies us for being called to become a member of God's family or to inherit eternal life. Notice what Jesus said about this.

"I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."  

Jesus came to seek and save the lost, not those who felt that they were good people. Remember what we studied about the covenant that the children of Israel proposed at Mt. Sinai? They wanted to make themselves good, but that wasn’t good enough to come up to God’s standard of goodness. Besides that, it was the wrong kind of goodness. Our efforts to be a “good person” may impress those around us, but if it is the wrong kind of goodness, it will not give us entrance to that Heavenly Eden.

In his letter to the church at Philippi, Paul probably really shocked his readers when he said that he was "blameless." But he probably shocked them even more when in retrospect he considered all of his “goodness” as "rubbish." Just as there is a better type of love, there must be another kind, a better kind of goodness then the kind Paul had developed on his own, rather a kind of goodness that would result in eternal life with God. This is the goodness that is the subject of this lesson.

One day a young man who wanted to know what it took to inherit eternal life approached Jesus. In response to this request, Jesus first referred him to the manner in which the young man had addressed Him, i.e. "good teacher (master)." To this Jesus replied by stating an eternal truth. He said: "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone." Only God can be truly called good. But He offers to share that goodness with those who want to be part of His family.

It is only by personal experience that we can know what goodness really is. The psalmist puts it this way.

"O taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!"

Those who choose to accept God's goodness as the ruling factor of their lives will discover a life style that is far superior to anything else. But this goodness will not cohabit in a life where sin is harbored. We must:

"Depart from evil, and do good; Seek peace, and pursue it."

Only when we make this choice to stop doing things “my way” [Depart from evil] and choose to seek a better way [God’s way] can God come in and fill our life with His goodness.

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1 Luke 5:32
2 Philippians 3:6
3 Ibid. verse 8
4 Read the story in Mark 10:17-23 or Luke 18:18-30
5 Psalm 34:8
6 Psalm 34:14
As James told his readers:

“For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”

While faith is essential. While our choice is imperative. None of this will bring us to the saving goodness God offers unless we allow God to implant it in our lives. Then it will be a working faith, or a faith that works.

One thing most humans fear, some even more than anything else, is letting someone else control their lives. There are exceptions, many of them, but even in those cases, they want to choose who controls their life. This becomes especially hard when that "someone else" is an unseen power and a power that calls for some radical changes in our lives when compared to the society in which they live. Especially when those changes seem to be so radically different from what the world is practicing. Also when they are different from the drives within us that demand immediate gratification, like power and recognition.

So another element of receiving goodness is:

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness."

Just like human beings are more comfortable with those who they can trust, so God can work better with those who trust Him. The psalmist goes on to tell of some other things that are necessary too.

"Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He will do it. And He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret, it leads only to evildoing. For evildoers will be cut off, But those who wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land."

Notice the key words here: Trust, Delight, Commit, Rest, Fret not, Cease from anger. They picture the relationship God wants to establish with His people. This pictures a delightful life with God where we rest on His promises, trusting because we have committed ourselves to Him. We know that we can trust that which we have committed unto Him against that day. But there is more.

To this point, we have only looked at what the human being must do to have this divine goodness. But all of the trusting, being delighted, commitment and resting we can do is of no value unless there is one other important factor. To this point the human being is just becoming submissive to God. But that isn't enough,

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

We must allow Jesus to mold us into a model citizen of the heavenly kingdom. We can only be good if He makes us good. All of our efforts at achieving goodness is, as Paul called them, filthy rags.

Paul came to this realization only after a life of constant struggle to achieve goodness. He had kept all of the Ten Commandments as well as all of the Jewish rules and regulations. He was able to say that according to the law he was blameless. And remember, this was written under the influence of the Holy Spirit, so we can rest assured that his evaluation of himself and his efforts to follow all that was revealed as man's duty was a correct one. But the part Paul hadn't understood was the role Jesus Christ was to play in his salvation. When he understood this, this is what he wrote.

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7 James 2:27. Read the passage from verse 20
8 Psalms 37:3
9 Psalm 37:3-9
10 2 Timothy 1:12
11 Ephesians 2:10
12 Philippians 3:8
13 Philippians 3:6
"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."  

Jesus will not do a half-way job in changing our lives. When He is invited in, He will either completely change us, or nothing at all. He isn't interested in doing the job half way. And only He can make the changes in the right way. We don't even know what the end result is to be. So we must entrust the work to Him fully and completely, realizing that He can and will do it correctly. Also if we could see the end from the beginning, we wouldn't choose to have it done any other way. It is a “100% satisfaction guaranteed” promise.

When people renovate something, they usually just change the exterior. For example, if someone wants to restore an old car, they will tear it all down, remove all of the rust, fix the dents or replace those body panels and scrape it down and then repaint it and put it all back together again. But Jesus goes one step further. In reference to the old car illustration, Jesus would give us all new metal parts of a better grade of metal too, as well as correcting any design flaws. He says:

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you."

Notice the similarity of My Covenant with the New Covenant. This similarity is there because it is the New Covenant. God will write His law in our heart and He will make us good. So the truly "good person" in God's sight is the one He is making good. And that will be from the inside out, not just a clean and newly painted façade.

WHAT IS “GOODNESS?”

The standard for goodness has been around for a long time, but the clearest statement of goodness is found in one of those little books at the end of the Old Testament whose name is the same as the one who wrote it. The prophet Micah records an amazing statement from God.

"He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?"

Imagine the God of the Universe wanting to walk with us! Isn't that incredible? But there are a couple of terms we need to explore here. What does it mean to "do justice" and to "love kindness?"

PART 1 “PRACTICE JUSTICE”

To “do justice” carries the idea of wanting things to be done right. It isn't good enough to just get the job done, no matter who or what gets stepped on, such a person just wants things done correctly. But an equal part of that is that the job is done fairly. That it is in accord with the New Covenant and in accordance with the rules of right and wrong that God has given.

PART 2 “LOVE LOVE”

But that isn't all. A good person will also will "love kindness." Had this been originally written in Greek, it would have read: "eros agape," or if it was in English it would read: "love love." Referring back to the lesson on "What is Love?" we will remember that eros type love is a love centered on how we feel about things. Agape love is the divine love that is built on principle. So what we are being told here is that we will have an intense desire/feeling for the principles found in Divine love. We will have an all-consuming desire to have agape love in control of our lives.

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14 Philippians 1:6
15 Ezekiel 36:26-29
16 Micah 6:8
PART 3 “WALK HUMBLY”

But the third part of this standard for being good is the best of all. Consider this example. If we had the president of the United States as our closest friend, the most powerful single individual in the world as our close companion. We would find it a real privilege to pursue that friendship. But here the God of the Universe invites us to have that close relationship with Him! He is infinitely more powerful then any head of any worldly nation or organization. Yet He is offering to walk with us! He wants to have the closeness that two people, have who enjoy frequent long walks or visits together, experience. However, that can only happen if we choose to walk in the same way He is going. He will not change directions to accommodate us; we must choose to go the way He is going. We must walk with Him, because that is what is best for us.

This is not a surface restoration, but a complete life change. Nor is it accomplished overnight. It takes time to make the changes we need in our lives and God is well able to do what we allow Him to do for and in us. Many try to correct their actions so people will think they are Christians. But while it might fool people, it won't fool God. God's plan is a different and better plan.

"The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."  

The difference is a change for the better that most appreciate. A person who is "good to the core" will perform in a predictable way at all times. On the other hand, a person who is only putting on a front will change when it is to their advantage. Those who are candidates for heaven must be trustworthy to the heart. This is God's plan and it is as far superior to human plans of correcting bad behavior, as heaven is higher then the earth.

This is the heart of the New Covenant that God offers to His people. In the lesson, on "What is a Born Again Christian," we studied about the two different ways people choose to walk in. God promises that He will enter into the New Covenant with all who will walk humbly with Him.

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, And I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, And they shall be My people."  

This is the only plan that will really work over the long haul.

It is not only people who can be described as good, when their source of goodness is the Lord. The Bible calls the Law "good" too.

"But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good."  

In fact, the law of God is a description of what a good person will be like. Let's look at God's law and see what a good person will be like. Just what characteristics would we be able to expect to find in a “good person.” But first a little review of the events, leading up to God’s giving the Law on Mt. Sinai.

OVERVIEW

God had brought the "sons of Jacob" and the "House of Israel", which included a large mixed multitude of many nationalities, very possibly including a representative from every nation on earth, on a 90-day journey out of Egypt. They had crossed a hot, barren, desert and had come to the broad plain before Mt. Sinai. Here God offered to renew the contract He had made with their fathers.

Israel, however, wanted to change the arrangement God offered, so they came up with what is now called the "Old Covenant." They wanted to make themselves good instead of allowing God to make them good. Making oneself good, according to God’s standard of goodness, is an impossible task, as they were soon to find out. Since they wanted to make themselves good, God outlined for them just what a good person will be like if they allow God to

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17 Luke 6:45  
18 Hebrews 8:10  
19 Romans 7:16  
20 See the story in Exodus 19
make them good. This is the goal of the New Covenant, the standard that they must come up to, in order to be able to fulfill that covenant. In other words, this Ten Commandment law is a description of the type of person God is and the kind of person He wants to make us into.

**LANGUAGE BACKGROUND**

It is interesting to note that although in the English language there are about seven tenses, in Hebrew there are only two corresponding parts of speech. One part compares with our English tenses of Present, Past, Perfect, etc. The other Hebrew part of speech corresponds to the English tenses of Command and Future only. So the passage under consideration could be correct grammatically, translated as either: **“You will not . . .”, a promise of what would happen,** or **"You shall not . . .”, a command regarding their doing or not doing something.**

Since the Israelites had said: "All the Lord has said we will do," God gave them ten “commandments” as to what they must do, to accomplish "all the Lord has said." But if we relate to this as the New Covenant Christian will, then to him they will be Ten Promises of what God will do in his life. To him it will represent the standard of character to which God will bring us up to when we give Him our permission. Context, as usual, makes a great deal of difference.

So, for the one who has chosen the Old Covenant, the same standard becomes Ten Commandments. While to the one who has chosen the New Covenant, the standard will be ten promises, made by God regarding what He will do in the life of the Christian.

Israel of old, like many Christians today, missed the whole point of the law by focusing on changing behavior to match the precepts of the Law, the Old Covenant approach. And, like Israel of old, they too fail just as badly today. The one who enters into the New Covenant arrangement will arrive at the same place as the Old Covenant Christian wants to arrive at, only God will be the one doing the work in their life and He will be making them good.

Paul attempted to communicate the correct way to come into compliance with God's law when He wrote:

"**Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, "You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law."**"  

The love referred to here is the special agape love we have discussed already. When that love completely fills our hearts, our actions will reflect the law perfectly. Likewise, as already discussed, this is a love that we can only be a channel for, it is not something we can originate. It is only present and in control when God is our closest companion.

Many try to make us believe that the New Covenant Christian is not under the Ten Commandment law today. While there is some truth in that, basically it is not correct. As we have just noticed in Paul’s statement, he lists four of the ten precepts, which identify the law he is referring to as the Law of God as recorded in Exodus 20. Nothing can be clearer then that when agape love is present and when it rules the heart, our actions will reflect the ten precepts found in God's eternal law. A New Covenant Christian is not “under the law” rather he is being brought into conformity to the law. He is becoming more and more like the God, who’s character the law describes. The law has become a specification list that the Christian checks up on, to see just what God has left to do in their life in order to finish the work He has started. They are promises of changes to be made, not demands that they have to conform to.

**THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT**

One day when Jesus was here on earth, the Sadducees had just been silenced by the wisdom of Jesus. Next the Pharisees, who had a lawyer primed to present a hard question to Jesus – well, let's read the story.

"**But when the Pharisees heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they gathered themselves together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your **

21 Romans 13:8-10
soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.'\(^{22}\)

Jesus here agrees with Paul that actions motivated by agape love, are the fulfillment of the Ten-Commandment law. The first four commandments spell out just how we will love God. The last six commandments spell out how we will show agape love for our fellow man. In fact it is only the keeping of these ten precepts as a natural result of our being motivated to do it by agape love that makes our obedience acceptable to God. Only as Christ is living out His life in us and we are totally submitted to doing His will, are we reflecting the goodness found in these ten precepts.

"The ten holy precepts spoken by Christ upon Sinai's mount were the revelation of the character of God, and made known to the world the fact that He had jurisdiction over the whole human heritage. That law of ten precepts of the greatest love that can be presented to man is the voice of God from heaven speaking to the soul in promise, "This do, and you will not come under the dominion and control of Satan." There is not a negative in that law, although it may appear thus. It is DO, and Live"\(^{23}\)

\(^{xiv}\) God has tried to communicate in several ways just what kind of relationship He wants to have with His people. One example He uses is that of a marriage relationship.

"And I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion,"\(^{24}\)

This is the closest relationship human beings can know with other beings, apart from a relationship with God. And just as a man and woman, when they marry, make vows or promises to each other, so too God has made promises to those who want to enter into this special relationship with Him.

"The ten commandments, Thou shalt, and Thou shalt not, are ten promises, assured to us if we render obedience to the law governing the universe. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Here is the sum and substance of the law of God. The terms of salvation for every son and daughter of Adam are here outlined\(^{25}\)

\(^{xv}\) The concept of the Ten Commandments being Ten Promises is new for many people. The more a person understands this fact, however, the more beautiful and reasonable it becomes. Especially when the burden of establishing goodness in our lives is transferred from our feeble efforts to God's great adequacy. The Ten Commandments then become a "checklist" where we can look at them and see where we God is wanting to make us good, but not for the purpose of attempting to make the changes indicated in our strength. Rather, when we see that we are falling short of any given promise, we can ask God to correct that problem area in our lives. Since He has promised to make us into that type of person, we are within our right, as a part of the covenant relationship, to ask God to perform His part of the covenant and bring us up to the standard established by the law/promise. He is eagerly waiting for us to make those claims upon Him. Until we do, He cannot act.

**Promise One**

The very first command/promise God makes is very all-inclusive, despite its short length. God commands,

"You shall have no other gods before Me."\(^{26}\)

But in reading that as a promise it would read:

"You will not want to have any other god, other then Me."

\(^{22}\) Matthew 22:34-40  
\(^{23}\) S.D.A. Bible Commentary Vol. 1 -PG- 1105  
\(^{24}\) Hosea 2:19  
\(^{25}\) S.D.A. Bible Commentary Vol. 1 -PG- 1105  
\(^{26}\) Exodus 20:3
This is a big promise, made by a big God. But since He is the one who made us, wouldn't it be logical to recognize that He would know better than any other intelligence just what is best for us? In this first promise, God is setting a high standard to achieve. So high that it boggles the human mind. He promises to perform His part of the New Covenant arrangement so well that we will not even consider to desire any other God. A Big promise from a Big God. As an earnest on this promise, He has shown how much He loves us by sending His only Son to make it possible for us to return to the family of God. The incarnation of Jesus is part of this promise to make us totally satisfied and to do more for us then any other god can possibly do.

**PROMISE TWO**

The next promise serves to place the first promise in more concrete terms. God commands/promises:

"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."\(^{27}\)

Many apply this to treasures that we trust in like cars, jobs, money, clothes etc. While these, along with graven images, are all included, that is far from all it includes. In a little bit we will see just how this works in a parable, just like Jesus used. But first notice this commentary.

"Idolaters are condemned by the Word of God. Their folly consists in trusting in self for salvation, in bowing down to the works of their own hands. God classes as idolaters those who trust in their own wisdom, their own devising, depending for success on their riches and power, striving to strengthen themselves by alliance with men whom the world calls great, but who fail to discern the binding claims of His law. . . . No outward shrines may be visible; there may be no image for the eye to rest upon; yet we may be practising idolatry. It is as easy to make an idol of cherished ideas or objects as to fashion gods of wood or stone. Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal."\(^{28}\)

**A PARABLE – THE CLASSIC STORY OF JOHN AND MARY**

Christ often spoke in parables to help make the subject clearer. Let's look at a modern parable to help understand better how to be a good person. Meet John Smith and Mary Jones.\(^{29}\)

John Smith and Mary Jones meet and fall in love. After a moderate courtship, John asked Mary to become his wife. They were married in a beautiful wedding and took a two-week honeymoon in Hawaii. On their return they moved in to the beautiful home John had prepared for them. It was on the sloop of a hill, overlooking a lovely lake with majestic mountains in the background. The grounds were beautifully landscaped and the home had every modern convenience. Upon returning home after their honeymoon, as they entered the front hall, a tall object standing there, covered by a sheet. This catches Mary’s attention. It was about 5 ft. 6 in. tall, and Mary's curiosity could not be contained, so she asked her new husband: "What is that?"

John dramatically pulls the sheet off of the statue and reveals a lovely, rose marble, life size statue of Mary. Mary is very surprised, a little flattered that John thought that much of her to have this unique statue made, but quite puzzled.

**QUESTION**

What do you think Mary thought about the statue at this point? _______________________________________

\(^{27}\) Exodus 20:4-6  
\(^{28}\) S.D.A. Bible Commentary Vol. 1 -PG- 1105  
\(^{29}\) Some have been offended by this parable, but it is taken right from God’s word, only modified to a more modern setting. Read Isaiah 62:5; Malachi 2; Revelation 19:7; 21:2, 9, etc. The parallel between the marriage relationship between a man and woman is a major comparison that God uses to illustrate the relationship between Himself and His people. Today we too can learn some very valuable lessons from this comparison.
However, the next morning they got up late and John was behind schedule. So Mary had his briefcase waiting for him in the hall. While waiting for him to come, she was admiring the statue, but still a little puzzled as to why he would want a statue when she was here? When John came up to where she was admiring the statue, he gave the statue a big hug and kiss, then took his briefcase from Mary, told Mary goodbye and rushed out the door.

**QUESTION**

What do you think Mary thought about the statue now?

Wouldn't it be unreasonable to believe that either the statue or Mary would be gone when John returned from work? This is the message God is trying to get across to us. He wants our affection to be on a personal basis, not through some cold, lifeless statue. He does not want us to channel it through some intermediary, human or statuary. One reason is that we will soon think more of the statue then the God we claim that it represents.

**Promise Three**

**xvii** In this same vein of thought, God addresses another problem with this command/promise.

"You shall (will) not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain." 30

Many apply this to swearing, and that is certainly a part of it. But it goes far beyond just prohibiting the use of profane language. This will be illustrated in our parable, but first notice this commentary.

"This commandment not only prohibits false oaths and common swearing, but it forbids us to use the name of God in a light or careless manner, without regard to its awful significance. By the thoughtless mention of God in common conversation, by appeals to Him in trivial matters, and by the frequent and thoughtless repetition of His name, we dishonor Him." 31

**xviii** The Bible goes beyond this. To really understand what God is getting at here, we need to examine how the Bible considers a person's name to be. Peter gives us a strong clue here.

"If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God." 32

This name we are not to take in vain is God’s family name; the name of Christian. Taking this name implies many things. It has much power and means that we are now part of the family of God.

Today in many parts of the world the family name is jealously guarded. If a family member adopts a lifestyle that is dramatically different from the rest of the family, they can become disowned and disowned by the family, treated as if they no longer exist. On the other hand, if someone does real well, the rest of the family is proud to be known by the same name as the one who made good.

"But to pray in Christ's name means much. It means that we are to accept His character, manifest His spirit, and work His works. The Saviour's promise is given on condition. "If ye love Me," He says, "keep My commandments." He saves men, not in sin, but from sin; and those who love Him will show their love by obedience.

“All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart-work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him,"

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30 Exodus 20:7
31 Patriarchs and Prophets -PG- 306, 307
32 1 Peter 4:14-16
our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us."

But to really understand the implications of the taking of God's name we must go back to the illustration the Bible often uses to describe the union between God and His people as a marriage.

"In the Bible the sacred and enduring character of the relation that exists between Christ and His church is represented by the union of marriage. The Lord has joined His people to Himself by a solemn covenant, He promising to be their God, and they pledging themselves to be His and His alone." (See Hosea 2:19. Jeremiah 3:14. "2 Corinthians 11:2.)

When we take the name of Christian, we enter into a relationship very much like that of marriage. Just like when a woman takes her husband's family name, when we enter into the New Covenant relationship with God we take the name of our Lord, the name of Christian, as our new family name.

When we enter into that relationship, as when we marry, we promise to "Love, Honor, Obey and keep ourselves to Him alone." Then when we call ourselves a Christian, we are in effect saying: "I belong to Christ and I have vowed a vow to Love Him only, honor Him supremely and keep myself to Him along." If I fail in any one of those parts of the promise, I have taken that name in vain, or without regard to what it really means to identify ourselves with God's name. To see how that works, let's return to our parable with John and Mary.

**A PARABLE continued – LOVE, HONOR AND OBEY**

Our friends, John and Mary, have had a wonderful time. Theirs is a storybook marriage. His work is going well. She is happy in his love and he has provided her with a nice home, comfortable income and everything a wife could want and the rose marble statue is residing in a museum as a piece of art.

Things go well with John and Mary for several years, but then the company John worked for moved him to another state. It was a hectic move. To make things worse, he left just about of the arrangements up to Mary, who had come down with the flu right after he left to go to his new job assignment. John was busy setting up his new office and taking over his new duties, so all the moving details were left to Mary to handle. Things were hectic at his work so she had to take care of getting the new house settled even though she wasn't feeling well either.

Finally one day Mary had had all she could take and she decided to go for a long walk, to get some fresh air, see the neighborhood and get away from everything for awhile. As she was walking down a street in their new neighborhood, she noticed someone in a yard she was passing, that looked strangely familiar. As the man turned so she could see his face, she recognized him as an old boyfriend she had once dated and whom she loved very much before meeting John. They had not seen or heard from each other since she had met John, so there was a lot to talk about. They visited for a while and then as old feelings again surfaced, she unburdened her heart to him. One thing led to another and before long she found herself breaking her marriage vows.

**QUESTION**

Now, if a little later you were to meet Mary, she would introduce herself as “Mary Smith.” In doing this, after what has happened, what has Mary done to the name of “Smith” that she has taken to identify herself with?

When Mary introduces herself as "Mary Smith," what she is really saying is that her name is Mary and that she is married to John Smith. She is saying that she has made certain vows to John, including the one to keep herself to him alone. If she breaks that vow and gives herself to anyone who she feels like, she has taken his name in vain, or without concern for the importance of that vow.

33 The Desire of Ages  PG- 668
34 The Great Controversy  -PG- 381
BASIC CHRISTIANITY

The same is true when we take on the name of Christian. When we take the name Christian, we are telling people that God is the supreme authority in our lives.\(^{35}\) We tell the world that we love Him, we want to honor Him and most of all, we have chosen to keep ourselves to Him alone. His is the supreme authority in our lives. But if we in fact follow another authority (another god), then we are taking God’s name, that of Christian, in vain.

\(^{xix}\) This is a serious issue, especially when so many in Christianity today do not recognize the implications of what it means to take on the holy name of Christian. The Old Testament prophet, Ezekiel, recognized this fact when he wrote:

\["You adulteress wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband!"^{36}\]

God considers the church as His wife and when we flaunt the vows we have taken when we came into the family of God, we are taking His name in vain in the worst possible way.

\["The unfaithfulness of the church to Christ in permitting her confidence and affection to be turned from Him, and allowing the love of worldly things to occupy the soul, is likened to the violation of the marriage vow. See Ezekiel 16:8, 13-15, 32; Jeremiah 3:20"^{37}\]

A PARABLE continued - A DAY TO REMEMBER

\(^{xx}\) When a couple say their vows of marriage, the date on which they gets married becomes an annual day to remember and one they celebrate each year. This is understood to be “their day.” Likewise, when a child is born, for the rest of their life they celebrate a birthday, a special day in which they celebrate a new year of life in whatever way they like. This is called their “birthday,” “their day.” When some other significant event comes into a person's life like a marriage of a child, a baptism, a commemoration of that day and event is often kept. Likewise when a war is won, or when a state achieves statehood etc. There are many events that are forever memorialized with the celebration of an anniversary of that event.

PROMISE FOUR

So too God has His day to remember. But like He reminded us in Malachi 6:8, that He wants us to walk with Him. So too God wants us to remember His day and celebrate it with Him. This is the next promise that He makes to us.

\["Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."^{38}\]

Inherent in that promise is an invitation to share His special day. The birthday of the world, a day He has set aside to spend with His people here on earth. No more can a birthday be changed after a child is born, then can God's holy day be changed. For it is a memorial of that time when He finished the creation of this world and rested after that memorial event. The day that He established as a memorial of His creative powers. Only, in the case of the memorial of the end of creation, it is a weekly memorial, not a yearly one. So, it will be the seventh day of the week that God has set aside for His special day.

As such, it will forever be on that day of the week, and no other day that the creation of the world is commemorated. Oh, yes, we can and should remember God’s holy day every day of the week, but creation was not completed on every day of the week. It is true that we can worship God on any day. But there is no substitute for meeting God as He has requested on that special day, the seventh day of the week as He has asked us to do. Inherent in that promise, is that God will come to be there at that special meeting time and place to meet with His people. Worshipping God on the seventh-day of the week will be the natural result of loving God and wanting to celebrate this day that is special to Him. Any other worship we may choose to do is over and beyond this minimal requirement.

\(^{xvi}\) The seventh-day of the week was the day the creation of the earth was finished and the earth was born. That day is etched in history and God invites us to join Him, the creator, to remember our creation as His creatures.

\(^{35}\) Ephesians 5:22-30
\(^{36}\) Ezekiel 16:32
\(^{37}\) The Great Controversy - Pages- 381, 382
\(^{38}\) Exodus 20:8
"Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you."  

When He was living on this earth, one Sabbath He was walking with His disciples through the grain fields and the religious leaders challenged His obedience to the law of God and by inference the accuracy of His claim to be a teacher from God. His disciples were taking heads of grain and removing the husks and eating them which was in violation of their laws for keeping the Sabbath. While this was a perfectly proper action for any other day, the religious leaders taught that to do so on the Sabbath was “harvesting grain,” therefore work which was not to be done on the Sabbath. But, this was their interpretation of what God said, not what had been commanded. His response to them was:

"Consequently, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

So even when Jesus came to walk on this earth He created, He still considered the seventh-day Sabbath to be His day. Can anyone ever really change the events that have honored that day throughout all history?

There are several reasons why that day is important. Far too many to go into here, but we will look at just a couple of them as illustrations. Since these are promises, we don't want to be left out on any good thing God has promised to us, now do we? The first reason to remember this day is contained in the promise itself.

"For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

As we have already noted, this is a memorial, not only of the completion of creation, but of the fact that He is the creator. Satan has tried to get mankind to forget that so that they will not feel any obligation to God. So by the institution of a counterfeit sabbath and by the theory of evolution, the fact that God is the maker of this world has come under question and even forgotten. But that is only in the minds of those who do not love God supremely. Those who really love God will never forget that special date He has with each of His family.

Another reason for our continued respect for the Sabbath is that God made it Holy. Only God can make some-thing holy. Since God has made the seventh-day of the week, a Sabbath, a holy day, man cannot change that designation nor characteristic of the Sabbath, any more than he can make himself holy. The Sabbath, therefore, resembles a birthday and a date. Like a birthday it commemorates a historical event, the birthday of the world, that cannot be changed at anytime in the future. It is a date in that it is a time that God has asked us to meet with Him so He can spend some time with us. We can think on Him and not be interrupted with the things of this world.

There is yet a third reason the seventh-day Sabbath is important. That is found in the Old Testament. There are only two signs given whereby the world can know that we are Christians. Both are things God has promised to give to us. Both will be around until He comes and will be as important then as they ever were. The first sign of being a Christian comes directly from Jesus. He said:

"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

This is the agape love that we have already studied about. But there is a second sign or symbol of our being a Christian. That is found in the Old Testament in two different places. Moses, under the inspiration of God, said it this way:

"You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.” Exodus 31:13 (ESV)

Ezekiel said it this way.

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39 Exodus 20:9-11
40 Mark 2:28
41 Exodus 20:11
42 John 13:35
"And also I gave them My Sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them."  

Under the New Covenant, it is God who makes us good, not we ourselves. These Ten Promises to the new Covenant Christian are promises of the changes God will make in our lives if we allow Him. A love for keeping the seventh-day of the week as a rest day, i.e. the Sabbath, is declared to be a sign that God is perfecting the promise He made to make us good. That is what the word "sanctify" means, to make good. But God will only give us a love for the Sabbath if we allow Him to fill our hearts with Love for Him too. The keeping of the Sabbath without it being a natural love response to God, for what He is doing for us, is really of no value. No more then going through the actions of being on a date and not being interested in the other person, our having minds being on something else, far away.

A PARABLE continued - RECONCILIATION

After the initial hurt and anger that John experienced over Mary's course of action, John began to think it over and he recognized that what had happened had probably been at least partially his fault. So he forgave her and they patched things up. One afternoon a few weeks later, he was out of town on business and he remembered that the next day was Mary's birthday. So he thought that he would surprise her. So he called her long distance and asked her to keep the next day free and they would spend the whole day together. When he got home that evening, to his surprise, he found her in her bathrobe, cleaning the house. In the air there was the unmistakable aroma of a cake baking in the oven. In response to his startled question about what was going on, she had this explanation.

"John, do you remember that fellow I use to date?" (Do you think John could forget?) "Well, after you called earlier today I remembered that the day following my birthday is his birthday. Your phone call brought it back to mind. So I thought it would be real nice if we invited him over and had a party for him to celebrate his birthday. I won't have time to prepare except for tomorrow, so I didn't think you would mind my not spending the day with you so I can get the house ready for the party."

QUESTION

A) What do you think John would feel like in this situation?

YOUR ANSWER

B) What would this show about Mary's love for John?

YOUR ANSWER

As difficult as it is to suggest that God does not accept some kinds of worship, this is in fact what the Bible says is the case. We are far more concerned about hurting other people’s feelings then in hurting God’s feelings. Who’s feelings are the most important? Since there is absolutely no hint of any command in the Bible to have weekly worship on any day of the week, other then the seventh-day of the week. Sunday, therefore, is solely a man made day of worship.

Also, when there is a lack of a desire to worship on the day God calls His Holy Day, or absolute hatred is shown for worship on the day God claims as His own, we can know that this promise has not been fulfilled yet in that person's life.

43 Ezekiel 20:12 also see verse 20
44 Matthew 15:9, Mark 7:7
The Last Six Promises - How We Will Relate to Each Other

While the first four commands/promises deal with how we will relate to God. The last six deal with how one will relate to their fellow man. The first of these promises deals with the home/family. This promise comes right in the center of the ten promises. Since God so often likens the relationship between Him and His people to a marriage, it is no surprise that the first promise that comes after the promise that we will want to spend time with God as His Family, is how we will interact with our earthly family.

Promise Five

The first part of this earthly family is our home, parents and siblings. God promises that we will want to:

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you."

Just what is the greatest honor we can show to our parents? Some might think that it would be to make a great name for themselves. Others might believe that obeying their parents would be the greatest honor. Obedience is very definitely something that is commanded/promised by God. Paul gave this instruction.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth."

But obedience of a human, as important as it is, is not called the greatest honor.

Yet others might believe that taking care of their parents in old age would be the greatest honor. Some could find support for their belief in this area. Other suggestions could be made, and all of these things are indeed honors we can and must bring to one's parents. But we are talking about the greatest honor now. What is the greatest honor we can show to our parents?

The greatest honor a child can show to his parents is to obey all that the Lord has asked them to do. No greater honor can be shown to one's parents then to follow their example, if they have set such an example of serving and submitting to God, and to enter into the New Covenant relationship and allow God to make them good. We are to obey and follow our parents, however, only as long as they follow Christ. Therefore, only as we let God make us good, can we truly honor our parents. There is no greater honor then to have children who have chosen to make God the absolute ruler in their lives. So entering into this covenant relationship with God and allowing Him to fulfill these Ten Promises in one's life is the greatest honor any parent can ever have from their children.

Promise Ten

Up to this point, we have followed the Ten Commands/Promises in the order they are given in. But now we are going to jump down to the last one,

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

The reason for this is because when this commandment is broken, we have in reality broken all of the others too.

"The tenth commandment strikes at the very root of all sins, prohibiting the selfish desire, from which springs the sinful act. He who in obedience to God's law refrains from indulging even a sinful desire for that which belongs to another will not be guilty of an act of wrong toward his fellow creatures."

God is promising here that He will be so good to us that we will not lack anything. We will be so happy with what He is giving to us that we won't even want anything our neighbors has, or anyone else’s for that matter. We will be

45 Exodus 20:12
46 Ephesians 6:1-3
47 Nowhere in the Bible does God admonish us to obey any human authority when it commands or pressures us to do something contrary to God’s revealed will. As Jesus said: “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.” Matthew 22:21
48 Exodus 20:17
49 Patriarchs and Prophets -Page- 309
happy that God has given those things to them and have no desire to have them for our self. The satisfaction, which brings peace and joy in its train, is one of the greatest assets any person can have. Huge stores of money only makes one want more.

A study was done of the people who won in these mega million dollar lotteries. In virtually all cases, the effect on their lives was negative. In some cases when the money was gone, they were further in debt then before they won. Eating to excess only makes one want more. Being overweight is pandemic in our society today. Sexual conquests only make a person want more. Fidelity for a lifetime marriage is almost unheard of today. Even before getting married, it is not uncommon for a person to have multiple sex partners. But it doesn’t bring happiness. Land acquisitions only makes a person want more. Power and Popularity often goes to a person's head and they become jealous if they think someone else is their equal or has more. And the list could go on. But none of these things brings satisfaction. The only true satisfaction anyone can have, is that which comes to those who enter into this arrangement with God, without charge, by God.

Promise Nine

xxvii If a person is satisfied, there would be no reason to want to say anything that would misrepresent ones friends or neighbor. Therefore the ninth commandment/promise is fulfilled where it says:

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." 50

xxviii Jesus enlarged our understanding in His sermon on the Mountain when He said:

"Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.' "But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; and anything beyond these is of evil." 51

When the love of God fills a persons heart, their word can be trusted. They will not need extravagant vows. When a true Christian says something, either stating a truth or reporting a situation, those who hear will know that it is accurately reported to the best of that person's ability to know the situation. When God fulfills the promise of bearing a true witness, a person will be truly be honored.

Promise Eight

xxix When a person is trusting God and is satisfied with what God is providing him with, he will not even want anything that God has not given to him. Therefore he will not be stealing from others. Thus the eighth promise is fulfilled:

"You shall not steal." 52

The motives that lead a person to steal are: 1. the desire for more than they have or 2. envy that the other person has more than they have. When a person is committed to God their necessities are taken care of by God and they are satisfied. In the case where this does not seem to be the situation, they should patiently wait on the Lord to see how He will provide.

"God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Phil 1:29.] And of all the gifts that

50 Exodus 20:16
51 Matthew 5:33-37
52 Exodus 20:15
What Is A Good Person?

Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor." 53

Promise Seven

xxx If a person is satisfied with their marital status, either single or married, they will not even want to break the seventh commandment/promise:

"You shall not commit adultery." 54

Adultery is really just another demonstration of the fact we are not happy with the home situation God is providing us with. The married person comes to feel that another person can fill their needs and desires better than the one he/she is married to and the result is adultery. Or the single person is too impatient to wait on the Lord and the same thing results.

People who have a problem in this area, at times attempts to deal with the problem of their sex drive by exercising more self-control. But that is working on the wrong problem. The real problem is that they have not allowed God to have completely control of their lives so they will be completely satisfied. This is evidenced by the fact that they are still coveting that which God hasn't given to them. The solution is not to dwell more on how to not commit adultery. For the more we worry about how to control our sex drives, the stronger they will become.

The real solution is to draw closer to God and think more on the wonderful things He has done for us and wants us to think about. Then our sex drives will come under the control of the Holy Spirit and they will be appropriate to our station in life. An old gospel song goes something like this.

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face. Then the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

This is the solution to the coveting problem and all that comes in its wake.

xxx Here again Jesus enlarges on our understanding of this problem area in the life. Jesus said:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." 55

The word lust is not referring to the appreciation of the beauty that can be seen in a person of the opposite sex. Lust is the drive that pushes a person to "have to have" that object of their desire, no matter what God or anyone else says. God has made women beautiful for men to appreciate and He has made men handsome for women to appreciate. As long as one goes no further, as long as one is completely satisfied with the status God has placed them in or has lead them to, there will not be any temptation to commit adultery. But if we do not allow God to completely control our lives, we will be very apt to not allow this promise to be fulfilled in our lives.

"The Jews prided themselves on their morality and looked with horror upon the sensual practices of the heathen. The presence of the Roman officers whom the imperial rule had brought into Palestine was a continual offense to the people, for with these foreigners had come in a flood of heathen customs, lust, and dissipation. In Capernaum, Roman officials with their gay paramours haunted the parades and promenades, and often the sound of revelry broke upon the stillness of the lake as their pleasure boats glided over the quiet waters. The people expected to hear from Jesus a stern denunciation of this class, but what was their astonishment as they listened to words that laid bare the evil of their own hearts!

"When the thought of evil is loved and cherished, however secretly, said Jesus, it shows that sin still reigns in the heart. The soul is still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. He who finds pleasure in dwelling upon scenes of impurity, who indulges the evil thought, the lustful look, may behold in the open sin, with its burden of shame and heart-breaking grief, the true nature of the evil which he has hidden in the chambers of the soul. The season of temptation, under which, it may be, one falls into

53 The Desire of Ages -Page- 225
54 Exodus 20:14
55 Matthew 5:27, 28
grievous sin, does not create the evil that is revealed, but only develops or makes manifest that which was hidden and latent in the heart. As a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he;" for out of the heart "are the issues of life." Proverbs 23:7; 4:23.  

Promise Six  

The last commandment/promise we have to look at is the most final in its results. We have seen how God has promised that if we are satisfied with what He has done for us that we will not misrepresent another person or bear false witness. We will not steal anything they have, nor will we covet that which belongs to someone else and be lead into adultery. Therefore if we have no desire for anything our neighbor has, we will not be troubled with the sixth command/promise:

"You shall not murder."

If we don't covet their reputation, their belongings, their mate, why would anyone want to kill them? But there is even more.

"All acts of injustice that tend to shorten life; the spirit of hatred and revenge, or the indulgence of any passion that leads to injurious acts toward others, or causes us even to wish them harm (for "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer"); a selfish neglect of caring for the needy or suffering; all self-indulgence or unnecessary deprivation or excessive labor that tends to injure health--all these are, to a greater or less degree, violations of the sixth commandment."

So when Christ is abiding in the heart and the person is allowing God to make these changes in his life, it will not just be outward correctness of behavior, but the wants and desires will change. This is the ONLY goodness that is acceptable to God. As Christ said in the sermon on the mountain, we can be guilty of murder when we become angry with a person. Controlling the emotions that boil up when we are irritated is possible. But God’s was is that He will take away the tendency we have to respond with irritation so we won't even become angry. His way is far superior to man's efforts to conform.

What is the Purpose of the Law?

Paul and James give us two different reasons the law was given to us on Mount Sinai. First Paul tells us that:

"Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith."

As we look at the Law of God and see how impossible it is to meet it's requirements on our own, we can then appreciate the efforts that Jesus made to perfectly keep the law for us. Then we will be lead to allow Him to do the same work in our lives. We then are more willing to enter into the New Covenant relationship where God does the work and we just give permission for Him to do it and don't resist Him.

James uses a little different illustration to communicate the same point. He said:

"For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does."

It really makes no difference if you think of the law as a tutor that shows us our weakness or a mirror, which shows us where we fall short. In either case, the Law of God was given as a law for the purpose of allowing Israel, and us today, to see how utterly impossible it is for mortals to keep Gods law. It was given to help us to make the right choice; that is to enter into the New Covenant relationship with God where “all the Lord says He will do.” Then all
of those commands which we readily admit we can not keep the become promises of what God will do in our lives with our permission.

"The law of God is the mirror to show man the defects in his character. But it is not pleasant to those who take pleasure in unrighteousness to see their moral deformity. They do not prize this faithful mirror, because it reveals to them their sins. Therefore, instead of instituting a war against their carnal minds, they war against the true and faithful mirror, given them by Jehovah for the very purpose that they may not be deceived, but that they may have revealed to them the defects in their character.

"Should the discovery of these defects lead them to hate the mirror, or to hate themselves? Should they put away the mirror which discovers these defects? No; the sins which they cherish, which the faithful mirror shows them as existing in their characters, will close before them the portals of heaven, unless they are put away, and they become perfect before God."  

**SUMMARY**

So here in these ten promises we have the Biblical standard for a good person. He will measure up to this standard. Not by his own efforts, however, but by entering the New Covenant agreement with the God of Heaven and allowing Christ to make him into this kind of person. This is a description of the only truly “good person.”

Would you like God to make you into the type of person described in this standard for a good person? He is willing, if you will let Him.

For further information, see Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14; Revelation 14:12

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Quiz – Chapter 10

I What standard for goodness does the Psalmist set? Psalm 25:8 ________________

II What invitation is extended to us? Psalm 34:8, 14

vs. 8 ________________________________________________________________________

vs. 14 ________________________________________________________________________

Also see Isaiah 1:16, 17

III How can we experience this goodness in our own lives? Psalms 37:3-9

vs. 3 _________________________________________________________________________

vs. 4 _________________________________________________________________________

vs. 5 _________________________________________________________________________

vs. 7 __________________________________________________________________________

vs. 8 _________________________________________________________________________

IV Who is it that makes us good, since we cannot make ourselves good? Ephesians 2:10 ___

V How good a job will He do? Philippians 1:6 ______________________________________

VI What is the job He will do in our lives? Ezekiel 36:26-29

"I will give you a ______________ ______________ and put a ______________ ______________ within you; and I will ______________________ the ______________ of ______________ and give you a ______________ ______________ of ______________ and I will put ______________ ______________ within you and cause you to ___________________ in ______________ _______________, and you will be careful to ______________________ my ______________ ___________________, so you will be ______________ ______________ and I will be ______________ _______________."

VII What three things does Micah say God has shown us that goodness is? Micah 6:8

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

VIII Where is this goodness placed? Luke 6:45 _________________________________
IX What does God place there? Hebrews 8:10 ____________________________

X What is the "Law" described as? Romans 7:16, 1 Timothy 1:8

XI How does Paul say we fulfill the law? Romans 13:8-10 ____________________________

XII Which law are we fulfilling? ___________________________________________

  Compare Romans 13:9 with Exodus 20:13-17

XIII How does Christ say we can fulfill the law? Matthew 22:34-40

XIV How does God liken the relationship between Him and His people? Hosea 2:19

  Also see 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22-27, 32; Jeremiah 31:32

XV What is the first promise God makes to those who enter into this New Covenant relationship? Exodus 20:3

XVI What does God next promise? Exodus 20:4-6

  "You shall not make for yourself __________ _______________ or any likeness of what is in heaven above
or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth."

XVII What is it that we will not take in vain? Exodus 20:7

  "You shall not take the ____________ of the Lord your God in _______________, for the Lord will not
_______________ ________ _____________ who takes His name in vain."

XVIII What is this name that we are not to take in vain. 1 Peter 4:14-16 ________________

XIX What does God call those who do not keep their vows to Him? Ezekiel 16:32

  Also see Jeremiah 3:1-14, 20; James 4:4

XX What is it that God does not want us to forget? Exodus 20:8 ____________________________
XXI Why is it important to Him? Exodus 20:10
"but the seventh-day is a __________________ of the _____________________..."

XXII What did Christ say His relationship was to the Sabbath?
Also see Matthew 12:8; Luke 6:5; Revelation 1:10

XXIII For what three other reasons are we to remember the Sabbath? Exodus 20:11
A. "For in ______ _________ the Lord ____________ the heavens and the earth and the sea an all that is in them,
B. and _________________________ on the seventh day:
C. Therefore the Lord _______________________
D. the Sabbath day and made it ____________________________"  

XXIV How are we to regard our parents? Exodus 20:12
_____________________________________________________________________________

XXV What comments does Paul make about this? Ephesians 6:1-3
_____________________________________________________________________________
Also see Colossians 3:20; 1 Corinthians 4:15, 16; 11:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:6

XXVI How does God summarize the last five promises? Exodus 20:17 __________________

XXVII If I do not covet, what else will I not want to do? Exodus 20:16 __________________

XXVIII How does Christ enlarge this promise? Matthew 5:33-36 _______________________
Also see Matthew 22:16-22;

XXIX What else will the New Covenant Christian not want to do? Exodus 20:15
_____________________________________________________________________________

XXX What actions will not be desirable to the person who is having these ten promises fulfilled in his life? Exodus 20:14
_____________________________________________________________________________

XXXI How did Christ enlarge on this promise? Matthew 5:27, 28
_____________________________________________________________________________
XXXII  What disaster will we be kept from if God is fulfilling these promises in our lives?  Exodus 20:13

Also see Matthew 5:21, 22

XXXIII  What is the function of the law according to

--Paul?  Galatians 3:24  ________________________________

--James?  James 1:21-25  ________________________________
In the past few lessons we have studied the fundamentals of what it means to be a Christian. These area subjects that many just assume that everyone knows about. Yet, as has been seen, few really know what is involved in them. Now in this lesson we will discover how to put these principles of the Christian life into operation and how to sustain a growing experience over the long haul. Because of the vast amount of information that could be discussed on this topic, this study will focus on some of the more fundamental aspects of the Christian life. The principles outlined here will give you a good basis upon which to build your personal study later.

**The Source Book**

1. God's word, the book we call the “Bible,” was written over a time span of about 1,500 years, by 35 authors writing 66 books. The last book in the Bible, Revelation, was written about circa 95 AD while the last book chronologically written, the Gospel of John, was penned about circa 100 AD. The Bible covers an amazing amount of subjects. It is not known if anyone has categorized all of them, but virtually every life experience is dealt with either formally or by example or principle.

God has watched over this book and protected it like no other book ever written. While at times, the number of copies of this book was very small; today they number in the multiple millions. Each year more new translations emerge, all in an effort to keep it in the language of the common people. The latest types of Bibles are on the computer, making the Bible easier then ever to research and study for those who earnestly desire to know God’s will for their lives.

**Translations**

Some of the translations are considered to be quite faithful to the original autographs, while others, called paraphrases are more intent on communicating ideas rather than a detailed rendition of the original. This results in some variant readings, but the same message will be found in virtually all copies of the Bible. That message is probably best summarized in the possibly best-known text in the entire Bible;

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."¹

This is the heart, sum and substance of all else that is written in God's word.

Paul told his young protégé, Timothy, to:

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth."²

**How To Study**

The wise student will approach the Bible much like they would approach any research project or learning experience. But unlike other research projects, we have been promised a divine tutor. Jesus promised this helper just before He left His disciples. He said:

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."³

So the first step one should take when they approach a study of God’s word is to ask, pray, for this divine helper. This is a resource no other research project can even hope to have. But we must be willing to allow Him to lead us, He will not force Himself on us.

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¹ John 3:16  
² 2 Timothy 2:15  
³ John 16:13
**BASIC CHRISTIANITY**

"If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself."  

The next major problem in studying the Bible is our personal opinions. Unless we are willing and able to set these aside, we will never come to an understanding of what God's word, the Bible, is really trying to tell us. Multiple degrees are of no value in knowing truth unless personal opinion is set aside and we surrender our opinions to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Closely related to this is the understanding of words. A good dictionary will be found to be an invaluable asset in Bible study. Often we may find that we are only using one definition of a word, a common one or one we have settled on, while it may be very possible that the author is using an entirely different meaning of the word. The context will determine this.

Likewise words evolve in their meanings. In the early years of the 20th century the English word "gay" in America meant someone who was happy, outgoing, friendly etc. As the end of the 20th century drew on, the same word came to refer to a homosexual. Certainly nothing like it's earlier meaning. This is not the only word, which has changed meanings, but it serves to illustrate the vast change some words can make.

Another important aspect is a willingness to obey and follow what God's word reveals to us. God doesn't waste time and effort on those who are determined to follow their own way and who are determined to not listen to His counsel. He will work with them for a while, but then they will find they have ignored this divine helper so long that they can't respond to Him. This makes for a very sad condition.

**Tests for Truth**

However, for every blessing that God has given mankind, there is a counterfeit the devil has invented to confuse and destroy. The same is also true in the way this divine helper will guide us in our study. There are many today who claim to speak for the Holy Spirit and therefore for God. They will claim various degrees of inspiration from and including special divine messages unique to them, on down to just special insight into knowing the meaning of God's word. Some of these will be telling the truth, some will be lying. One needs to know and apply the test the Bible has given to us to know the difference so we will not be deceived.

A number of these tests were discussed in lesson one, and they need to be reviewed often enough to keep them as a part of one's mental screening process. Following these inspired tests will save one from being deceived and lost in the end.

One of these tests, possibly the most important, is:

"To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. (light. KJV)."  

What the one who claims to be a messenger of God presents must agree with what the Bible has told us before.

Yet another very important test is that of loyalty to God's revealed word. Anyone who counsels anyone to not obey what is contained in God's word is a false guide. No man can change God's word. What is written is there for our instruction and to help us know God's will for our lives.

Jesus gave us a very important test through the apostle John.

"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." 

This love is not just the brotherly love common to both humans and animals, but the special divine love God alone can give us. This was taken up in lesson two.

**God's Love**

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4 John 7:17
5 Isaiah 8:20 (ESV)
6 John 13:35.
There are three types or facets of love known to the Greeks. They had special words to describe each of these facets. These words are: philos, eros and agape. Each one has clear, identifying features.

**PHILOS**
This is a description of brotherly love. It is the love based on relationships and can apply to both animate and inanimate objects that we feel belong to us. It is the love of the person or object we possess or believe we possess. In its pure form it is only based on "ownership" and not much more. "I" am the center of this kind of love. It asks the question: "Who is that person or what is that thing in relationship to me?" All animals and humans are born with it and it is very useful in bonding families and communities together. It seldom, as is also true with the other facets of love, acts alone. But relationship is the identifying feature of this aspect of love.

**EROS**
The Greeks used this word to identify the love based on emotion. It is identified by the emotional responses one has towards a person or object. It often mixes with philos, but it is unique from philos in that it asks the question: "How do I feel about this person or thing?" Like philos, all animate beings are born with it and it brings much happiness, as well as sorrow, into one's life. While often associated with sexual desires, eros is far from limited to that narrow range of feelings. Even an emotional response to a beautiful sunset or flower is an erotic response. Just because this type of love has been misused is no reason to ignore it or reject it. To do so would rob life of much of its pleasure God intended for us to enjoy.

**AGAPE**
This is the special divine love that is only available from a connection with God. It is a love based on principle, not on feelings or relationships. That doesn't mean it is totally separate from either relationships or feelings, but the other two are intended to be controlled by agape, not the other way around. In fact, neither our relational experiences nor our emotional experiences can reach their fullest satisfaction without agape love being in control. It is also true that agape love can't exist in a life that will not allow it to be in control of our feelings and relationships.

There is another fact about agape love that is important. The other two facets of love are centered on oneself, while Agape is others centered. Agape asks the question: "How can I help?" Also, both philos and eros are natural to all animate beings, while agape is only present when it is received from God. As stated above, it is one of the two unique signs of a true follower of Jesus. Unless one has both signs, they are not truly His disciple.

So our choice to be a Christian must be made on this agape level, a decision made on principle, not on feeling or relationships. The reason is that the choice founded on principle is more lasting. Feelings and relationships change. So it is with the decisions built on those types of love. But principle is the same no matter what one may feel about it or no matter how relationships change. It is the only solid basis for a decision to serve God.

**SIN**
There is much talk about sin and sinning in religious circles. As discussed in lesson 3, there are many misconceptions circulating around about what sin really is. The most popular, i.e. that sin is the transgression of the law, is based on half of a sentence in 1 John 3:4. But any doctrine based on half of a sentence, especially when the rest of the sentence, and the rest of the Bible say something different, is a flimsy position to hold. (You will find that this isn't the only commonly accepted doctrine built on such a flimsy foundation.)

In fact there are three other texts in the Bible, which identify or define sin. The two most clear ones are James 4:17 and Romans 14:23. After looking at all of the evidence we find that the best modern synonym for sin is “rebellion.” Sin is an attitude, not an action. However, most frequently the attitude is followed by an action, but

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7 NOTE: Actually the Greeks had four or five words that were used depending on the source, but their meanings can all be covered in these three.
not always. So we could really say that everything we do, good or bad, without trusting God is sin. Sin is not trusting God and that mistrust causes us to not obey Him.

**JESUS, THE SOLUTION TO THE SIN PROBLEM**

This trust concept is a hard one for humans to comprehend, since humans are so notably untrustworthy. So God "gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." The real nature of that gift is still something that humans are puzzling over and will never really understand in full. However, we can know enough about it to be able to accept the gift God has given to all who will accept it. Even more of a problem, it seems, is to know how to really accept Jesus as our Lord. Most comprehend the "Savior" part reasonably well, but the "Lord" part is much more difficult to put into action in our lives. This is because, in at least a number of nations, which have religious freedom, the concept of being a servant under a lord is a foreign concept, one that is very hard to accept. Freedom and independence, while part of God's program and an integral part of being a Christian, has been badly misrepresented by Satan. So most cannot comprehend that the truest freedom comes from being in total servitude to Jesus alone. Yet, when that becomes an accepted part of one's life the truest freedom one can experience becomes real, no matter what their state in this life might be.

**OLD OR NEW COVENANT CHRISTIAN**

One aspect of this freedom that God offers us through Jesus Christ is found in the covenant relationship He makes available to us. But along with everything else good, which God has offered, Satan created a counterfeit. In the Bible we find two covenants. They are commonly called the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. God never intended that there would be more than one covenant, the everlasting covenant that is variously called: My Covenant or the New Covenant. But Satan convinced God's people that they could do as well on their own. So they told God that all that He said, they would do. Some believe that such a response was a good one, but the problem was and still is that all God has said, we can't do it.

The heart of the everlasting covenant, now called the New Covenant, is that God will make us part of His family, representatives of heaven, and He will make us good. None of these three things is it possible for any being to do on their own. We can't adopt ourselves into God's family. We can't represent Him to anyone, nor is it possible to make ourselves good. Yet all of this God's people vowed to do. Which brings us to the only difference between the Old and the New Covenant, which is only one letter. The Old Covenant says: "All the Lord has said, we will do." While the New Covenant in essence says: "All the Lord has said, He will do." The difference is in who will do the work, the single letter: a "w" or an "H." The difference is whether we are relying on our efforts or on His power to effect the change in our lives.

**THE STANDARD FOR GOODNESS**

Since God's people determined to make themselves good in their way and wanted the Old Covenant, it became necessary for God to give them the specifications of what a good person really is. So He gave them His law, the Ten Commandments, the transcript of His character. But these are only commandments for those who live under the old covenant. The ones who are trying to make themselves good. For those under the New Covenant, those who have chosen to allow God to make the needed changes in their lives, these are ten promises. It contains the list of issues God intends to deal with in our lives and change as needed. And since we all have sinned and come short of His plan for us, we all have severe needs in this area.

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8 Proverbs 23:7; James 1:26
9 John 3:16
10 John 8:36
11 Exodus 19:8
12 Deuteronomy 5:29
13 Romans 3:23
God promises to so fill us with His love that He will be "number one" in our lives.\(^4\) So we will have a personal relationship with Him instead of worshipping inanimate objects. We will love Him so much that when we take the name of Christian that we will take the covenant we are making with Him seriously and not take His name in vain. Weekly we will look forward to meeting Him on the day of the week He has set aside as the rest day. It is our weekly "date with God." Our love to God will cause us to honor our parents. Also our love for God will cause us to be totally satisfied with all God has given to us and not attempt to gain for ourselves what our God has given to our neighbor.

Since we will be satisfied with what God has given us, we will not covet what He has given to others. We will not want to kill our neighbor. Nor will we want to steal from them. We will be happy with the marital status God has lead us to or is leading us to and not covet what our neighbor has. We will not misrepresent our neighbor, but protect their good name. All of these things will be the natural result of being filled with God's agape love and it will show that we are indeed followers of Christ, or Christians.

\(^{X}\) The relationship that God desires to have with us is likened to that between a husband and wife. It is the closest one we have on this earth that we can understand. God has attempted to place all truth on a level that we can understand. That is one reason why Jesus used parables so much, so we could understand truth.

This brings us up now to the study at hand, how to live the Christian life. Just how do we put all this into practical living instead of theory? That is the focus of what follows.

\(^4\) Exodus 20:3 (For the following statements in this paragraph and the next, see the following verses through verse 17.)
QUIZ – CHAPTER 11

I In lesson One on How to Study your Bible, what three points interested you in the discussion on how we got our Bible?

A. ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

B. ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

C. ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

II In the section on Preparation for Bible Study, what were the four points suggested concerning how to approach the study of the Bible?

A. ____________________________________________________________________________

B. ____________________________________________________________________________

C. ____________________________________________________________________________

D. ____________________________________________________________________________

III In the section on testing those who claim to have a message from God, what are two important general tests ALL such messengers must pass?

A. ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

B. ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

IV In lesson Two on "What is Love," what three types of love did we study and what were their identifying features?

A. TYPE _________________________________________________________________________
   FEATURE _______________________________________________________________________

B. TYPE _________________________________________________________________________
V On which level does God want us to use to make decisions, especially in our choice to be a Christian?

VI In lesson Three, what one word and what one phrase did you find best summarizes what is sin?

WORD

PHRASE

VII In lesson Four on Who Is Jesus Christ? what does it mean to accept Christ as "Lord" in your life?

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

VIII In lesson Five, what did you discover to be the difference between the Old and New Covenant?

_____________________________________________________________________________

IX When we studied the ten "promises" that God made to us, what did we find that they were promises concerning?

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

X In lesson Six, what relationship did God use to illustrate the connection (bond, union) between Him and His people?
Once we make the decision to become a Christian and ask God to make us into a good person, what is it that we have to do then, or is our part done? Many feel that once we choose to be on God’s side, our responsibility ends and we are carried into the kingdom of God with no more effort or changes needed in our lives. They feel that any needed changes will just happen but mostly they will come after we go to heaven. Is that what the Bible teaches? What will be the nature of the lifestyle the new Christian must embark upon, that will help bring him into a mature, full-fledged, member of God's family?

In the world of physical fitness, when one chooses to make for themselves a better body, they will enter into training of some sort. They will exercise, watch their diet and life patterns etc. They believe that: “If you don’t use it, you loose it.” There is really no difference in the act of becoming a Christian. Either one uses the gift God has given them at conversion, or they will loose it. In this lesson we will examine God’s word to find out just how we are to “use it” so we don’t “loose it.”

USE IT OR LOSE IT

In its simplest form, the responsibility of the one who enters into the New Covenant arrangement with God is that every time a question regarding what we are to do comes up, we will choose God's way. We will get into the habit of asking this question: “What would God do if He were in my place right now?” But how can we know God's way and get the power to make the right choice? Why is it that once a decision to serve God is made, the conflicts and troubles seem to start? Where is the joy, the peace, and the victory the Bible promises that a Christian should have? Some who present the gospel plan to us often promotes these benefits as the reward of being a Christian. What does it take for those promised benefits to become a reality in our lives? These objectives are attainable, but only if we go about seeking them in the right way.

WHERE IS THE PEACE?

1 Jesus made a promise to His followers while here on earth. He said:

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."¹

There are two kinds of peace referred to here. One is the peace that Christ gives; the second is the peace the world gives. The first comes from a right relationship with God; the second comes from having a conscience seared so badly that it no longer responds to the wooing of the Holy Spirit. One is desirable, the other is eternally fatal. Even many Christians mistakenly advocate the later kind, mistaking it for Heaven’s peace. This counsel will help.

"This peace is not the peace that comes through conformity to the world. Christ never purchased peace by compromise with evil. The peace that Christ left His disciples is internal rather than external and was ever to remain with His witnesses through strife and contention."²

² So often we look for the peace the world brings, believing that it is the peace Christ offers. This is no surprise because those who tell us about it do not have the heavenly peace themselves, so that is all they can tell about is the peace the world offers. Jesus, Himself, made this clear that what the world calls peace is not His peace, when He said:

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."³

¹ John 14:27. (For God's peace see: Psalms 119:165; Isaiah 26:3, 4, 12; 27:5; Romans 8:1-6 etc.)
(For the world's peace see: Proverbs 16:2, 3, 25; 30:20; Jeremiah 6:14, 15; John 16:2, 3; Romans 1:21-25; Ephesians 4:17-19; 1 Timothy 4:2)
² The Acts of the Apostles -Page- 84
³ Matthew 10:34
**BASIC CHRISTIANITY**

**BATTLE OF THE ARCHANGELS**

We are in, what many call, the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan. It is an all out war to the finish between Christ, the Son of God and Satan, His archenemy. This battle has been in progress for over 6,000 years, longer then the world has existed as a home for man, but it is about to come to an end. So when we join the ranks of the Christians, we change sides in this battle. There is nothing that is more calculated to bring up the ire of the satanic kingdom then this. There is no way to escape the battle; all we can do is choose which side we will be on. When Jesus came, He came to rescue those who had chosen to be part of His family and those who would make that choice, from the captivity that Satan has held them in. Satan will not give up easily, but the victory is assured if we just keep our hearts open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

With Christ's death on the cross, Satan became a defeated foe and we can know for a certainty that no matter how victorious his side may appear now, it is a short-lived prosperity. In the end he will be defeated. And the results of that defeat will be for all time and eternity. Note what the Psalmist learned:

> “When I pondered to understand this, [the prosperity of the wicked] it was troublesome in my sight until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end.

> Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.”

All their prosperity now is only evidence against them for the choice they made to turn their back on God who allowed them to have so much, and yet they still chose to serve Satan who has done nothing good for them at all. Just like with Adam and Eve. God had given them everything, but still Eve choose to obey Satan who had done absolutely nothing for her, instead of God who had given her everything she had. It doesn’t make much sense, does it? Yet people are making that same dumb choice every day.

> "In our own strength it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature. Through this channel Satan will bring temptation upon us. Christ knew that the enemy would come to every human being, to take advantage of hereditary weakness, and by his false insinuations to ensnare all whose trust is not in God. And by passing over the ground which man must travel, our Lord has prepared the way for us to overcome. It is not His will that we should be placed at a disadvantage in the conflict with Satan. He would not have us intimidated and discouraged by the assaults of the serpent. "Be of good cheer," He says; "I have overcome the world." [1 JOHN 16:33]."

1. **SPEND TIME IN PRAYER**

The first avenue that we have open to us to help in living the Christian life is the avenue of prayer. This is not some mysterious incantations, a turn of a prayer wheel, or the moving of a bead from one side to another, or some mumbo-jumbo, or chant or formal formula, but prayer the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. It is the communicating to God of our hopes, desires, problems, and anything else that concerns us. As in a marriage, it is vitally important to keep the lines of communication open. Problems arise when communication breaks down. The same thing happens in our spiritual marriage to God. Prayer is that channel of communication that keeps our relationship as a Christian healthy and happy.

> "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

But this wisdom only comes with a condition. It is this.

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4 John 10:29  
5 Psalm 73:16-18  
6 The Desire of Ages -Page- 122, 123  
7 James 1:5  

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"But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind." 8

We must believe that God will give us the wisdom and strength we ask for and then proceed as if it is an accomplished fact. It is Heaven's goal that we be victorious over sin and the father of sin, the Devil. God is more anxious that we succeed in the Christian life then we are, unfortunately. God knows that we cannot, in our own power, ever gain the victory over sin. Rebellion seems to be in our very genes and the very air we breathe. But just because it is impossible for us, doesn't mean for a minute that the goal is not achievable. We just have to allow God to do the work in us. For He says:

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." 9

AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO PRAY

One day Jesus was teaching the people and He wanted to get a point across to them. So as usual, He told them a story. The story was of a judge who was less than on the level in his dealings. In that same city there was a widow lady who had a legal claim against, or needed protection from, someone who was out to hurt her. But apparently the person trying to harm this widow lady had a lot of influence in that town and the judge was loathed to rule against them. But this didn't stop the lady. Instead she continued to press her case before the judge. Finally she wore him down and he gave a fair verdict, protecting her from her enemy. The point of the story is this; we are not to give up in pressing our petitions before God. 10 If an unrighteous judge will even finally rule fairly through the persistence of the plaintiff, how much more assuredly will God, the righteous judge will rule fairly? So as long as we have a request that is according to God's will, which are the only kind that are for our best good, we can be assured of a just response from God. 11 We just need to be persistent and help will come when God sees it is best for us.

Jesus didn't want us to be in the dark about how to pray. So when His disciples asked for guidance on how to pray, Jesus gave them a sample prayer. We find that prayer in Matthew 6, and often it is called "The Lord's Prayer." He begins this prayer with a phrase that carries a lot of meaning. He tells us to address our prayer to: "Our Father." 12 In making this statement, we are claiming that all other Christians are our brothers and sisters. In fact this is reflected in some church fellowships where the members call each other "brother" or "sister" instead of "Mr." or "Mrs." etc. Not that such titles are necessary, but it helps one to keep in mind the fact that those who choose to be Christians are really all of one family and are really brothers and sisters with God as our Father.

CONDITIONS FOR AN ANSWER TO OUR PRAYERS

We have already discussed one main prerequisite for an answer to our prayer, as set forth in the book of James. Mark also recorded the same concept from the teachings of Jesus.

"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you." 13

But just believing that we will receive an answer is not enough. The Bible lists several other conditions for answered prayer. Let's explore these here.

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8 James 1:6
9 Ephesians 2:10
10 Luke 18:1
11 NOTE: There are many instances on record where God has answered prayers that were not for the suppliant’s best good. However, they insisted and God gave them what they asked for, only to find it was not what they really wanted. God seems to allow these prayers to be answered so we will learn that we need to submit to His will, which is to give us only what is best for us.
12 Matthew 6:9
13 Mark 11:24
**BASIC CHRISTIANITY**

**A. ASK IN CHRIST'S NAME**

The next condition for answers to our prayers is:

"And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."  


Asking in His name means more than just repeating the name of Jesus at the beginning and/or end of our prayer. A person's name also represents their reputation or character. We must ask in the same character or have the same attitude that Jesus possessed. The most important aspect of that name/character is what Jesus shared with us. He said:

"When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me."  


When we are willing to not go anywhere, do anything, say anything or be anything except what God teaches us to do, then we are praying in the name of Jesus.

**B. WE MUST BE "POOR IN SPIRIT."**

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."  

[16] Matthew 5:3

To understand this condition, it might be helpful to consider what the opposite is to being "poor in spirit." A horse that is labeled as "spirited" or "has a lot of spirit," is usually quite headstrong and wants to do what it wants to do no matter what his master might want, or what obstacles it meets. So to be poor in spirit would be the opposite, or to be submissive, teachable, trainable, willing to follow instructions. This fits right in with the above condition of praying in the name of Jesus and not doing anything on our own initiative, but only doing what God instructs us to do. This is also in harmony with the New Covenant arrangement of allowing Him to do the work of making us good.

**C. WE NEED TO BE HUNGRY FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS**

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."  


A college president once made this statement in a chapel service I was in attendance at when in college.

"When an empty head is as painful as an empty stomach, education will have made a great gain."  

[18] Dr. Floyd Rittenhouse, Emmanuel Missionary College, now Andrews University, chapel, circa early 1959

This statement could be paraphrased to read:

"When a lack of righteousness is as painful as an empty stomach, Christianity will have made great gain."

In short, we must want our prayers to be answered. We must be in earnest to achieve, not just worldly gain, but spiritual gain. When that is our main goal, then God will willingly answer our prayers, for they are safe to answer.

**D. KEEP OUR PRAYERS SHORT AND MEANINGFUL**

"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him."  


The religious leaders, like many today, seemed to believe that many words made a better prayer. Or that repeating the same words or phrase endlessly is impressive to God. If we really believe that God loves us, we don't need many words to present our requests before Him. One Christian author made this comment about long prayers.

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[16] Matthew 5:3  
[18] Dr. Floyd Rittenhouse, Emmanuel Missionary College, now Andrews University, chapel, circa early 1959  
"Long, prosy talks and prayers are out of place anywhere, and especially in the social meeting. Those who are forward and ever ready to speak, are allowed to crowd out the testimony of the timid and retiring. Those who are most superficial generally have the most to say. Their prayers are long and mechanical. They weary the angels and the people who listen to them. Our prayers should be short and right to the point. Let the long, tiresome petitions be left for the closet, if any have such to offer. Let the Spirit of God into your hearts, and it will sweep away all dry formality." ²⁰

E. WE MUST ASK

This seems so simple that one might be tempted to ask why even suggest it. WHY? Because Jesus thought it was needful to tell us this.

"Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened." ²¹

The idea is here that our prayer must be more then just a "throw away" prayer, i.e. one that is offered for show, without any real concern about the answer. We must be in earnest about wanting an answer enough to put forth our own energies in the process. Or as someone said: "We must pray like it all depends on God and work like it all depends on us." That may be a bit of an overstatement, but the truth is somewhere in that quarter.

This brings up the question about the difference between helping to bring about the answers to our own prayers and trying to make ourselves good. Humans do tend to go to extremes. God will not carry us to heaven on a bed of ease. The Christian life is a battle and a march. God gives food to the birds of the air and the animals of the field and forest, but they have to go out and find it. He doesn't pour food in their mouths as they lay in their nest or den. On the other hand, we cannot change our hearts. They are deceitful and desperately wicked; we can't even know them ourselves. ²² Only God can change our hearts, but we must choose to allow Him to do it. So the solution is that we do and what God asks us to do, and don't try to accomplish what only He can do.

F. WE MUST BE WILLING TO FORGIVE

One main topic of Christian’s prayers will be asking for the forgiveness for our sins. Since all mankind has sinned, all of us will need to ask for God's forgiveness. However, forgiveness comes with two conditions. The first is that we must also want the cleansing that must accompany God's forgiveness. ²³

"And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions." ²⁴

And again:

“For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. “But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” ²⁵

This is the other equally important condition that we must be willing to forgive those who sin or trespass against us, as the King James Version reads.

Jesus told a story to illustrate this fact. ²⁶

THE PARABLE OF THE SELF-CENTERED SERVANT

Once there was a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. He had a servant who owed him a fantastic amount of money. By some people's calculations, this debt was well over 10 million dollars. More money

²⁰ Gospel Workers, page 325:1
²¹ Matthew 7:7, 8
²² Jeremiah 17:9
²³ 1 John 1:9
²⁴ Mark 11:25
²⁵ Matthew 6:14, 15
²⁶ Matthew 18:22-35
then he could ever hope to see in several life times. The king called him in to make arrangements for payment. 
The man fell down before the king and begged for mercy. Debtors in that time were thrown into jail until they paid 
up. So the King not only didn't throw him in jail, but he forgave the whole debt. 

When he this servant left the courtroom, the he met a man who owed him a very small amount, probably less then 
$10.00. The forgiven debtor seized the second debtor by the throat and demanded payment from the person who 
owed him the money. When the second debtor also begged for time to pay, the one who had just been forgiven 
$10,000,000.00 or more, caused the one who owed him less then $10.00 to be thrown into jail until he paid in full. 

Bystanders who witnessed this response of one who had been forgiven so very much, who had witnessed the 
magnanimous forgiveness of the king, when they saw the hard-heartedness of the one who was forgiven, they 
reported to the king what had happened. At that point the king called his servant back into court and turned him 
over to the tortures until he paid all in full. His forgiveness for his debt was directly tied to the way he had handled 
one who had done him wrong. The lesson is the same for us today. If we take an unforgiving attitude towards 
others, we are in essence telling God that that is how we want Him to deal with us. This is never a safe position to 
be in. 

G. WE MUST BELIEVE GOD WILL HEAR AND ANSWER OUR PRAYERS 

When we pray, we must believe that God loves us and is willing to hear and answer our prayer. To pray, not 
believing that it is of any value, or that God will not hear us makes praying a waste of time. Jesus said: 

"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they 
shall be granted you." 

Some believe that such blind faith is presumption. And indeed it can be if we are knowingly not complying with 
one or more of the other conditions. But if we have done our part, we can rest assured that God will hear our 
prayers. 

Belief is more then just a mental state of mind that we are sure the request will be answered just as we asked for it. 
Here is an area where modern word meanings do not convey the whole picture. Belief also includes trust. We trust 
that God will hear our prayer and answer in THE BEST WAY not necessarily in the way we ask. We will 
recognize that God's superior wisdom may see that what we ask for we really wouldn't want if we could see the end 
from the beginning. So God may answer with a "No" or maybe even with a "Wait awhile" instead of the "Yes" we 
think we would like. So when we "believe in God" we must include with that belief that He will answer in the way 
that is best for us and the way that will not only give us the best here, but also prepare us for the home in heaven He 
is preparing for us. 

H. WE MUST PUT AWAY ALL OUR SIN 

A vitally important condition for answered prayer is this one. 

"If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear;" 

The heart that is in rebellion, which is harboring concepts that are known or could be known if we choose to know, 
to be out of harmony with God's revealed will, can only have one prayer heard by God. That is the prayer of 
submission and request for forgiveness. Choosing to do things God's way is crucial to getting an audience, through 
prayer, with the King of the Universe. Many, who take the name of Christian, believe that God isn't particular. 
That God will overlook their pet sins and will still hear and answer their prayers. Oh, yes, their prayers may be 
answered, but it isn't necessarily God who is answering them. Satan loves to answer these types of prayers in order 
to encourage rebellion among those who claim to be Christians. So just because a prayer is answered is in no way 

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27 Mark 11:24  
28 Psalms 66:18
proof positive that God answered or that this answer is God’s will for us.\(^{29}\) Only if the heart and the resulting answer is in harmony with His revealed will, can we be sure it was God who answered our prayer.

I. WE MUST LOVE TO LEARN ABOUT GOD'S WILL FOR OUR LIVES

The wisest man who ever lived had some sage advice for those who approach the God of heaven in prayer. Having tasted all that life could offer, he could speak from personal experience. It is a wise person who will learn from other people's mistakes. Here is what he shares with us from his own experience.

"Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they shall not find me, because they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would not accept my counsel; they spurned all my reproof. So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be satiated with their own devices."\(^{30}\)

When we insist on having things our way, God will honor that insistence, but it is to our detriment. Solomon learned this the hard way. Note the summarization he came up with after having explored it all.

"The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil."\(^{31}\)

J. WE MUST CONSENT AND OBEDY

The Old Testament prophet, Isaiah has a good summary for conditions for answered prayer. Let's let him speak.

"So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you, Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless; Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the Lord has spoken."\(^{32}\)

"Let the soul be drawn out and upward, that God may grant us a breath of the heavenly atmosphere. We may keep so near to God that in every unexpected trial our thoughts will turn to Him as naturally as the flower turns to the sun.

"Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." James 5:11. His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Psalm 147:3. The relations between God and

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\(^{29}\) In Numbers 22, we read the story of Balaam and his cursing Israel. God finally allowed him to go in response to the call of Balak, but this was not God’s will for him. The end results were that he was slain with his new friends.

\(^{30}\) Proverbs 1:28-31

\(^{31}\) Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14

\(^{32}\) Isaiah 1:15-20
each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His
watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son."33

HOW OUR PRAYERS ARE ANSWERED

Once we have come into compliance with the conditions for answered prayer, who is it that answers our prayers?

That question is partially answered by whom we surrender our will to. If we are insistent on doing things our way
like what happened with Balaam, or following the ways of society or our peer group, then we are not complying
with the conditions for God to answer our prayers. In that case we may answer our own prayers or Satan may give
us what we ask for. Or, in some cases, God may answer to help us realize that what we prayed for was not best for
us. But if have complied, then:

VIII "the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own
initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. "He shall
glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you."34

Jesus gave His word that He would not leave us without help. Since His responsibilities were in other areas, He
promised the Holy Spirit as a Helper to stand along side of us and answer our prayers for us.

IX Not only that, He would even help us to pray.

" . . . the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself
intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of
the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."35

Imagine this! Heaven will not only hear and answer our prayers, but will help us to even know what we should
pray for and how we should make those petitions! See, God is most interested in seeing that we are able to live
forever with Him. Heaven will do all it can; short of violating our free will, to help us conquer the sin problem in
our lives. So if we fulfill the simple conditions that are necessary, we can have answers to our prayers.

X The major way that the Holy Spirit uses to help us find the answers to our prayers is through the study of the
Bible. This has long been recognized as the source of truth. In Jesus time, it was seen to be the source truth, but its
instructions were not followed in spirit. Jesus told the religious leaders of His day:

"You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear
witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life."36

They knew the facts, but they refused to connect with the source of all truth and in fact have eternal life. We must
not just know the answers, but we must know Jesus, the ultimate source of the answers to our prayers.

QUESTION

From a study of the previous texts, what is the first channel that the Lord will use to answer our prayers?

CAREFULLY STUDY GOD’S WORD

XI At the very beginning of this search for the very basics of christianity, we discussed various ways on how we are
to approach the Bible and study it. Paul gave his protégé, Timothy, some good counsel on how to study God's
word.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling
accurately the word of truth."37

Notice the two things here.
First of all we are to be diligent. Slothful, casual, half-hearted interest in God's word will never help the student to find truth. We must be diligent. We must approach it as a master craftsman approaches his craft.

Secondly we must be accurate. Much Bible study today, even among supposed Bible scholars is far from accurate. But this is usually because the conditions for answered prayer have not been conformed to and there is another spirit, other then the Holy Spirit guiding the student's thinking.

This is why the first step in Bible study must be to pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us. Otherwise truth will forever remain a mystery to us, as it did to the highly trained Bible scholars in the time of Christ.

**SPECIAL DIVINE GUIDANCE**

However, there are some questions that cannot be answered with a text of scripture or even a principle from scripture. That does not mean that God is without channels to guide us. He has yet another way to answer our prayers.

"And I will lead the blind by a way they do not know, In paths they do not know I will guide them. I will make darkness into light before them and rugged places into plains. These are the things I will do, and I will not leave them undone."38

When there is no scriptural answer to our prayer (and we must be sure that we are not just ignoring it or setting it aside) God will arrange circumstances in such a way to guide us. He will lead us in the dark ways, in the rugged parts of our lives where not even the light of the Bible can penetrate.

"Constantly He is sending His angels to those who, while surrounded by circumstances the most discouraging, pray in faith for some power higher than themselves to take possession of them and bring deliverance and peace. In various ways God will reveal Himself to them and will place them in touch with providences that will establish their confidence in the One who has given Himself a ransom for all, "that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." Psalm 78:7."39

It is through divine providences that He will lead those who are praying for guidance and are honest in their hearts yet cannot find an answer in the scriptures. Circumstances will be so arranged that we will be able to see His will.

Then, however, we must act on that information and follow that direction in order for Him to continue to lead. If we do not act on His leading it indicates that we have a heart problem, an unwillingness to obey when it is not in accord with our own desires and ambitions. Or it may indicate a spirit of unbelief. If we pray for guidance and then refuse the guidance when it comes, it shows that we do not trust God's answer to our prayers.

**FOUR WAYS TO KNOW GOD IS LEADING US**

As with the tests we found for the prophets, or those who claim to have a message from God, the Bible also gives us tests to apply to know that it is the God of heaven who is answering our prayers.

Not unexpectedly, the first test is that we must consciously complied with the conditions for our prayers for guidance to be answered.

"And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."40

This requires being honest with ourselves, something that is not always easy to do. But when we are in earnest about being in conformity to God's will, we can have the assurance that He does in fact hear us.

A. The second test is that we must believe, i.e. trust, that God will and can guide us.

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38 Isaiah 42:16
39 PROPHETS AND KINGS -PAGE 377, 378
40 1 John 5:14
"And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it shall happen. And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."" 41

James tells us that if we don't really believe that God will hear and answer, we ask in vain and our asking is likened to the surf pounding on the seashore. There is a lot of noise, but the faith of the one presenting that petitioner is as unstable as sand and water. God will always answer the prayer of faith, that we are assured of by God’s own word.

B. To find this third test, let's go with Jesus as He pleads with God in the last night before He was betrayed and crucified. He and eleven of His disciples (Judas was off betraying his Lord) have made their way out of the city gates to a place outside of the wall called the Mount of Olives. Here He told His disciples to watch and pray.

"And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? "Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done."" 42

Here the Son of God sets an example for us, which if followed will assure us of being heard in the throne room of the Universe. His prayer to His Father was: “Not my will, but Thy will be done.” If we are truly willing to accept whatever answer God provides, we can be sure it is from God. But if we only want God to rubber-stamp our desires, we might as well forget about hearing an approval from God. Even if what we are asking might otherwise be OK. If we want our way to be done, God can't even bless our otherwise good plans. Remember our discussion about sin. It is the attitude of wanting things our way. God will not answer such a sinful prayer. The only exception will be when our will is so submitted to His will that they are one and the same. Then it is not in reality our will, but His will being worked out in us.

C. The fourth test is whether the answer we desire is in conformity with God's revealed will. Are we consciously choosing to do His way as revealed in the Word of God? If our prayer is to be able to follow His revealed will, then

"whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us." 43

If this is our most earnest desire, then we can know for a certainty that God is hearing and will answer our prayer in the way that is best for us. This is His promise.

**QUESTION**

From a study of the previous texts, what is the second channel that the Lord will use to answer our prayers?

**SPECIAL DIVINE REVELATION**

XIV There is one final way that God will use, but it is very rarely needed, because probably 99% of our prayers can be answered either through a study of the Bible and God arranging circumstances.

"Your ears will hear a word behind you, “This is the way, walk in it,” whenever you turn to the right or to the left." 44

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41 Matthew 21:21, 22
42 Matthew 26:39-42
43 1 John 3:22, 23
44 Psalm 30:21
But in the case where God’s word and the direction of circumstances are not enough, God will still communicate directly with His faithful children, just like with Abraham and others in the Bible. There are severe limitations to this way of gaining information from heaven.

The most important one is that the counsel God gives is ONLY for the one He gives it to. The message will never be for anyone else, for when that happens all of tests of a prophet must be applied and no one who God has not called will pass those tests. God alone chooses who He wants as His special messenger that He reveals His will to in ways outside of the Bible and the arranging of circumstances. This is not something a person chooses without being approached by God. If they do believe that God has given the special relationship to them, then they must be tested by all of the tests of a prophet we looked at near the beginning of this study.

This counsel given by voice communication is never contrary to what is found in God’s word. It will always be in harmony in principle with all the other instructions found in God’s word.

Those who are constantly hearing voices are not hearing from heaven. This channel of communication is only rarely used. Not even the patriarchs of the Bible are recorded of having constant communication in this manner. When you consider the number of times they heard the voice of God over the period of their lives, it would not be a very common occurrence. In most cases, only a few times in a lifetime.

We have an example of God using this channel of communication in the life of Abraham, the father of the faithful. Abraham and Sarah, his wife, had not had any children. Then when Sarah was long past childbearing age, she conceived Isaac, the son of promise. But when Isaac became a young man, God spoke to Abraham and made a most unusual request. He asked Abraham to take his only son out and kill him as a sacrifice. You can read the story in Genesis 22. So Abraham took Isaac up to a mountain where God led him. He bound Isaac, placed him on the altar and raised his knife offer up the sacrifice of his only son. But notice what happened.

"But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." And he said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

This third channel, that of direct, divine guidance, is not used very frequently. If a person finds that he is receiving many messages of this nature, he would be wise to check these messages very closely with the tests of the Spirit found in the first lesson. Nevertheless, it is comforting to know that God will, in the last resort, speak to us personally if we are sincere in wanting to do His will and He cannot reveal His will to us in any other way.

**QUESTION**

From a study of the previous texts, what is the third channel that the Lord will use to answer our prayers?

**ROADBLOCKS TO ANSWERED PRAY**

Prayer is the divinely ordained method by which we can present our petitions to God and He alone chooses the way, that He knows is the best way, in which to answer. Often we place roadblocks in the way of the answer and then wonder why God fails to answer. These roadblocks can take form in many ways. One common one is asking for something, which if we could see the end from the beginning, we would not want anyhow. Another is asking for something that is just to fulfill a lust we have, but which we really don't need or is not even good for us. These are just a couple reasons God seemingly doesn't answer our prayers. He loves us so much and He is too good to give us answers that will not be good for us.

So when we find our prayers are not being answered, or the answers are not in accordance to the instructions found in God's word, we should check to see if we haven't set up some roadblocks to our getting help from heaven. This has been a frequent problem all through the history of the world. Because this is such a prevalent problem, God has given us a record of the mistakes of the past as examples for us to learn from.

"...and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to

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45 Genesis 22:11, 12
man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."  

The human heart is very cunning and we can often find that we are deceiving ourselves. This is the worst type of deception. This is why one of the first things we must do when studying God's word is to set aside all preconceived opinions. Otherwise truth will always be beyond our reach.

When Solomon was dedicating the magnificent temple he had built according to the plans drawn up by his father David and approved of by God, God responded with a universal condition to having our prayers answered. He said when:

"My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Notice the things mentioned here.
First - "humble themselves (confess sin),
Second - pray,
Third - seek His face (seek God's will),
Forth - turn from their wicked ways (repent).

These are the universal truths needed to maintain a connection with heaven. It should not be any surprise that they are also the conditions for answered prayer.

As we noted earlier, prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. No meaningless repetitions will gain an audience with the God of the Universe. Nor will prayers that are just repeated like a good-luck charm find their way to the throne of the Universe. No, God wants to have meaningful communication with His people. He wants to be a real part of our lives.

Through the prophet Jeremiah God has said:

"For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord,' plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found by you,' declares the Lord,' and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares the Lord,' and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile."

How could we expect to have a better friend then this? One who has our well being at heart.

But just like there are things, which can bring in broken communication in a friendship, in a home or in any relationship, there are also things that can cause our prayers to not be heard by God. We have already noted a couple of them, i.e. vain repetitions and meaningless noise. But there is even a worse barrier to our prayers. One that many do not even realize exist, because they have turned a blind eye to its existence.

"If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear;"

Wickedness is just another word for sin, missing the mark, the attitude of rebellion or a broken relationship.

Some thinking person will say about now, "Whoa here! There is a major problem here. Since it is only through praying that I can get forgiveness and if God will not hear my prayer if I have sin in my life, then I have a real problem."

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46 1 Corinthians 10:11-13
47 2 Chronicles 7:14
48 Jeremiah 29:11-14
49 Psalms 66:18
Let's reread the text. "If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear." The key to this seeming conundrum is in the word "regard." Webster's Dictionary of the English language offers these definitions among others.

"1. to look upon or think of with a particular feeling: to regard a person with favor. 2. to have or show respect or concern for. 3. to think highly of; esteem."

In short one could say that sin is guarded or held in high respect in the life, we are regarding sin in our lives. If this is the case, God will not hear our prayer. Sin is the attitude of rebellion, as we found in an earlier lesson. As long as rebellion or doing things our way is held in high respect, God just will not hear our prayers. Today there are even songs presenting the idea of “doing things my way.” The core message in a lot of advertising is: “Do your own thing, don’t let others tell you what to do” when all the time the advertiser is trying to tell us what to do.

In contrast to the above attitude, the prayer of the person who has come to see sin as it really is: A deadly force that is separating them from eternal life. Their most earnest prayer will be to have God take all sin, no matter of what nature, out of their lives. That person's prayers will be gladly heard especially the prayer for wisdom to come back to God with repentance. They are not regarding or guarding sin, but seeking deliverance from it.

Therefore the main burden of every true Christian’s prayer will be:

"Teach me to do Thy will, For Thou art my God; Let Thy good Spirit lead me on level ground."

This kind of prayer is as sweet music to God’s ears. It is the delight of every agency of heaven to respond to such a prayer, honestly expressed from a sincere heart.

Just as in any relationship, we shouldn’t only communicate with our friend when we need help. If it is a true friendship, we will want to make contact as often as possible. The same is true with our forever friend, God.

"Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need."

The blessing of any relationship is in maintaining that relationship. Friends, at least on this earth, seem to have a habit of coming and going. Circumstances change and those who are close to us one day may slip away and others take their place. While no true friend can ever be replaced, others sometimes will become more active in our lives then those who have come before. Lifelong relationships are rare even as life long marriages are becoming less common. One major reason for this is the many crises, which come into our lives. Some of these are by our own doing, others through no fault of our own. Feelings become hurt, people move, interests change etc. But our friendship with God never needs to be affected with any of these.

Unlike with human friends, distance is never an issue with God. God's interests never changes and His feelings are not fickle, like human's tend to be and subject to change. So with Him, we can safely plan for the long haul. He wants that type of friendship and offers it to us.

So He wants us to come to Him in prayer, just for the fun of maintaining the relationship. We don't have to have any special need, except to desire to maintain communication. He can never be burdened with our prayers. He wants us to share with Him our joys, sorrows and our ups and downs. Our successes and failures are all the same to Him. When we have established this type of friendship, then when an emergency comes, coming to God is the most natural thing we can do. Then when we have a need, we know that our special friend will be there to help us.

“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:16

Unlike with earthly friends, time is not an issue with God. We can come to Him at any time, for as long as we like. But just like with other things, which are important in our lives, we should set aside time for it, or it just might not get done. One good time for prayer is in the morning. The psalmist recorded:

50 Psalms 143:10
51 Hebrews 4:16
"In the morning, O Lord, Thou wilt hear my voice; in the morning I will order my prayer to Thee and eagerly watch."\(^{52}\)

Speaking with God should be the first thing our thoughts turn to when we awaken each morning. It need not be a long formal prayer; it might just be a three-word prayer: "Good morning, God!" After we get up and as part of our preparation for the day it is very good to spend some time in Bible study and prayer, at which time our requests for guidance through the day, our thanks for the new day and raising those who are important to us in our lives before the throne of grace can be done. This special time cannot be replaced with any other time during the day. There is nothing better then starting the day with God.

Another time that is good for prayer is at mid-day.\(^{53}\) Touching bases with our best friend as we pause during the busy activities of the day just helps to maintain the realization that in all of our activities,

"Thou God seest me."\(^{54}\)

This reminder that all we are doing during the day is in full view of the God of the Universe can help us order our ways in a way He will approve. He still sees us no mater whether we think of it or not. Of course, no day is really complete unless we end it with God. Someone once said:

"A day bound in with God will never come unraveled."

So in the evening, just before retiring for the night, it is well to tell God, our best friend, "Good night." Share with Him what happened during the day if we need someone to talk to. When we have a clear conscious before God, it helps us sleep much better. In reality, there is not time that is not appropriate to talk to God.\(^{55}\) God is willing to listen to us whenever and wherever we are in order to maintain that forever friendship.

**THINGS TO AVOID IN OUR PRAYERS**

\(^{xxii}\) A point that has been repeated several times is that we should avoid meaningless expressions.

"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words."\(^{56}\)

In many religions prayers are nothing more then ritual. Of course that doesn't mean that ritual can't creep into our prayers too, but for example in some religions prayers are written on a piece of paper and placed on a "prayer wheel" and then set to turning. This is just one example of many, many other such methods. The key word in this text is: "meaningless." Or, a prayer that is just made to fulfill an obligation, without one’s heart being in it. Like a little child who is taken to the home of relatives whom they may have never met and they are suppose to give all of the relatives a hug. There is a very good chance that those hugs are "meaningless." They are just given to satisfy their parents who may love the relatives dearly. But it takes time for the child to develop that same love for these relatives. The main point is that God wants us to pray from our hearts, not just a mechanical repetition.

In 1 Kings 18, we find a most interesting story. Israel had turned away from their god, the God of heaven and started to worship one of the Canaanite god's, Baal, the god the Canaanites believed controlled the weather and seasons. So God withheld the rain from Israel and there was a severe drought in the land. Read the whole story because there are other very interesting things that happened that will not be included here.

But the prophet of God, Elijah, challenged the priests of Baal and priestess of Ashtoreth, on God’s command, to a duel, a showdown. Not with weapons, but with a challenge to their respective god, to prove which god was the true God. So all of the priests of Baal, the priestess of Ashtoreth didn’t come, were gathered together to Mt. Carmel, where Elijah met them. The contest was to see which god could bring fire down from heaven in response to a call

\(^{52}\) Psalms 5:3  
\(^{53}\) Psalms 55:17  
\(^{54}\) Genesis 16:13  
\(^{55}\) Ephesians 6:18  
\(^{56}\) Matthew 6:7
from their prophet/priest/priestess. And this is the part of the picture we want to look at. Notice what the record says.

"Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, "O Baal, answer us." But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made. And it came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened." So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them. And it came about when midday was past, that they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention."\(^{57}\)

This is an example of how not to pray. With all of the noise and confusion, there was no answer from their god, because he was not the true God. But now notice what happens. When it came time for the evening sacrifice, Elijah called an end to the nonsense and called the people to the altar of the Lord, which had been specially prepared with a ditch dug all around it. Elijah prepared the sacrifice and then poured water all over it. He had enough water poured over the sacrifice and altar to fill even the ditch surrounding it. Now listen to Elijah’s prayer.

"Then it came about at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that Thou, O Lord, art God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again."\(^{58}\)

No shouting, dancing, disfiguration or loud music. No formality, stilted language or stained glass lingo. Elijah’s prayer was just a plain and simple prayer to his life-long friend. But this prayer brought results. Fire came down from heaven, consumed the offering, the wood, and the stones of the altar and even licked up the water in the ditch. All in response to a simple heartfelt prayer that was completely in tune with God's will. We can have that same effectiveness today if we pray in the same way Elijah prayed.\(^{59}\)

But not all prayers are answered in such dramatic ways, but they are still answered. To illustrate, let's look at another Bible character who had his prayer answered in a totally different way. Paul, the most prolific writer of the New Testament, had a "thorn in the flesh" which presumably was poor eyesight. He prayed just as earnestly as Elijah did, submitting his will just as fully as Elijah did, but notice the results.

"Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me."\(^{60}\)

Paul's prayer was answered, but the answer was "No." It will be the same with us too, at times. Sometimes God will answer prayers in a dramatic fashion with a resounding "Yes." Other times it will be with a resounding "No." But the hardest answers to understand are the ones where God says: "Wait awhile." God answers our prayers, but in the time that is best for us. Notice this note of encouragement.

"Not without a purpose does God send trial to His children. He never leads them otherwise than they would choose to be led if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as workers together with Him. He subjects them to discipline to humble them, to lead them, through trial and affliction, to see their weakness and draw near to Him. . . ."\(^{61}\)

As we close this discussion on prayer, notice another favorite passage on the subject.

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\(^{57}\) 1 Kings 18:26-29  
\(^{58}\) 1 Kings 18:36, 37  
\(^{59}\) Malachi 4:5  Compare Revelation 2:20 ff.  
\(^{60}\) 2 Corinthians 12:8, 9  
\(^{61}\) In Heavenly Places, page 267:2
"The darkness of the evil one encloses those who neglect to pray. The whispered temptations of the enemy entice them to sin; and it is all because they do not make use of the privileges that God has given them in the divine appointment of prayer. Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray, when prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence? Without unceasing prayer and diligent watching we are in danger of growing careless and of deviating from the right path. The adversary seeks continually to obstruct the way to the mercy seat, that we may not by earnest supplication and faith obtain grace and power to resist temptation."  

For the student who wants to see more of what the Bible has to say about prayer, the following text will be useful for study.

2. CHOOSE GOD'S WAY

Besides praying, there is another important part of the Christian life. When God made man, God gave him a gift that no other member of the animal kingdom has. That special gift is the power of moral choice. He made us to be "free moral agents." I.e., we had the privilege who we would serve God or some other authority we might choose. This gift of being a free moral agent is the primary aspect of our being that sets us apart from the rest of the animal kingdom. This special gift is ours to use any way we want to use it. In theological terms it is called "Free Moral Agency." But it simply means we can choose which master we want to serve Christ or Satan.

Included in this is our right to choose which program we will follow. The demands of Satan are exhibited through our carnal natures. The promises of a loving all-powerful Creator will be seen through our regenerated life. The choice is ours alone to make. While we must choose to submit to one force or the other, that choice will mold our decision-making ability and/or hamper our exercise of free moral agency. In the end, it is our decision and one we will reap the result of and must give an account for in the end.

An important factor of free moral agency is that we must be able to have what we choose. If in fact we are free moral agents, we must also receive the results of our choice, good or bad. This does not mean that if I want a new car I can just go to the dealer's lot and drive off with one and it becomes mine. The dealer is also a free moral agent. That action would be stealing and the law would step in and I would have to return it and be punished for the action my free choice caused me to perform. This is getting what we choose. If I choose to break the law then I get the results of my choice, i.e. punishment.

Unlike Satan, God never forces our will. Satan will use peer pressure, our own desires and wants, misinformation and any other diabolical trick he can think of to force our will. God will only use truth and love. He will use Christians to encourage us, He will use the Holy Spirit working on our conscience to guide us and He will draw us with His love, but He will not force us. If He did, we would cease to be free moral agents. God considers that so valuable that this is one reason Jesus came to die on Calvary, to restore that lost gift to us.

Returning to the story of Elijah and the priests of Baal previously mentioned. In this story we find the primary choice we all must make.

"And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word."

The initial response of the people then is often the response people make today. In spite of the mighty miracle they had just witnessed. In spite of all God had done for the nation of Israel over the ages. The people were loathed to give up on their Baal worship, even though it had failed so miserably, they would not choose for God. Pride of opinion, the greatest barrier to truth there is, stood in the way of the obvious. So they said not a word. We are

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62 Steps to Christ, page 94:2
64 1 Kings 18:21
facing that same decision today. Just what is your response? Are you willing to speak up for the obvious and serve
the God of heaven and earth? Or are the earthly ties still too strong and silence is your response too?

**HOW TO RESPOND TO GOD'S INVITATION**

The idea of "choosing God's way" seems simple enough. As a saying that was once popular goes: "Just do it!"
But, there is a little more then that to the process. See, choosing God's way is more then just an outward action or
verbalization of a rote, set, phrase or set of words. Remember the discussion about sin being an attitude of
rebellion? Well, doing things God's way is the opposite way to that, or the attitude of cooperation. It is a whole
mind change. This can only happen when, as Paul puts it, we:

"Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."  

So the first part of "choosing God's way" is to first of all focus on God's instructions. Spend time each day in God's
word. Develop a love for heavenly things. Pray for that love to fill your heart. Pray for fellowship with others
who have that same goal in life. All of this is involved in "setting our minds on things above."

Notice the progression, which naturally happens when we choose to set our minds on things above.

"For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed,
then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."  

Self dies and we cease to be so all consumed about our own welfare. This is a sign that God is filling our hearts
with the His special agape type love. As concern for self-dies away, then our opinions and desires become so
blended with Christ's that it can be said that we are "hid in Christ." But there is more here too. We cease to try and
"do battle" with Satan and his temptations. We "hide" in Christ, we get behind Jesus, one might say, and let Him
fight the devil and his suggestions. All bravado is gone and we realize our total inability to stand up to Satan’s
wiles and we hide when he attacks. Isn’t this a cowardly approach? So what? It keeps us safe from a foe who is
much stronger then when we are. In reality, that is the smart approach. When this happens, we will gain the victories
over sin and when Jesus is revealed in glory, we will also share in that glory.

This is not unlike two people who marry and stay in love for a long time. When they have sought to make the other
happy for a long time, soon one finds it hard to know where one person ends and the other begins. They operate as
one. The same thing must happen with the relationship between Jesus and us, and it will happen if we immerse
ourselves, or hid ourselves, in Jesus and His way of life. We will be so submitted to God’s will that our greatest joy
will be found in obeying His slightest wish. When this happens, we are safe to save.

When "hiding in Christ" becomes our primary goal in life, Paul lists some other things that will happen as a
natural result of that choice. Paul, in writing to the Christians at Colossae, said that since he had heard of their love,
which the Holy Spirit had given them, he hadn't ceased to pray for them. His prayer was that they would also be
filled with the knowledge of His will in spiritual things and be given special understanding. This would result in
their walking or acting in a way which is characteristic of a Christian. They would be pleasing to God in all
respects. They would be bearing the fruit, or having the natural responses to the Holy Spirit living in their life
which comes naturally from a fuller knowledge of God's will.

When the life is bearing the fruits of the spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22-24, it is then that we have the power to
attain to the consistent Christian life. The life, which is patient, the life, which has the joy many talk about, but few
really understand. The joy that Satan has counterfeited by boisterous music, drama and other entertaining functions
is a joke beside the Joy God promises. These things are just the counterfeit of the joy that Jesus promises. The joy
that can only be attained to in the way outlined in this passage of Colossians.

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65 Colossians 3:2
66 Colossians 3:3, 4
67 Colossians 1:9
68 Ibid verse 10
69 Ibid. verse 11
BASIC CHRISTIANITY

But the best is left to last. We not only have joy, power, patience and consistent goodness here, but this qualifies us to inherit the inheritance of the saints. This agrees with one of the most amazing promises in the entire Bible. In Revelation 3:21 Jesus tells us that if we overcome in the same manner in which He overcame, we will inherit the same position that He has been given. No higher honor can come to any being in the universe. Yet this is the reward God has for those who choose His side here. For those who allow Him to make them the type of person He intended for the human race to be to begin with. Oh the matchless love of God towards those of us who are so unworthy.

So the initial choice to follow God's way is merely the beginning. It is of no value unless we progress in His way, for when we stop growing, we die. If we do not use what Heaven offers, we will loose it. As Paul stated,

"I die daily." 71

In every situation that we come onto, self must die, our wishes must be submitted to God's better way, we must choose to serve Him. If we truly love Him, that will be the highest joy we can experience. Note this encouraging comment.

"Faith is trusting in God--believing that He loves us, and knows what is for our best good. Thus, instead of our own way, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership, and accepts its blessing. Truth, uprightness, purity, are pointed out as secrets of life's success. It is faith that puts us in possession of these. Every good impulse or aspiration is the gift of God; faith receives from God the life that alone can produce true growth and efficiency." 72

So the initial choice to follow God's way is merely the beginning. It is of no value unless we progress in His way, for when we stop growing, we die. As Paul stated, "I die daily." (1 Corinthians 15:31). In every situation that presents itself, self must die; our wishes must be submitted to God's better way, we must choose to serve Him.

"Many are inquiring, "How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?" You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him." 73

Some may ask: "Why should I choose God's way over my own way?" The wisest human who ever lived answers that for us.

"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." 74

There are at least two reasons for this. The first is that God is the only source of life. So choosing to go a way different from the way God is going is to separate ourselves from life. The result is eternal death. The second reason is that only God can see the end from the beginning. In addition, if we could see the end from the

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70 Ibid. verse 12
71 1 Corinthians 15:31
72 The Faith I Live By, page 90.3
73 Steps to Christ -Page 47
74 Proverbs 14:12
beginning, we would not choose to be led in any other way then God will lead us. So it is the really smart ones who choose God's far-sighted way over their own short-sighted way.

Besides, God has some wonderful plans for us. Better then we can ever imagine. Some of these have already been discussed, but there are more. One, just mentioned, is that God offers us His life instead of the death we deserve. Another reason is that He offers us His New Covenant instead of the Old Covenant that we tend to choose. See, free moral agency carries liabilities with it as well as honor. Those who only seek its freedom will be blindsided by the results. Whatever we sow, we will reap. And we seldom, if ever, know, what will result from some of the choices we make. So, in following God's way, He will help us to sow the right decisions, so we can reap the results we really want.

Then there is another one of those texts, which says an awful lot in just a few words.

"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?"

God only requires three things, but an awful lot of territory is covered in those three. There is a hidden jewel here too that is hidden by the translation. That is in the phrase "love kindness." Had this been written in Greek instead of Hebrew, it might read like this. Eros agape. Or if it were in English, it would read: “to have an intense desire for agape love.” This is why Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit, agape love.

But the amazing part of this text is found in the last phrase. "Walk humbly with thy God." God is asking for us to walk with Him as a friend and beloved companion. What an invitation from the God of the Universe! We loose everything if we fail to accept it.

Why indeed is His way the better way? He tells us that as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are His ways higher then our ways. And why should that be a surprise? He has been around a whole lot longer then we have been. He made us. He designed our whole beings, who else would know what is best for us? There just isn't any logical or good reason for any thinking people to want to run their own life, when God offers to manage it for us. Yet all of us have, do, and many will continue to try it. Always with the same result, utter failure in the areas, which matter most.

"Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Godliness--godlikeness--is the goal to be reached. Before the student there is opened a path of continual progress. He has an object to achieve, a standard to attain, that includes everything good, and pure, and noble. He will advance as fast and as far as possible in every branch of true knowledge. But his efforts will be directed to objects as much higher than mere selfish and temporal interests as the heavens are higher than the earth."

FOR ANYONE TO BE REALLY TEMPTED, TWO FACTORS HAVE TO BE PRESENT. DESIRE AND ABILITY. THE BROTHER OF JESUS PUT IT THIS WAY.

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75 Romans 6:23
76 Galatians 6:6-10
77 Micah 6:8
78 Isaiah 55:1-9 see verse 9
79 Education -Pages- 18, 19
"But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death." 80

For an example, Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness to turn stones into bread. For most humans, if not all, this wouldn't be any temptation at all. It is not possible for humans to turn stone into bread. Some of us can turn what was intended to be bread into a reasonably facsimile of stone, but not in the other way. Unlike us, Jesus had the ability to do such a thing. Remember that not too long after this wilderness experience, He created both bread and fish from just a small source, enough to feed thousands of people.

Also, Jesus had the desire. He had fasted for 40 days and a loaf of bread probably would have looked very good about then. But Jesus chooses not to resolve the problem of His hunger in His way, but He waits on His heavenly Father to resolve the problem. This was given as a pattern for us to follow and show us how we must deal with like situations.

However, we are far too often carried away by our own lust. The word "lust" carries the idea of a passionate or overwhelming desire or craving. In today's lingo, it would be presented as: “our passion.” This is not referring to the "take it or leave it" desire we have about many things. Issues where Satan let's us gain the "victory" so we believe that we are successful in resisting temptations. But Lust is the hard-core drive, clamoring for fulfillment, like the hunger Jesus must have experienced after not eating for 40 days. It is in those demanding situations, where the "rubber meets the road," that we are tested. When a test of our allegiance to God shows that it is what it claims to be, then God says that we are perfect, complete, lacking in nothing. 81

XXXII Jesus came to be our example on how to deal with such drives, such as our lusts and overwhelming passions. When Jesus knew that a trial was coming, He did what we should do, He went to His Father in prayer. 82 In this way He stored up a reserve power to meet the temptations HE was about to meet. When we discussed prayer, this principle was mentioned that we need to come to the "throne of grace" before we have a need, so that the connection is there when the need arises. Then we don't have to do our "homework" first, that has already been done.

XXXIII When we have diligently studied God's word, we can then respond as Jesus did when He was tempted. He responded to Satan's temptations with a statement from the Bible. 83 Unlike Satan did, when he later quoted the Bible, Jesus quoted it correctly, while Satan left out what wasn't convenient for him. So when we use Scripture, we must use it accurately. 84 Otherwise it will not be of any value in the fight against evil. We will often come across those who want us to believe that they know the Bible and want us to believe that the way they quote it is correct. But we are not to leave this to anyone. We need to study for ourselves and accurately handle God’s word. Our eternal life depends on it.

The arguments we use should be so solid that no matter how carefully they are examined, they will be found to be solid. Yet, we often blame the one examining the arguments we present, for being to particular. When the real problem is that we have not been particular enough.

"Yet we have a work to do to resist temptation. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan's devices must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind should not be left to wander at random upon every subject that the adversary of souls may suggest. "Girding up the loins of your mind," says the apostle Peter, "Be sober, . . . not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in . . . your ignorance: but like as He which called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living." 1 Peter 1:13-15, R.V. Says Paul, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever
things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Philippians 4:8.

This will require earnest prayer and unceasing watchfulness. We must be aided by the abiding influence of the Holy Spirit, which will attract the mind upward, and habituate it to dwell on pure and holy things. And we must give diligent study to the word of God."85

**WHAT DOES OBEDIENCE SHOW?**

Who we obey is neither an innocuous choice, nor one we should take lightly. If we are not happy with it, it isn't just a case of: "well, I made a mistake," type of situation. When we choose to obey Satan's suggestions, we become his slave.86 As has already been discussed in the lesson about the “Who Is Jesus Christ,” slavery isn't something we can avoid. Depending on our choice, we are either a slave of Satan or a slave of Jesus. We can't opt for a third option, for there just isn't one. It is vitally important to be sure that we are serving the master who we really want to throw our lot in with for eternity. The smart person will choose the winning side. Not the one that appears to be winning now, but who will win in the long run.

"The prince of this world cometh," said Jesus, "and hath nothing in Me."[3 JOHN 14:30.] There was in Him nothing that responded to Satan's sophistry. He did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So it may be with us. Christ's humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And He came to make us partakers of the divine nature. So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us. God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character." 87

When we choose to obey God and follow His way, Satan does not just sit back, roll over and give in. He is not that type of a being. When a person gives their life to Jesus, Satan will approach each person where they are weakest. Some, he harasses them unmercifully. These can be those who have committed to serving Jesus, but their commitment is tenuous. He feels that he still might have a chance with them. They want to live with one foot in the world and the other in heaven. So Satan does all he can to get them to come all his way. Others who he harasses are those who are solidly committed and who are successful in helping other to also choose God’s way. These he seeks to destroy at all costs as they are a constant example of what God can do with a person who submits their life unreservedly to Him. Jesus, the Son of God, had Satan constantly on His track seeking any opportunity to trip Him up and get Him to do anything, no matter how seemingly innocent on His own instead of obeying His Father in heaven. No one has had to withstand the level of temptation that Jesus had to meet, because no one has had as important a part to play in the plan of salvation.

Others he seemly ignores, possibly because he knows their commitment is not genuine and they are his anyway, so why bother them and risk their becoming more committed and turning to Jesus for help. But we have this assurance from God's word.

"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."88

**WHY IS IT THAT THE CHRISTIAN LIFE SEEMS SO HARD AT TIMES?**

The question that puzzles many new Christians is the fact that while their life, which seemed so smooth before they choose to be a Christian, now seems to be so stormy. This is only an indication of the type of master they were serving. Of course Satan will try and blame it all on God. When someone turns to serve Satan, God doesn’t harass

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85 Patriarchs and Prophets -Page- 460
86 Romans 6:16
87 THE DESIRE OF AGES -PAGE 123
88 1 Corinthians 10:13
them and cause them all kinds of trouble. The only trouble they have is the natural results of making the choice to separate themselves from God and life.

On the other hand, when a person chooses to serve God, Satan is not willing to accept that free will decision on their part and he will bring all kinds of problems their way to try and cause them to change back. For in fact, it is the Devil who is causing all of the problems here on planet earth. When we experience trouble when we choose to serve God, it just shows how terrible a tyrant our former master really is. God warned us about this in His word. Unlike some advocates of Christianity claim, being a Christian is not a ticket to worldly prosperity. Nor is it a pathway strewn with flowers. It is a “battle and a march.” It challenges the best in a person and brings out the best. In making that choice, one allies themselves with the greatest power in the Universe. They just have to choose to utilize the privileges and authority that comes from being a child of God.

Yes, we will all be prosperous far beyond the wildest dreams of anyone today. But that will be later in the program, not now. First, we must prove that our choice is not based on happy feelings. The pleasures of this world. But that it is based on a sincere love for God and a recognition that His way is the best way. That is not to say that becoming a Christian is a vow of poverty either. God will deal with each individual as He sees best in the area of wealth and "smooth" sailing. But what most do not realize is this: In the lives of those who appear to have the easiest times, may come some of the most difficult temptations. They face temptations that if we were to have to deal with them, they would completely overcome us.

On the other hand, their prosperity may come because they only appear to have chosen to serve God sincerely. It may be that the wealth and success may be a test to help them see their real need. Plus other reasons. So we must not judge from outward appearances. Only God knows the heart.89

Since no human being has ever walked the path of life that a Christian must walk, none of us can know exactly what lies ahead, except for Jesus. Some things will seem very mysterious to us. Paul, considered the greatest of the apostles by many said at one time:

"as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless."90

But then he turned around and at another time said:

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all."91

How could one be at the same time sinless according to the law and the worst sinner? Paul explains this in Romans 7. In all of us there is a battle raging between the claims of God on our lives and the rebellion that we have been born with. Our lusts, passions, desire that we have cultivated or inherited, battle constantly for supremacy. On the other hand the truths we have seen in God's word have convinced us that there is a better way. So all through our Christian life we can expect this conflict.92

But it is not a loosing battle if we fight it in the way God has outlined and like Jesus gave us an example of in the wilderness. There is a light at the end of the tunnel. When Paul wondered if there was any hope of ever being saved from his sinful nature, he sees this wonderful truth. There is deliverance and victory at the end for those who persevere.

"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"93

Yet there is more. As anyone who has given his or her life to Jesus, either knows, or will soon find out, the life without mistakes is not a reality here on this earth. We will all stumble and fall short from time to time. Does this mean that we then come under the condemnation of God? Does this mean that we have to be baptized all over again and be born again, again? No, not unless it is a serious choice to rebel against God and go our own way. We have this promise we can claim in order to meet the everyday problems that we confess and ask forgiveness for.

89 1 Samuel 16:7  Also see Psalm 73:1-20
90 Philippians 3:6
91 1 Timothy 1:15
92 Romans 7:15-23
93 Romans 7:25 first part
"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."  

The main issue is staying "in Christ Jesus."

Let's look at a family who adopts a child here on this earth. That child will stumble and fall when learning how to walk. Do the parents disown the child for this? No, a thousand times no. The child may lie, or steal something, or disobey their parents. Are they then forced to give up the family name? Again, a thousand times no. In some cases earthly parents have even had children who committed adultery or killed someone. Do the parents then disown their child? Not very often, at least if they are truly Christians.

No, the only way that child of God can cease to be a part of His family, is if they choose to separate themselves from the family, in human terms, if they choose to be emancipated from their parents. Can we expect less from our heavenly family then we expect from our earthly family? No, as long as it is our sincere desire to be part of God's family, Jesus will do all He can to help us through these detours of life and we will not come under the condemnation of heaven. But, even as long suffering as God is, there does come a point when He had to turn away and allow them to have what they have made very clear, is their final choice.

UNPARDONABLE SIN

Only when we make it our determined choice to not submit to God’s authority in our lives, or fail to respond the call of the Holy Spirit and seek to destroy God’s family by siding with Heaven’s arch enemy, that we are no longer part of the family of God. God wants us to be with Him far more then we can possibly want to be there. Only when we choose beyond any chance of changing our minds to not submit to God, will He then give up on us and let us have what we have chosen, eternal separation from life, which results in eternal death.

Does that mean that once we are "saved" that we can never be lost? Well, that depends on just how one understands the term "saved." Since it is used in so many different ways today, the term really needs to be defined. Let's try an illustration.

PARABLE

You are standing on the deck of a ship at sea, watching the waves, the clouds chasing themselves and the other sights of the ocean

Q. Suddenly, a wave washes you off of the deck, into the ocean. Are you saved?
    A. Obviously not, not even if you are an excellent swimmer.

Q. An onboard sailor throws you a lifeline. Are you saved?
    A. Not unless you grab the lifeline.

Q. You grab the line, are you then saved?
    A. No, not unless you hang on to that line and are pulled in.

Q. The crew pulls you up on deck, are you then truly saved?
    A. Well, maybe, but what if the ship sinks, or another wave washes you off?

No one is truly "saved" until either they die as a committed child of God, or their probation closes here and they are a member of the family of God. So when a person dies, or one's probation closes, then they are saved and they will always be saved, but not before.

What sets us free from slavery to Satan is not our abilities, but

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94 Romans 8:1
95 Unlike in God’s situation, sometimes humans must disown a child who has sold themselves to Satan and is unwilling to correct their ways. When this happened in the Old Testament, that child was not just disowned, they were put to death. See Deuteronomy 13, etc. However, even with God, there comes a time when His children are so set in their ways that He finally has to turn away from them and allow the choices they make to destroy them.
96 Hosea 11:8
"the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." 

This law of love, placed in the heart and controlling all of our actions, thoughts and attitudes is what makes it possible for us to be set free from the law of sin and death. Unfortunately many tend to think of "law" as some legal code. But there are more laws then just those written down in a law library. There are natural laws too. For example there is the law of gravity. No amount of legalism can help us keep the law of gravity. But if we disobey it, the results are sure. So too in God's kingdom, there are laws of life. Even in Satan’s kingdom there are laws, but they are only laws of sin and death. God is the source of all life. That is a law, just like the law of gravity. If we stay connected to God, the source of all life, then we will live. If we disconnect ourselves from God, we will die. It is that simple. This is not the whim of some arbitrary divinity, but the law of cause and effect. We alone choose the results we will experience. And part of that freedom of choice is the freedom to receive the natural results of what we choose. It is not some whim of a peevish, offended superpower.

So when we choose to live and abide in Jesus Christ, then the law of love and life "might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." It is then that the fruits of the spirit listed in Galatians 5 and elsewhere start to be seen in our lives. It will be at that point when others will know that we are a Christian by the way that we love one another, the kind of love we have for others.

"In the new birth the heart is brought into harmony with God, as it is brought into accord with His law. When this mighty change has taken place in the sinner, he has passed from death unto life, from sin unto holiness, from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty. The old life of alienation from God has ended; the new life of reconciliation, of faith and love, has begun. Then "the righteousness of the law" will "be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:4.

"That life in you will produce the same character and manifest the same works as it did in Him. Thus you will be in harmony with every precept of His law; for "the law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul." Psalm 19:7, margin. Through love "the righteousness of the law" will be "fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:4.

WHAT SPECIAL GIFT DID JESUS MAKE AVAILABLE TO US?

Most Christians recognize that the death of Jesus on the cross gave us the opportunity to have eternal life. But in reality, just living a long life is possibly the least important of the extremely valuable gifts He gave us. What good would it do to live forever, in rebellion against the law of love? Would anyone really want to live forever in this sin sick world? No, God has a much better plan.

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." As sometimes happens in the translation from Greek to English, some information get’s lost. The word "right" in the New American Standard Bible and other translations, or the word "power" in the King James Version, carries more ideas then just “right.” The Greek word used here is: "ekousia" (ἐκουσία). It carries the multiple English meanings of "authority," "right," (privilege) and "power." Christ not only gives us the privilege of being part of His family, but He gives us the power to overcome and the authority of children of the King.

PREPARATION TO BE TEMPTED

James the brother of Jesus packs some immensely, practical, advice in his little letter found near the back of the Bible, right after the last book written by Paul, the book of Hebrews. Here is the outline on how to be ready for the
tagements that Satan will bring to us. Since it seldom is announced that "You are about to be tempted," although sometimes it is almost that clear, we must be ready at all times to resist those insidious suggestions. The sequence of action is here outlined.

**FIRST we must submit to God.** We have already been enslaved to Satan whether we like it or not. We must choose to have a change in masters. There is no such thing as being neutral, as many would have you believe. We are not in some neutral position where we choose whether we will serve God or Satan at any given moment in time. In this area, we are not born with, as some claim, a “blank slate” and we must choose which god we will allow control our lives. A nice idea, but it is not so. We are born into slavery to Satan.\(^{102}\) However, heaven has made it possible through the death of Jesus on Calvary where we may choose to submit to God and become part of the family of heaven.\(^{103}\) That is a choice only we can make. While the heavenly intelligences will help us in anyway possible to see the benefits of being a Christian, we alone can make that choice.

**SECOND we must resist the Devil.** Only as we chose to not obey Satan will he eventually flee from us just like if we refuse to listen to the Holy Spirit He too will leave us. But we must be positive about our resistance. This will not be easy, since we have been more or less "friends" with Satan for a long time. But by choosing to resist his suggestions, it breaks that tie we have had with him.

**THIRD we must draw near to God.** Just submitting to God is not enough. We must be developing a close relationship with God. This is the opposite side of resisting the devil. Unless we both resist Satan and draw near to God, it will not work. Nature abhors a vacuum. When we choose to be a child of God, we must actively and consistently develop that relationship. Just resisting Satan isn't enough unless we choose to fill that void with Gods love first. Satan is more then willing to have us believe that we can choose some middle ground where we follow our own way and neither God’s way or Satan’s way. However, that is a lie, for when we are doing things our way, we are servants of Satan. The only choices we have are: 1. God’s way, or 2. Satan’s way. There are no other choices available to us in this area. Following the suggestions made in these lessons will help that process succeed.

**FORTH cleanse your hands** i.e. purify your heart. This refers to a purity of motive. We can't love God if we still have even a little feeling (eros) or maintain a relationship (philos) with Satan and his program. We must have a singleness of purpose and loyalty to God. Both our desires and actions must be cleansed. We must replace our wrong actions and motives with those God will supply for us and has told us about in His word. We must have divine love in full control of our feelings and relationships. This is essential. This is why Bible study is so important here, as it helps us maintain our commitment and develop a living connection with God.

**FIVE Draw near to the throne of Grace.** We must do this BEFORE temptation or the time of need comes. Then when Satan makes his approach we can find help from the throne of God.\(^{104}\) The above five steps is the ONLY plan that will go the distance.

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\(^{102}\) NOTE: There is some indication that if we are born to a couple who are totally submitted to doing things God’s way, that we are in fact a child of God. But even then it is only until we reach what is often called: “The age of accountability.” Or an age where we have matured enough to be able to make such moral decisions. But, to be on the safe side, it is better to take the position that we all need to choose to be part of God’s family. If the other is true, it really will not make any difference if we choose to serve God.

\(^{103}\) James 4:7

\(^{104}\) Hebrews 4:14-16
**Basic Christianity**

**Choose the Right Sources**

Another most important aspect of choosing is to use a careful selection of the type of the information we choose to put in our mind. **Everything we pay attention to is permanently stored in our mind. And it affects every decision we will ever make, whether we realize it or not.** Therefore it is vitally important to choose carefully what we see, listen to or are influenced by.

**XLI** Numerous examples exist of the effect of a long term focusing of a person's attention. Actual physical changes have been noted in people who keep someone or something as the object of their affection. A couple who lives together for many years will sometimes come to look alike. A young person who chooses a hard life will show this in their features before long. It is not uncommon to find people looking many years older then their chronological age, who have lived a hard life. The same is true the other way too. If we look

"with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

What better appearance could we have then to look like Jesus?

**XLII** The things we focus on are the things we love. Jesus told an inquirer once:

"Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him."

So when we focus on Jesus, it will be natural for them to keep His word and this will result in the abiding in Christ spoken of earlier. The closer that relationship is, the more like Him we will become and the happier we will be.

**XLIII** This love relationship will have definite changes in our lives. The first thing that will happen is that we will count everything as loss, or of a significantly lesser value, to knowing Jesus. Earthly things will become just so much rubbish in comparison to what heaven has to offer. Next we will find that we have the righteousness described in the law, but it will not be by our own efforts, but it will be ours because of our faith/trust in Jesus we have allowed Jesus to make those changes. What is seen is His righteousness that has been imparted to us. In fact, this is the only way we can have a righteousness that will fit us for heaven.

The results of this righteousness is that we will be considered to be perfect. This isn't something we will have already, nor will we even know when we obtain it. So it is our responsibility to continue to:

"press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus."

We can only “keep on keeping on” as we forget what lies behind, our life of sin and failure, and continually reach forward to what God has in store for those who love Him. On

"toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

This is the attitude that heaven is looking for in all who will be found to be fit to inhabit that better land.

**XLIV** This type of righteousness is only found in Jesus Christ. This was a known factor clear back in the time of the Old Testament. God through Isaiah said:

"Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. "I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness And will not turn back, That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.

105 2 Corinthians 3:18
106 John 14:23
107 Philippians 3:8
108 Ibid. verse 9
109 Ibid. verse 12
110 Ibid. verse 14
111 Isaiah 45:22, 23
Only Jesus was able to live that kind of life and only Jesus can make it possible for us to live that kind of life. When Jesus presents those He has saved from the world, it will not be a group of people who have shown how good they can be, but a group of people who have shown how implicitly they have learned to trust in Jesus and in their lives it will be revealed just how good He can make them.

**XLVI** But we still have a part to play. God never takes away our power of choice. That is still an inalienable and vital part of the process. So we are advised to:

“...gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."”

**XLVII** This level of holiness can only be attained if we choose to be ignorant in things that are wrong. It is a blessing to be ignorant of what is evil, but wise in that which is good. Those who are proud of their supposed great knowledge will tend to scoff at the person who refuses to know evil. But that scoffing is only for a short time. Then it will be silenced for the countless ages of eternity. Paul reached the very highest level of his ministry when he determined to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

God does not wish us to hear all that is to be heard, or to see all that is to be seen. It is a great blessing to close the ears, that we hear not, and the eyes, that we see not. Then the sophistries of the Devil will not make an impression on us. He can only gain an entrance to our mind if we allow him to. Our greatest anxiety should be to have clear eyesight to discern our own shortcomings, and a quick ear to catch all needed reproof and instruction, lest by our inattention and carelessness we let them slip and become forgetful hearers and not doers of the work.

If we remember that everything we pay attention to is forever stored in our mind, and will affect every decision we ever make, it should cause us to guard carefully what we pay attention to with our eyes and ears and what we think about.

**GUIDELINES FOR LIVING**

**XLVIII** In writing to the church in Philippi, Paul gave them some excellent advice for judging what we should pay attention to.

"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellency and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things."

Notice that the list is sequential, likewise, each one further qualifies the feature listed before it. Something might be true, but is it honorable? It might be true and honorable, but is it right? Or to say it another way, is it in context? Other criteria to be considered is its purity, its loveliness, its good reputation etc. Not all that is true is worth talking about or, for that matter, listening to. There is a lot of garbage, which is accurate, but it just fills the mind with garbage and turns our mind from Jesus. Even worse, it raises questions in our mind that we need not worry ourselves about, since God is in control. The same can be said for even things that might otherwise be considered as good. If it fills the mind to the exclusion of heavenly things, is it really worth it?

**XLIX** Jesus addressed some of these seemingly honorable things, which His disciples were to avoid. This came in a discussion following another attempt on the part of the religious leaders of that day to trick Him. Jesus was very short with them and basically turned and walked off. After they had arrived at the other side of the lake, they discovered that they had forgotten to go shopping for food. Then Jesus turned to His disciples and told them to be

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112 1 Peter 1:13-16
113 Romans 16:19
114 1 Corinthians 2:2.
115 Gospel Workers, page92 250.1 etc.
116 Philippians 4:8
wary of the leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees.\textsuperscript{117} Much like saying today, "Watch out for the theologians and other such spiritual leaders who are wise in their own eyes." The disciples thought that Jesus was speaking about bread that one could eat and was chastising them for forgetting to buy bread.

\textsuperscript{1} It was then that Jesus said:

\begin{quote}
"How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.\textsuperscript{118}
\end{quote}

The reason is this: relying on human wisdom will always lead one away from truth instead of towards truth. Just as preconceived ideas blinded the disciples spiritual eyesight, we too can be blinded by our own opinions if we let them stand in the way of what God’s word has to say.

But, one might say, is it true then that no one can be trusted? No, this is not true at all. That is why in the very first lesson of this series we looked at how to test those who claim to be speaking for God. If the person passes these tests, given to us by God, then we can and should trust them. If they fail any one of the tests, then we must look elsewhere. A good rule of thumb is this. If the person is leading you to trust more and more on God's word and less and less on humans, they are most likely safe to follow. Like Paul, we must choose in this life to follow Jesus only and only those who are themselves only following Jesus.\textsuperscript{119}

\begin{quote}
"As our physical life is sustained by food, so our spiritual life is sustained by the word of God. And every soul is to receive life from God's word for himself. As we must eat for ourselves in order to receive nourishment, so we must receive the word for ourselves. We are not to obtain it merely through the medium of another's mind. We should carefully study the Bible, asking God for the aid of the Holy Spirit, that we may understand His word. We should take one verse, and concentrate the mind on the task of ascertaining the thought which God has put in that verse for us. We should dwell upon the thought until it becomes our own, and we know "what saith the Lord."

"The word of God, received into the soul, molds the thoughts, and enters into the development of character. By looking constantly to Jesus with the eye of faith, we shall be strengthened."\textsuperscript{120}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11} This warning can not be taken too seriously. There are many voices in the world today who are trying to gain a following. Some are the voices of those who know Jesus as a personal friend. But there are far more who only parrot words without really knowing Him on a personal level. They have most of their knowledge of Jesus second handed. They have either studied under some noted professor, or they have read books about the Bible. Or they may even be able to quote scripture at great length. But they have never really learned to know the author of the Bible. These are the ones Paul warned about when he said:

\begin{quote}
"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;"\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

One must know Him. For to know Him is indeed life eternal. All other ways only lead to death.

\textsuperscript{11} Does this mean that we cannot learn anything from the teachings of men/women who write, preach, prepare tapes and videos by the score? In many cases we can learn what not to do from them. But again, we come back to the previous issue. We must test them by God's word. If they pass the tests, and many do, then we can learn from

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{117} Matthew 6:16 \\
\textsuperscript{118} Matthew 16:11, 12 \\
\textsuperscript{119} See 1 Corinthians 4 \\
\textsuperscript{120} THE DESIRE OF AGES -PAGE- 390 \\
\textsuperscript{121} Colossians 2:8-10
\end{flushleft}
their experiences and avoid the pitfalls they may have fallen into. It is a wise person who can learn by another's mistakes. But it can't be stressed too much that:

"If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain."\textsuperscript{122}

From such men turn away.

\textbf{LIII} But all deceptive attacks will not just come from human beings. Especially in these last days we will find supernatural exhibitions which will deceive if possible the very elect. So

"...even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed."\textsuperscript{123}

The gospel and teachings of the Bible are not to be altered or changed. If anyone tries to convince others of such changes, we can know for a certainty that they are not from God.

\textbf{ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP}

\textbf{LV} At another time when Jesus was teaching the people, the religious leaders of the day came to Him with a criticism regarding the conduct of His disciples. They cited some of the ceremonials rules Jesus and His disciples had not observed. Jesus turned the tables on them by pointing out how they had substituted their rules for God's instructions. Then Jesus made a most important statement, one that is almost totally forgotten today. One we forget at our own loss.

"'But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'"\textsuperscript{124}

The point is that it really doesn't make any difference how fervent, exciting, happy, solemn, elaborate or what every standard you want to apply, unless the teachings are from God, the worship is in vain. What is being taught is the standard we need to measure, not the person leading out, not the emotions that are stirred up, not the number of people who participate in it. When human precepts or teachings are substituted for divine instruction, all of the worship activity is in vain. It is just a show.

\textbf{LV} Acceptable worship is really not that difficult. God isn't trying to make things hard for us to serve Him. To the contrary, He says when

"you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."\textsuperscript{125}

That is the key for acceptable worship. It must come from the heart, the whole heart. Anything else just isn't acceptable to God.

\textbf{LVI} The alternative is a lot of form and ceremony, but no real experience with God. In such situations God says:

"Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they shall not find me, because they hated knowledge, And did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would not accept my counsel, They spurned all my reproof. So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, And be satiated with their own devices."\textsuperscript{126}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{122} 1 Timothy 6:3-5
  \item \textsuperscript{123} Galatians 1:8, 9
  \item \textsuperscript{124} Matthew 15:1-9
  \item \textsuperscript{125} Jeremiah 29:13
  \item \textsuperscript{126} Proverbs 1:28-31
\end{itemize}
There is far too much worship of this nature going on today. It is a shame to go to all of that trouble and not have our worship be accepted by God. But while God is a loving God, we must serve Him in the way He specifies. Our substitutions just are not acceptable.

So before we attempt to worship God, we need to look to our own attitudes. We need to test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?  

It comes down to the old adage. When you point a finger at someone else, you have four pointing back at you. So while we must test those who come claiming to have a message from God. We must also test ourselves. For it makes no difference how true and honest the messenger might be, if we are not right with God, we still will not recognize the truth God is sending to us through them.

The believers who will be giving acceptable worship; the believers who will be able to detect the truth amongst the error; are those, who like the Bereans of Paul's day:

for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so. 

The Bible is our only safe guide in this sea of human opinions. Stand by it, trust it, let it lead you and you'll not go wrong. But even more important is to stay close to the author of the Bible. As Jesus told the religious leaders of His day:

You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me;  

Some Bible study can be down right harmful, if we do not discover Jesus there and go to the Bible just to try and prove something we have already reached a conclusion on, our Bible study will be a positive harm to us.

God designed the Bible to be a lesson book to all mankind, in childhood, youth, and manhood, and to be studied through all time. He gave His word to men as a revelation of Himself. Every new truth discerned is a fresh disclosure of the character of its Author. The study of the Scriptures is the means divinely ordained to bring men into closer connection with their Creator and to give them a clearer knowledge of His will. It is the medium of communication between God and man.

The Christian life is of necessity one of growth. Just like the physical body needs food, fresh air, and water. So the spiritual nature needs food (God's word), air (the Holy Spirit), and water (the water of life). Man was made a social creature and to be well balanced needs to communicate. So too the spiritual nature needs to communicate with God in prayer.

How is it with you, dear friend? Is it your desire to set aside a part of each day for prayer and Bible study? If this is your desire, your instructor will be most happy to furnish you with additional study guides, which will make your study of the various doctrines taught in the Bible more interesting. Do not stop with just the study guides. Use them as a springboard for a deeper study of the subject introduced in that particular lesson. If guidelines are not available, write to the address on this lesson and study helps will be furnished. May God richly bless your efforts to become better acquainted with Him.

1 Corinthians 13:5
Acts 17:11
John 5:39
The Great Controversy -Page- 69
QUIZ – CHAPTER 12

I What did Jesus say He would give to us?  John 14:27

II How did Christ compare life in Him compared to the way the world would treat us?  John 16:33

OUR LOT IN CHRIST

THE WORLD'S TREATMENT

III When we come up against situations in which we do not know what to do, what are we advised to do?  James 1:5

IV What counsel did Christ leave for His followers?  Luke 18:1


V Christ gave us a model prayer in Matthew 6:8-13 that we today call "The Lord's Prayer."  How does He say we are to begin our prayers?  Matthew 6:9

VI In calling God "Our Father," what relationship does it imply we have to each other?  Matthew 6:9

Also see Hebrews 11:6; John 16:23-27.

VII What are the prerequisites for getting an answer to our prayers?

JAMES 1:6-8; MARK 11:24

JOHN 14:13

MATTHEW 5:3

MATTHEW 5:6

MATTHEW 6:7, 8

MATTHEW 7:7, 8

MARK 11:25

PSALMS 66:18

PROVERBS 1:28-31

ISAIAH 1:15-19

Also see Hebrews 11:6; John 16:23-27.

VIII Through whom are our prayers answered?  John 16:13, 14
IX What does the Holy Spirit do in response to our prayers? Romans 8:26, 27

Also see John 14:26; 15:26

X What is one channel that the Holy Spirit uses to "take of mine and . . . disclose it to you? John 5:39, 40

Also see 2 Peter 1:16-21; Psalms 119:105

XI In what two ways should we study the scriptures (Bible)? 2 Timothy 2:15

1ST. __________________________________________________________

2ND. __________________________________________________________

Also see Isaiah 28:9-13

XII What is another way that God will answer our prayers if there is no answer in the Bible? Isaiah 42:16

Also see Isaiah 30:21; 42:23, 24; Psalms 25:8, 9; Proverbs 3:5-8.

XIII In what four ways can we know for sure that the answer to our prayer is from God?

A. 1 JOHN 5:14 __________________________________________________

B. MATTHEW 21:21, 22 ____________________________________________

Also see Mark 11:22-25; James 1:6, 7

C. MATTHEW 26:39-42 ____________________________________________

Also see Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 6:38.

D. 1 JOHN 3:22 __________________________________________________

XIV What is a third way that God will use to answer our prayers for guidance? Genesis 22:9-19 (Note how God guided Abraham.)___________________________________________

XV Is there any temptation where we cannot find an escape route? 1 Corinthians 10:11-13

XVI What must we do when we pray? 2 Chronicles 7:14

I. ___________________________________________________________
2. ___________________________________________________________________________

XVII When only will God listen to our prayers? Jeremiah 29:11-14____________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Also see Deuteronomy 4:29-31; 30:1-3, 10; Luke 11:9, 10.

XVIII What can prevent God from listening to our prayers? Psalms 66:18-20 ___________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Also see Proverbs 1:28-31; 28:9; Isaiah 1:15-20; 59:2.

XIX What should be the main burden of our prayers? Psalms 143:10 _________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________


XX When should we "come to the throne of Grace" (or pray)? Hebrews 4:16 ___________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Also see Philippians 4:6

XXI At what times should we pray?

PSALMS 5:2, 3 ________________________________________________________________

Also see Psalms 88:13; 143:8; Isaiah 33:2

PSALMS 55:17 ________________________________________________________________

Also see Daniel 6:10

EPHESIANS 6:18 ________________________________________________________________

Also see 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Colossians 4:2-6

XXII What should be avoided in our prayers?

MATTHEW 6:7 ________________________________________________________________

1 KINGS 18:26-29 _____________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

ECCLESIASTES 5:1-7 _____________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Also see Proverbs 10:19, 20; Mark 12:40; Luke 20:46, 47.

MATTHEW 6:5 ________________________________________________________________

XXIII Will God always give us what we ask for? 2 Corinthians 12:8, 9 ______________

Also see Deuteronomy 3:23-27; John 11:1-46

XXIV What is the choice we are faced with? 1 Kings 18:21 _________________________
XXV How can we choose God or in other words surrender our will to Him? Colossians 3:2

XXVI When we have set our minds on heavenly things, what does Paul say happens? Colossians 3:3, 4

VS. 3. ____________________________________________________________

Vs. 4

XXVII What progression does Paul outline as a result of loving God? Colossians 1:9-12

VS. 9 ____________________________________________________________

VS. 10 ____________________________________________________________

VS. 11 ____________________________________________________________

VS. 12. ____________________________________________________________

XXVIII Why must our way be set aside for God's way? Proverbs 14:12 ____________

______________________________________________________________

Also see Proverbs 12:15; 16:20-25; 21:2; 24:12.

XXIX What is God's plan for us?

ROMANS 6:23 ______________________________________________________

Also see Romans 6:16-23

GALATIANS 6:6-10 __________________________________________________

MICAH 6:8 _________________________________________________________

Also see Deuteronomy 10:12-15

XXX Why is His plan for us better than ours other then our plans resulting in death? Isaiah 55:1-9

______________________________________________________________


XXXI What causes us to yield to or respond to Satan's suggestions. James 1:14, 15 _________

XXXII When Christ knew that a trial or test was imminent, what did He do? Matthew 26:36-41

XXXIII When the devil tempted Christ, what was Christ's response? Matthew 4:4, 7, 10

XXXIV When we obey someone, what does that show? Romans 6:16 ____________________
XXXV What can we expect in the Christian life? Romans 7:15-23

XXXVI Who will set us free from this conflict we experience? Romans 7:24, 25 first part

XXXVII When as a Christian we make mistakes and then seek forgiveness, do we then come under the condemnation of God? Romans 8:1

XXXVIII What sets us free? Romans 8:2

XXXIX What happens then in our lives? Romans 8:4

XL What did Christ give us? John 1:12

XLI How can we prepare to meet temptations before they come to us?

JAMES 4:7

JAMES 4:8

HEBREWS 4:14-16

XLII How can we become like Christ? 2 Corinthians 3:18

NOTE: "Glory" in scripture refers to the character. See Exodus 33:18, 19; 34:6, 7.

XLIII If we truly love Christ, or have Christ in the heart, what will we do? John 14:23

XLIV What will our love for Christ cause us to do? Philippians 3:8, 9, 12-16 NOTE verses 12, 14.

XLV Where are we going to find this righteousness? Isaiah 45:22-25

NOTE: Also see John 14:10-21; 8:28-31; Psalms 119:1-3; Proverbs 16:17; Micah 6:8; Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 10:21; James 1:5-7; 2:28, 29; 5:1-6

Also see Psalms 119:12; Proverbs 1:5-30; 23:12, 23; Zephaniah 2:3; 1 Peter 2:1-3
XLVI  What counsel does Peter give us?  1 Peter 1:13-16
"Therefore __________  ______________  _________ for action, keep  _____________________  in spirit, 
______________  your hope completely on the grace to be brought  to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.  As "
_________________________  children , do not be conformed, to the former lusts which were yours in your
_______________,  but like the Holy One who called you, __________    _______________________  yourselves 
also in all your  ____________________."  

XLVII  What counsel did Paul give the Romans?  Romans 16:19  last part
"I want you to be  _______________ in what is good, and  __________________________ in that  which is evil."  

XLVIII  What criteria did Paul give the Philippians to guide their lives?  Philippians 4:8

Also see Romans 16:19;  1 Peter 2:13-16; 1 John 2:15

XLIX  Christ warned the disciples to beware of what?  Matthew 16:6, 11 ___________________

Also see Mark 8:15;  Luke 12:1

LI  What was he referring to?  Matthew 16:12

LII  What two things does Paul warn us to beware of and on what are they based?  Colossians 2:8-10

Also see Hebrews 3:12;  1 Timothy 6:20, 21.

LII  What about man's teachings?  Can we not learn something from them?  1 Timothy 6:3-5

Also see 1 Timothy 1:3-7;  2 Timothy 2:14-16;  3:1-9;  Titus 1:10-16;  2 Peter 3:14-18;  Jeremiah 23:30.

LIII  What is to be done if a supernatural being comes with a "change" or "correction" of something God has 
spoken?  Galatians 1:8, 9  ____________________________

Also see 2 Corinthians 11:13-15;  Romans 16:17, 18;  Acts 20:28-32;  2 Peter 2:1-3;  Ephesians 6:12, 13.
LIV Will God accept my worship when I follow man's traditions instead of God's plan? Matthew 15:1-9
Also see Mark 7:1-23; Colossians 2:4, 8, 18, 22; Isaiah 29:13.

LV What counsel does Jeremiah give to us regarding acceptable worship? Jeremiah 29:13
Also see Lamentations 3:40; Psalms 119:59, 60.

LVI Under what conditions will our searching for God be in vain? Proverbs 1:28-31
Also see 1 Corinthians 11:27, 30; 9:27.

LVII What counsel does Paul give in regards to our attitude towards our own opinions and ideas? 2 Corinthians 13:5
Also see 1 Corinthians 11:27, 30; 9:27.

LVIII For what did Paul compliment the Berean believers? Acts 17:10, 11

LIX Why should we study the scriptures? John 5:39
Also see Luke 24:25-27