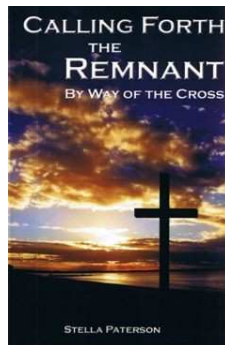


CALLING FORTH  
THE  
REMNANT

BY WAY OF THE CROSS



STELLA PATERSON

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

## PREFACE

The “CALL” is to the Body of Christ; those who attend church as well as those who do not.

This book comes as the result of the Holy Spirit’s revelation to me of the greatest deception of all time and the reason it has not been recognized. From the moment I sat down to write the first draft, Satan the deceiver has attempted everything he could to stop me. His attacks and opposition have been constant throughout the preparation for publishing. But God is greater! In “*About the Author*” you will find my testimony of how God repeatedly prevailed over the devil’s feeble attempts.

It has been with much heartache and sadness that I have recognized the growing apostasy in the Church, as the Lord opened my eyes to see her as He sees her. I take no joy in writing of the error which has robbed the Lord’s Bride of her beauty and purity. In the following pages you will read how the Holy Spirit revealed to me the real reason Jesus died; the role flesh has played throughout the ages; what God plans to do about it, and how He will restore all things to Himself in the end.

The reader may find some parts difficult to embrace, but we all need to be willing to examine the beliefs we hold dear, and allow the Truth to set us free. Truth MUST prevail over tradition. I pray that as the message in this book is read, it will not be “*filtered*” through previously held beliefs, denominational beliefs, a *trusted someone’s* belief, or any other “*filter*.” Only the Holy Spirit can be trusted to reveal Truth – we need no man’s authorization.

While showing me the meaning of Calvary, the Holy Spirit exposed the greatest enemy we Christians face. God’s response to this *enemy* is addressed within these pages, and He calls us to respond to His Spirit and His Word.

Why was the Cross necessary, when to many it is a stumbling block? What really is the new birth, as examined in light of God’s written word? Where has the flesh led us? Will we yield to God’s way or the way of the flesh? Will we choose to go the way of the Cross and become a part of the Church triumphant?

We must prayerfully ask ourselves if we ARE born again or have been deceived by an *easy* gospel about an “*easy Jesus*” who will take as His Bride those who are yet flesh. It is my fervent hope and prayer that all who read the book will be encouraged to stay open to God’s Spirit, trust Him to bring understanding, and ultimately be numbered with the *Remnant* – the Bride without spot or wrinkle.

I challenge every reader to take the Berean approach and check each Scripture that is referenced (in more than one bible version), trusting the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your understanding. May you be blessed beyond measure as Jesus increases in you, and you become more and more willing to be decreased.

## INTRODUCTION

Only two millennia have passed since the Church of Jesus Christ was born. In light of eternity this is but a very short time.

The early Church thrived amid much persecution for almost three hundred years. The power from On High sustained them as they proclaimed their faith in Jesus the Son of God, knowing that often it would mean torture and even death. Others who were not strong in faith would yield to the demands of their persecutors to make sacrifices to their gods. They denied the faith in order to escape persecution, and through persecution the Church was purified. The unwavering faith of those who were tortured and killed served only to draw others to this Christ, for whom they were willing to die.

During the reigns of various emperors the Church experienced periods of religious freedom. But then the enemies of the Gospel would impose restrictions, and once again the Christians suffered persecution. The Church survived in its earliest days, though only a remnant due to wave after wave of persecution.

In the Western world, what has come to be known as “*the Church*” today is a far cry from the true Church who met in secret for fear of their lives. The Church now often meets in grand buildings with labels bearing the Name of Christ, but they are nothing like the Church of the first centuries. Much of what began as a living organism has ceased to be the living Body of Jesus Christ. Rather than the Life of God dwelling in His people, His people go to church to *meet God*. He has been relegated to buildings, occasionally called “*temples*,” when His desire is for His people to BE His temple. Now some people, believing they are a part of the Body of Christ, think all religious activity must take place within the confines of their denominational, well-structured church programs. There are organized programs for everything, so that man is kept busy *servicing God* within the church.

For the better part of two centuries, there has been an acceleration of what Paul the Apostle called a “*falling away*.” It has not come with blazing headlines warning, “*The Lord is returning! Prepare to meet Him!*” Many have warned of His soon return, yet all the while an insidious thing has taken place. The deception of all deceptions has crept in, and the Church has been totally blind to it and blinded by it! The magnitude of its effect is catastrophic and the Father’s heart is broken.

God’s desire is to purify His Son’s Bride. He has pleaded repeatedly with those who call themselves “*The Body of Christ*.” Revival fires have broken out in many places at various times in the last two centuries. God has raised up men and women such as Andrew Murray, Susanna Wesley, Charles Finney, Oswald Chambers, and countless others who have proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ with great passion. Why, then, is the Church in such a state of apostasy? Why is the Bride of Christ so polluted in

rebellion and unfaithfulness? Why does she not hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, calling her to make herself ready? How can she believe she IS ready? And who will make up the remnant of which Paul the Apostle spoke? <sup>1</sup>

The answers to all the above questions can be found within these pages – starting with how it all began and following the progression of one simple overlooked truth until the last chapter where we see the final triumph of the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Matthew recorded Jesus' words, telling us that not everyone who says to Him, "Lord, Lord," will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, except for those who do the will of His Father. He said that in that day many will call Him "Lord," reminding Him of all the things they have done in His Name. With very sobering words, He foretells His response: "*I never knew you; depart from Me!*"<sup>2</sup>

Jesus was speaking of the MANY who believe they are Christians. They believe they are right with God, and they are serving Him. They impress a lot of people, but is Jesus impressed? His answer says it all: "*I never knew you.*" He is looking for a Bride, not a housekeeper. He wants a relationship, not service from men's hands. He wants Marys who will sit at His feet to learn of Him, rather than the Marthas who want only to do for Him. <sup>3</sup>

We cannot and must not ignore the words of the Master! We cannot fool ourselves, thinking He was referring to the other guy! We must examine ourselves and bow in humble surrender, allowing His Spirit to search our hearts and purge us of every **spot** and every **wrinkle**. The Lord is patient and longsuffering, "*not desiring that any should perish, but that all should turn to repentance.*" (2 Peter 3:9b Amplified)

There is a solemn word through which the Lord spoke to me.

*"But if the watchman sees the sword coming, and does not blow the trumpet and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any of them, he is taken away in and for his perversity and iniquity; but **his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.**" (Ezekiel 33:6 Amplified)*

1. Romans 9:27, 11:4-5
2. Matthew 7:21-23a NKJV
3. Luke 10:38-42

# PART ONE: ONLY A REMNANT

## CHAPTER ONE

### WHY THE CROSS?

In 1990, following surgery and work-related burnout, I was pretty much housebound for several months. During that long period of recuperation, God had my full attention. I had prayed a three-part prayer: (1) “Lord, reveal Yourself to me, (2) give me a hunger for Your Word and (3) show me the meaning of Calvary.” After hearing a riveting sermon on the crucifixion and all which Jesus suffered for us, I needed to know WHY He had to suffer and die. I wanted to know Him in a greater way, and He truly did answer my prayer. He gave me a hunger for the written word, and through it He revealed Himself to me. What a precious, beautiful, cleansing time!

During that first year, I learned the true meaning of the quickening of the mortal body by the presence of the Holy Spirit. In the natural, taking rest would have been vital to recovery from surgery and my emaciated condition. Many nights were spent in God’s presence studying, writing, and praying, with only a few hours of sleep. Rather than the lack of sleep being a detriment to my recovery, I found the quickening power of the Holy Spirit provided much better rest. Oh, what sweet rest He gives!

My experiences throughout the years since that time have been beyond anything I could ever have hoped. So often I have wept as the Spirit has taken me from one truth to another. There have been tears of awe at the majesty of God. There have been tears of grief as I recognized how far man has strayed from the Lord in the past one hundred and seventy some years, and how apostasy has become so rampant. There have been many, many tears as I surrendered to the cleansing of the washing of water by the word.

As an eight-year-old child, I had prayed a prayer with my parents asking Jesus to come into my life. He met me then, and I have always remembered how clean and light I felt. Throughout my whole life He has been there, even though I have not always acknowledged Him. In the churches I attended over the years I was always busy trying to do all the right things to be a good Christian. But I never truly understood what it meant to be born anew until the Lord opened my eyes in 1990.

At that time, my merciful God began to purge me of all the old, dead doctrines with which I had grown up. He gave me a fresh new relationship with Him, and satisfied my hunger for Him with an even greater hunger for more. Only in Him can hunger satisfy hunger! There is no place I would rather be than in His presence, engrossed in deep study of His written word. The more I learn, the more I desire to learn – I am only beginning to know God in a way I never dreamed possible!

## **The meaning of Calvary**

In asking the Lord to show me the meaning of Calvary, I was completely unprepared for the answer as He led me through years of learning at His feet. He took me from the Garden of Eden in Genesis, all the way to the end of Revelation.

One of the first truths the Lord revealed was that tradition is widespread in the Church, so I began to study all I could find in the bible about tradition. There were times when He awakened me in the night with clear understanding of Scripture passages, which were then confirmed by the word meanings from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance with Hebrew and Greek dictionaries.

Following the study of tradition, the Lord led me to research how the Law had prophesied of Christ. This launched me into a study involving thousands of hours, reams of paper, and boxes of stick pens. It was in this research that He gave me a complete understanding of the need for the Cross of Jesus Christ. The Hebrew and Greek languages brought so much greater understanding, and with the written word and the Holy Spirit I was moved from joy to grief as I learned the reason Jesus REALLY had to die.

*Calling Forth The Remnant* is the full account of the meaning of Calvary – because of one simple, heartfelt prayer.

## **Why a remnant?**

As the Lord took me deeper into the meaning of Calvary, He shared with me the anguish of His heart over the condition of the Church who believes she is the Bride of Christ. The depths of grief in the Father's heart cannot be uttered. The only way to describe the picture of the Church He etched on my heart is "masses (literally millions) of people, sitting in pews with hands folded awaiting Jesus' return, but not truly ready to meet Him." Whenever my thoughts turn to that picture I experience afresh the heartbreak our Lord must feel at the complacency of His would-be Bride. Paul's words in Romans 11:5 reveal a tragic truth: "*Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*" (NKJV) Only a remnant will be saved, while millions who do not know Jesus will be lost.

In 1845, Charles Finney (1792-1875) said the church was "*in a state of decline.*" And Andrew Murray (1828-1917) said, "*No words can tell the sad state of the Church of Christ on earth. I wish I had words to speak what I sometimes feel about it.*" I believe Finney and Murray were speaking of the same falling away which Paul the Apostle said would take place before the Second Coming of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Paul was not speaking of "just a little bit of backsliding." The Church is literally entrenched in apostasy! The Greek word for "apostasy" means "*defection from truth.*"<sup>2</sup> The Church has strayed from Truth and the bible has been perverted. Her condition

can be traced to basically one error. No person alive today can be accused of causing this defection from truth. We have all been exposed to “another gospel” of which Paul warned.<sup>3</sup> The apostasy is massive, taking root in every aspect of what we know as Jesus Christ’s “Church.” In spite of this far-reaching apostasy, there has always been a remnant of true believers who have remained faithful to Him.

### **Trust in man**

We have been taught to respect and revere the reverends and the doctors who attended “Bible colleges” and seminaries. We have been led to believe that what they preach is always from “God’s Word” so we must accept it without question. It would seem unthinkable to question anything they say. But they are simply passing on what they have been taught, with the same mindset, that they too would be wrong to question those in spiritual authority. In this twenty-first century, many of our Christian beliefs are based on man-made tradition, accepted without question because of trust in man rather than trust in God.

The prophet Jeremiah tells us we are “cursed” if we trust in a man of flesh, turning away from the LORD. We will be like a shrub in the desert, dwelling in parched places in the wilderness.<sup>4</sup> There is a wilderness of parched places, called “churches,” where the habitation of God is non-existent – and all because of trust in man. The hearts of many teachers, preachers, and hearers have departed from the Lord through trust in the man of flesh.

There was a time when the Gospel was preached with Power, and God’s Spirit gripped the hearts of hearers. As time passed, the idea of preaching was carried forward, but the power of the Gospel was missing. At some point, God’s written word has ceased to be “GOD’S word” in purity and has become man’s word. Yes, preachers quote portions of the bible, but all too often the message has become the “*letter that kills.*”<sup>5</sup> Rather than preach **the** Word (Jesus Christ), they preach **from** “*the word*”, creating ear-tickling masterpieces of oratory. We Christians can so easily be misled by something that sounds good because of our trust in man. Where are those who will be as the Bereans, searching the written word and beseeching the Spirit for wisdom to know the Truth?

### **Deadly error**

You may be thinking I have no knowledge of the many churches and ministries where God is moving and lives are being impacted by the power of the Holy Spirit, but I am aware. There are places where God’s Spirit is very welcome, and He is touching lives and drawing men and women to Himself. But it is a work of the Holy Spirit, not man’s doctrine and fine speech. The Holy Spirit must penetrate man’s presentation of the Gospel in search of hungry hearts. At the very core of belief in all of these places, there is a fatal error. This fatal error, the root of all errors, is UNCRUCIFIED FLESH.

Most people believe the problem in the world is sin. I am not denying there is a lot of sin, but the greater problem is this: *the Church has a flesh problem.* This is not a

conclusion I have reached on my own; the understanding has come with much heartbreak as the Spirit of Truth opened to me a very graphic word picture, as found throughout the pages of God's written word. Flesh is an age-old problem, but its manifestation has accelerated in the last two centuries.

The written word has become fragmented through the traditions of flesh-and-blood man. We have chosen the words of God we understand to create doctrines pleasing to our flesh. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would lead us into all truth. But we would not allow ourselves to be led. The Church is ignorant of the simplicity of the Gospel. She has access to the Old and New Testaments, as well as the Spirit of Truth, so there is no excuse for ignorance.

A death has come to the Church as she has plunged head-long into error, deception, and apostasy. She needs to be revived with Life from God. But in order to be revived, the Church must die to self. The purpose of this book is to expose the cause of apostasy in the Church, and how she can be cleansed of her spots and wrinkles, becoming a part of the remnant prepared to meet the Lord.

With the Holy Spirit's patient counsel, I was shown through the written word just how the devastating error has crept in. I had believed my theology was correct, but God undid ALL of my old theology and began to replace it with truth from His written word. At times, I would weep in agony as I came to recognize the error in which I, along with so many others, have been held in bondage. I was shown how tradition has kept people from knowing the Jesus of the bible. Paul the Apostle urged watchfulness so that no one spoil us *"through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."* (Colossians 2:8) Jesus also spoke strong words regarding the dangers of following tradition.

If only the Church could fathom what is in the Father's heart and the price He paid in giving His Son to die! And yet man goes his own way, with his churchianity and his own attempts at righteousness. We all must give an account for what we have done with Jesus. We who name the Name of Christ, believing we are born-again, have a responsibility to read God's written word and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal the Truth. If we do not, we will never know the true reason Jesus came.

The corporate Body of Christ cannot come to repentance and receive the Life she so desperately needs, for each individual must come to the Truth and be born anew [Greek: from above] <sup>6</sup>. Christ's true Church is a large integrated body, consisting of individuals – denominational tags are irrelevant. All true born-again believers make up the Body of Christ. The true Church is the living Body of the Living Savior Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God. It is not about buildings and programs.

## **Flesh and blood**

Our English language fails miserably in translating the inspired scriptures from the old languages. Single words had specific meaning, which take whole English phrases to

articulate. To give one example, the Hebrew word for blood means “*that which when shed causes death.*”<sup>7</sup> In order to understand how the error came about, we must know the significance of flesh and blood according to God’s eternal design. And without the understanding of flesh and blood, and life and death, we cannot begin to know the meaning of Calvary. Throughout the chapters I have included word meanings in the hope that this message will be clearer.

The message in the entire bible might be summed up in one sentence: **Flesh is the reason Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh to destroy flesh because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.**

1. 2 Thessalonians 2:3
2. Greek #646
3. Galatians 1:6-8
4. Jeremiah 17:5-7
5. 2 Corinthians 3:6
6. Greek #509
7. Hebrew #1818

## CHAPTER TWO

### HOW IT ALL BEGAN – MAN’S CHOICE

Flesh and, therefore, the need for Jesus’ death had their origin in the Garden of Eden.

The story of Adam and Eve is quite familiar to the majority of folks, but what we must understand is WHY God created man. Because He desires to be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth, God made man with the capability for worship.

The bible says man was created in the image of God; <sup>1</sup> formed from the dust of the earth, and made alive by the breath of God. <sup>2</sup> The form was lifeless, until God breathed life (spirit) into him. Because man was made from dust, he will return to dust after he dies. David said, “*You take away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.*” (Psalm 104:29b Amplified)

According to the Hebrew dictionary, “image” means “phantom.” Or one could say, “spirit,”<sup>3</sup> which would mean that man was a spiritual being. Although he was flesh and blood, he was capable of communicating with his Creator. There was no consciousness of man’s humanity because, as the scripture says, Adam and Eve were naked (nude) and “*were not ashamed.*”<sup>4</sup> There was nothing to separate man from his Creator. They could walk and talk in pure communion, Spirit to spirit.

Just think what it must have been like in the Garden of Eden, when God communed with man, His creation. The peace and serenity must have been beyond anything our finite minds can comprehend. There would be no such thing as the hustle and bustle

we have now in this twenty-first century. The fragrant flowers, the fresh green foliage, the carpet-like grass, and the exhilarating, oxygen-rich air must have been beyond description! Imagine the beautiful birds of every kind, in chorus with their unique sounds. It must have sounded like a symphony! Can you picture a beautiful, stately doe grazing in the woods, as she listens to the music of the birds? And imagine the spotless, woolly sheep wandering in the meadows, without fear of danger. Everything in the Garden was perfect.

## Two trees

Of all the trees in the Garden of Eden, the two mentioned are the Tree of Life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.<sup>5</sup> Why these two trees in particular? What is the significance? I believe we can see them as opposites, with the fruit of one giving Life and the fruit of the other resulting in death.

As is commonly known, God told man if he were to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would “surely die.”<sup>6</sup> God gave them the choice of life or death, and they chose death, because the serpent tricked Eve. That old serpent, the Devil, told her they would not die, but would “be as God, knowing good and evil.”<sup>7</sup> They ate the fruit and, just as the serpent had said, their eyes were opened. But what did they see? They did not see they were nude, as before, and “were not ashamed.” This time they saw they were “cunning,” as the Hebrew word for this “nakedness” shows.<sup>8</sup> Their flesh was exposed. They were now creatures of flesh, with self-awareness due to the knowledge of good and evil. And the man and woman tried to hide their nakedness with fig leaves.<sup>9</sup> God knew they had eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and He found them attempting to hide their flesh.

The LORD God clothed Adam and Eve with coats of skins.<sup>10</sup> But in putting to death the animals from which the skins were taken, there had to be bloodshed. Remember, the meaning of “blood” is “that which when shed causes death.”<sup>11</sup> Now we see how Jesus would one day shed His blood to provide a robe of righteousness for man. Even before the foundation of the world, God knew man would make the wrong choice.

With man’s new-found knowledge came the awareness that he could be his own god. And now being like God, knowing good and evil, the LORD God had to put him out of the Garden of Eden “lest he put forth his hand, and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live for ever.”<sup>12</sup>

Had man taken and eaten of the Tree of Life in his fallen condition, and lived eternally, God would have lost forever His creation who was made to worship Him. Man’s condition of flesh now separated him from his Creator, but God’s redemptive plan begins to unfold! He would one day reconcile man to Himself as we see in Romans 8:3-4: “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Was it Adam's act of disobedience that made all mankind sinful? Or was it the result of his disobedience? If simple disobedience was the problem, the tree with the forbidden fruit could have been a cherry tree or a fig tree. But no, it was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. **The fruit of the tree caused the problem: not merely the eating of it.** Yes, man ate the fruit in disobedience, but the fruit itself provided the source of trouble for all mankind from that moment on. Man's heredity was now to be born a mere man of **flesh**, both literally as well as figuratively. That is the reason Jesus said to Nicodemus, "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew.*" (John 3:6-7)

Another word for flesh is "*self*," and when man's eyes were opened he discovered his *self*-awareness, with its accompanying *self*-sufficiency. Rather than rely on God, man now relied on his knowledge of good and evil.

### **Mortality**

This new knowledge became the guiding force in man's life, and his condition changed to one of mortality – subject to death. As Paul said in Romans 5:14, "*Death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come.*" Death reigned because man was flesh, and flesh ultimately will die.

The word "*adam*" means "*man*." <sup>13</sup> However, "*man*" is also translated from a second Hebrew word meaning "*mortal*," <sup>14</sup> and is derived from another word that means "*to be frail, feeble*." <sup>15</sup> A whole book could be written to show the difference in the uses of "*man* [*adam, mankind*]" and "*man* [*mortal*]" throughout the Old Testament. But for now, I shall quote only the first verse where "*man* [*mortal*]" occurs. "*And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos [mortal] <sup>16</sup>; then began men [mortals] to call upon the name of the LORD.*" (Genesis 4:26) In acknowledgement of man's fallen condition, Seth named his son "*Mortal*."

### **A flesh heredity**

Adam did not pass on to man the sin heredity because he sinned. He passed on a flesh heredity that came with the knowledge of good and evil. All that which flesh produces is sin, whether it is good or evil. This can be seen in Leviticus 5:4 (Amplified): "*Or if anyone unthinkingly swears he will do something, whether to do evil or good, whatever it may be that a man shall pronounce rashly taking an oath, then, when he becomes aware of it, he shall be guilty in either of these.*"

This verse in the Law reveals to us that man was guilty of sin whether he chose "*to do evil or good*." The determination "*to do*" was the problem.

Satan had "*fathered*" flesh when he planted in man the seed of a thought, "*to be as God, knowing good and evil.*" <sup>17</sup> **The devil knew that with the knowledge of good and evil, man would be in his domain.** His own original sin was exaltation of self, which caused him to

be thrust down from the position he once held. He wanted to be God,<sup>18</sup> but he became only the god of this world and the realm of flesh. In the end, the God of all gods will triumph over ALL flesh!

The serpent had deceived man into exalting himself through the **knowledge of good and evil**, which was his God-likeness. But God chose to humble Himself and come in the “*likeness of sinful flesh*,” to put to death the flesh that had come between man and Himself. In crucifying flesh then being buried and raised to life by the Spirit, Jesus made a way for man to receive the **knowledge of the Truth**. God’s response to man’s God-likeness was for Himself to come in the form of man-likeness.

Only God Almighty, Creator of all things, can Father the new creature by planting His own Seed, His Spirit, in all who will come to the end of self and receive His Son Who is LIFE. God was not known as “Father” until Jesus came, and He is Father only to those born again – or “*born from above*,” which is the true meaning of the Greek word. Only the truly born-again believer can be called a “new creature in Christ Jesus.”

If sin were a deed, this verse would make no sense: “*Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him.*” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Paul was referring to the fact that Jesus was made flesh so that He could destroy the heredity of flesh, thus making a way for man to become the righteousness of God in Christ. Jesus said, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me.*” (John 14:6).

Man did not merely have a sin nature; the sin nature was the manifestation of what he had become – a creature of flesh. Man’s fleshly heredity is the root of his sin nature. Deeds spring from heredity. Therefore man’s heredity must be altered, and only God can alter heredity through the new birth.

I grew up believing that just because Adam sinned, it would make sinners of all those born after him. I thought, “*How can that be? It has to be more profound!*” The Lord showed me that it is indeed much more profound. **That which transpired because of Adam’s deed produced the root of all trouble.** This root, deep within the heart and soul of mankind, brought such depravity that Jesus had to die in order for the root to be removed.

We must not trivialize the Cross of Jesus Christ. He came because of man’s heredity of flesh, and the death which most certainly results. After all, our flesh is mortal, which means “*that must eventually die.*”<sup>19</sup> When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, He made very clear the difference between flesh and spirit, saying, “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*” (John 3:6).

In the whitewashing of the truth, we have overlooked the absolute need to be born again, not merely forgiven. If a mere deed was the problem with Adam eating the fruit of a wrong tree, God could simply have forgiven him, and all of Adam and Eve’s offspring would have had to avoid eating that same fruit in order to obey God’s

command. His command also included the fact that man would die if he ate the fruit – not that the fruit would kill him or that God would kill him, but that the knowledge of good and evil would reduce man to a creature of mortal flesh. And from that point on, all offspring would be born in this man-likeness.

1. Genesis 1:27
2. Genesis 2:7
3. Hebrew #6754
4. Genesis 2:25
5. Genesis 2:9
6. Genesis 2:17
7. Genesis 3:5
8. Hebrew #5903 from #6191
9. Genesis 3:7
10. Genesis 3:21
11. Hebrew #1818
12. Genesis 3:22-23
13. Hebrew #120
14. Hebrew #582
15. Hebrew #605
16. Hebrew #583
17. Genesis 3:4-5
18. Isaiah 14:12-15
19. Webster's New World Dictionary – Simon & Schuster Inc. 1986

## PART TWO: GOD'S RESPONSE

### CHAPTER THREE

### DESTRUCTION OF FLESH

From the time of man's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, he continued on the path of self until a point was reached where "*only evil*" prevailed. <sup>1</sup> When God saw the wickedness of Noah's day, He regretted that He had made man. There were tyrants <sup>2</sup> in the land who married the women and fathered powerful men. <sup>3,4</sup> The LORD told Noah that His Spirit would not strive with man forever, "*for he also is flesh,*" <sup>5</sup> and He said, "*I intend to make an end of all flesh, for through men the land is filled with violence; and behold, I will destroy them and the land.*" (Genesis 6:13 Amplified).

The wickedness of man came as a result of his knowledge of good and evil. Man had become a full-fledged creature of flesh and blood, capable of every kind of evil imaginable. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD, <sup>6</sup> and God called him and his family out, preserving them as a remnant while all other flesh perished in the flood.

The mortality of flesh was pointed out many times. Especially throughout the Psalms, the frailty of mortal man and the greatness of God can be seen. “*He remembered that **they were but flesh**, a breath that passes away and does not come again.*” (Psalm 78:39 NKJV).

David was constantly exalting the LORD God. He knew from personal experience the compassion of God toward man, and he said, “*As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that **we are dust**.*” (Psalm 103:13-14 NKJV).

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the fleeting life-span of mortal man. “. . . **All flesh is grass**, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; **surely the people are grass**. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” (Isaiah 40:6b-8 NKJV).

Peter, the apostle, had the same understanding when he spoke similar words. “**All flesh is as grass**, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD endures forever.” (1 Peter 1:24-25a NKJV).

### **When Jesus comes**

Jesus is coming back to receive unto Himself the remnant who have been faithful to Him. Even He does not know when that day will be, but His Father does. He tells us that it will be just like it was in Noah’s day, with people marrying and giving in marriage until He comes.<sup>7</sup> I believe Jesus was referring to how the people were taken up with flesh marrying flesh, and with how the wicked hearts of these carnal creatures was “*only evil*.” Once again as in Noah’s day all flesh will perish, but not with a flood of water covering the earth, as the beautiful rainbow reminds us. This time the destruction will come with the arrival of Jesus, the Son of God – a “*Consuming Fire*.”<sup>8</sup>

If man is taken up with the things of this life in the flesh – eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage – and if he is not consumed **with** a burning passion **for** God, he will be consumed **by** the burning passion **of** God.

1. Genesis 6:5
2. Hebrew #5303
3. Hebrew #1368
4. Hebrew #8034
5. Genesis 6:3a
6. Genesis 6:8
7. Matthew 24:36-39
8. Deuteronomy 4:24, Hebrews 12:29

## CHAPTER FOUR

### WHY CIRCUMCISION?

From the time of man's [adam] <sup>1</sup> fall, the inherent evil of man's heart and his determination to live apart from God has been manifest. Paul warned, "*But evil men and imposters shall wax worse and worse...*" (2 Timothy 3:13a). This will continue until Jesus returns to earth.

Here we focus on one of the ways in which God dealt with the flesh of man. Even though he was created in a physical flesh-and-blood body, it was man's eternal soul which mattered to God. In this chapter we will begin to see how this life is merely a pattern after that which is spiritual – the real life.

The bible says, "*And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect.*" The LORD went on to tell Abram of a covenant He would make with him, and how He would make him the "*father of a multitude of nations.*" (Genesis 17:1-4). How could Abram not humble himself and fall on his face at the thundering voice of I AM, <sup>2</sup> the Almighty God? How could he not respond to the desire of God's heart and walk before Him in pure, complete trust?

Genesis 17:5 tells how the LORD changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "father of a multitude." God required Abraham to keep his part of the covenant by circumcising all males of his household, including himself. At the age of ninety-nine, Abraham was circumcised. As Genesis 17:11 & 13b reads, *And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token or sign of the covenant (the promise or pledge) between Me and you. ...and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.* (Amplified) If any male were to break the covenant by failing to be circumcised, he would be cut off from his people. <sup>3</sup> There would be no reminder of the covenant, and nothing to turn his thoughts toward God.

#### **A matter of the heart**

*"So circumcise the foreskin of your [minds and] hearts; be no longer stubborn and hardened."* <sup>4</sup> God's people Israel were failing in their love for the fatherless, the widows, and the strangers who sojourned with them. That is why God told them to cut the flesh from the foreskin of their hearts, and to not be stubborn and hardened. He told them to love the stranger, for they had once been strangers in Egypt. He commanded them to fear Him, serve Him, and "*cling to Him, and by His name and presence you shall swear.*" <sup>5</sup> It has always been about relationship between God and man. They were to show their love for God by caring for others.

Circumcision became a part of the Old Testament Law. Later in the New Testament, the term "circumcision" was used in reference to God's people Israel, while "uncircumcision" referred to the Gentiles. The Old Testament was the Old Covenant made with Abraham. The New Testament is the New Covenant in Jesus' blood,

provided through His death, burial, and resurrection. The New Testament tells of the fulfilling of the Law and all that the prophets foretold regarding Jesus. It is the story of God's Son, and the freedom (from Law and flesh) He came to bring.

God used the Apostle Paul to write much of the New Testament, in which he clearly explained how the NEW replaced the OLD. In Romans 4:11-12, Paul recounted how Abraham had received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of the faith he had before his circumcision. As a result, Abraham could be the father of all who believe, whether Jews (circumcised) or Gentiles (uncircumcised). Circumcision did not make Abraham righteous – he was righteous because of his faith in God. His descendants were also counted as righteous. The evidence of the cutting off of flesh was the sign or “that which signified” that they were righteous.

In Romans 3:30b, Paul explained the difference between Abraham's (and the Jews') righteousness and the righteousness of the New Testament (as for the Gentiles): ... he [God] shall justify the circumcision **by** faith, and the uncircumcision **through** faith. The Greek meaning of “by” is “according to,” while “through” means “by way of.” So Abraham was counted as righteous in God's sight, “according to” his faith in God, while the Gentiles are justified “by way of” faith. And the word “faith,” when used as “saving faith,” shows that man is justified “through reliance upon Christ for salvation.”<sup>6</sup>

Eventually the Jews desired to have even the Gentiles circumcised. To their way of thinking, it was necessary for a person to be circumcised for him to be saved, as we see here: “*Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved.*” (Acts 15:1b.) They believed the deed of becoming circumcised would earn them entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Through diligent adherence to Moses' Law they had lost sight of the truth that their father Abraham's faith in God was the reason for circumcision. “*Therefore, remember that at one time you were Gentiles (heathens) in the flesh, called Uncircumcision by those who called themselves Circumcision, [itself a mark] in the flesh made by human hands.*” (Ephesians 2:11 Amplified).

Circumcision was a procedure done to the flesh by human hands. But Paul told the Colossians they were circumcised through Christ in His putting off the body of flesh – not with a circumcision “made by hands.”<sup>7</sup> Paul was speaking of the circumcision of the heart by the presence of Christ. When a person is born again [from above], Jesus, our Righteousness, provides the circumcision made without hands. We are righteous by way of FAITH. **Righteousness is not imputed to us because of our act of belief, as it was with Abraham: it is through rest in the finished work of the Cross.** The presence of His Spirit circumcises [cuts off] the flesh of our heart. “. . . *Not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*” (Titus 3:5)

According to the Greek, the word “renewing” means “renovation.”<sup>8</sup> The Holy Spirit comes into our heart and He renovates His new temple. It is a life-long process, as long as we surrender moment by moment to His working to form Christ in us.

The term “*circumcision*” could be used to describe the method employed by legalistic people to make other people appear righteous. Their aim is to change the outward appearance through outward deeds and to make them stop sinning. Paul had something to say about it in Galatians 6:12: “*Those who want to make a good impression and a fine show in the flesh would try to compel you to receive circumcision, simply so that they may escape being persecuted for allegiance to the cross of Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).*” (Amplified).

Rather than suffer persecution, some would revert to the life and ways of the flesh. They would deny the Christ of the cross in order to save their own skin. “*For not even they who receive circumcision do themselves keep the law; but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory [Greek: boast] <sup>9</sup> in your flesh. . . . For neither is circumcision any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*” (Gal. 6:13, 15) It is not about doing or not doing – it is about **being** a new creature in Christ Jesus.

### **Modern day “circumcision”**

There was a woman whose daughter had suffered much at the hands of religious people. As a young girl, the daughter’s faith in God was very real. She was a sensitive child, knowing the voice of the Lord at a very early age. Because of the “help” of people who love to “*circumcise*,” she rebelled and was deceived by other “spiritual” experiences. Her vulnerability made her a target of Satan the accuser. She made many mistakes in her life, including unwise choices in relationships. Her mother’s heart was heavy. She desired to see her daughter return to the faith she once had as a young child. One evening at a prayer service, the mother requested prayer for her daughter. The minister said, “Is she still living with her boyfriend?” The mother replied “yes,” and he hastened to say that he would pray for this request. His prayer started out with “Oh God, show them what they are doing.” Was there a genuine concern for the daughter’s need to return to her relationship of trust in Jesus? Is it possible the minister desired only to see her “*circumcised*?” Did he simply want to change the outward appearance to please man, but not necessarily care whether God circumcised the flesh of her heart?

The good news is that the young lady has returned to her faith in the Lord. She and her boyfriend got married and had a family, and God is continuing a work in her, purifying her for Himself. God will never perform His work to the stipulations of religious people. He does not expect people who are separated from Him to stop sinning so they can come to Him. Jesus longs for sinners to come to Him just as they are so that He can make them new creatures in Himself.

Paul was emphatic when he said, “*Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*” (Philippians 3:2-3).

“*Concision*”<sup>10</sup> is mutilation, or one could say, “forceful circumcision.” Are there those today who could be called the “*concision*” because of demands on others to adhere to religious rules and precepts in the name of Christianity? How many souls have been driven away from a relationship with Jesus because of flesh-conscious, circumcising, religious people?

Man cannot be changed from the outside – he must receive a new heredity. He must be born from above and become a new creature in Christ Jesus. The wellspring of the new heredity is the knowledge of the Truth (Jesus) through the indwelling Spirit of Christ. 1 John 5:18 (Amplified) tells us that those born of God no longer practice sin, but “*the One Who was begotten of God*” keeps the evil one from touching us. What wonderful good news! It is Jesus in the new creature Who keeps the evil one from “touching” him. Though born from above, we still live in a mortal body and will slip up. But because Jesus is in us, our heart is toward God, and we will no longer practice sin as one who still has the old heredity.

1. Hebrew #120
2. Exodus 3:14
3. Genesis 17:14
4. Deuteronomy 10:16 Amplified
5. Deuteronomy 10:19-20 Amplified
6. Greek #4102
7. Colossians 2:11
8. Greek #342
9. Greek # 2744
10. Greek #2699

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE LAW AND THE SACRIFICE

“*For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.*” (Romans 5:13). These were words Paul used in his lengthy letter to the Romans, as he expounded on Law and Grace.

When God instructed Moses to give the Law to His people, it was to reveal the sinfulness in their failure to acknowledge the LORD God. It was part of His plan to prepare Israel for the coming of their Messiah. Without the Law, they had no knowledge of sin. But it was necessary to expose sin so they could practice the shedding of blood for atonement. Throughout the Law, the prophetic provision of God’s Sacrifice can be seen in the repetition of the phrases, “*If a man do. . . then he shall take. . . shedding blood. . . making atonement. . . shall be forgiven.*” Each time the Law was transgressed, it was necessary that blood be shed so forgiveness could be granted to the transgressor. Even then, there were some exceptions which resulted in death or expulsion from among God’s people Israel.

The Old Testament is full of accounts of Israel's unwillingness to acknowledge God. At creation, He had become life to man when He breathed into him the breath [spirit] of life. <sup>1</sup> Man's sin was his independence from God, and Israel continued on the same path. Man no longer acknowledged God as God, but relied on the knowledge of good and evil introduced by Adam and Eve. Wayward Israel suffered many things. But at the same time God's love was unfailing – He was always there to provide, to heal, and to free them.

Israel was in bondage in Egypt until God brought them out. Although Moses repeatedly asked Pharaoh to let his people go, his pleading went unheeded. God was at work, even through Pharaoh, to reveal Himself as “*the LORD God.*”

When the time came for His people Israel to come out of Egyptian bondage, the first words God spoke to Moses were, “***I am the LORD.***” He continued with, “*Tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you.*” Moses replied, “*I am of deficient and impeded speech; how then shall Pharaoh listen to me?*” (See Exodus 6:29-30 Amplified) Moses was concerned that he was a mere mortal, with lips of flesh, and Pharaoh would have no cause to pay attention to anything he might say. The LORD'S response was that He would make Moses a “god” to Pharaoh, with Aaron as his prophet. And that He would give Moses the words for Aaron to speak unto Pharaoh, telling him to let the children of Israel go. God told Moses that Pharaoh would not listen to him, and He went on to say, “*I will lay My hand upon Egypt and bring forth My hosts, My people the Israelites, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth My hand upon Egypt and bring out the Israelites from among them...But the Lord made Pharaoh's heart more strong and obstinate, and he would not let the Israelites go.*” (Exodus 7:1b-5; 10:20 Amplified).

God's great acts of judgment came in the form of multiple afflictions upon the Egyptians, yet God hardened the hearts of Pharaoh and his servants, again and again. <sup>2</sup> God explained it to Moses, saying he would relate to his sons and grandsons the things God had done so that they “*may know that I am the LORD.*” <sup>3</sup> And He told Moses to declare to Pharaoh how He had raised up Pharaoh to show him His power that “*my name may be declared throughout all the earth.*” (Exodus 9:16).

Ten chapters later, the message is still the same with this introduction to the first of the Ten Commandments: “*And God spoke all these words, saying: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me . . . for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God. . .*” (Exodus 20:1-3, 5b NKJV). God continually pleaded for self-centered man to turn from self and to acknowledge the LORD God.

God desired that Israel not forget Him, and He required them to keep His statutes so they might live and not be destroyed. <sup>4</sup> If they feared the LORD, trusted Him as Healer and Provider, and did not become puffed up, they would escape the destruction which came upon the Egyptians. But He said that if they forgot Him to “*walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them,*” they would “*surely perish.*”<sup>5</sup>

God's patience with rebellious man of flesh indicated the great love He had for His people Israel. However, as long as flesh prevailed with its knowledge of good and evil, there would be failure after failure. Only if they were successful at keeping the Law could they measure up to God's requirement that they acknowledge Him. He reminded them repeatedly with the words, "**I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD.**" Here is another example of God's words of pleading: "*Therefore you shall keep My commandments, and perform them: I am the LORD. You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. I am the LORD who sanctifies you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD.*" (Leviticus 22:31-33 NKJV).

### God's plan

God alone gave breath [spirit] to man, and God alone takes away their breath [spirit]. And it is God Who ordained the length of life to be "*threescore years and ten; or even by reason of strength fourscore years, yet is their pride but labour and sorrow; for it is soon gone, and we fly away.*" (Psalm 90:10).

God had a plan to bring Eternal Life to mortal man. But first, He had to effect reconciliation by removing that which separated man from Himself. To destroy all flesh would leave Him without man. He could have started over and created a new human race, but instead He chose to redeem fallen man. "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him.*" (John 3:16-17).

All mankind is mortal and, whether he is born a Jew or a Gentile, he is a man in the image of man and condemned to death. Adam chose death through the knowledge of good and evil, when he could have chosen Life. As Paul wrote, "*For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*" (1 Corinthians 15:22). The Law of Moses, given to Israel, was fulfilled in Jesus so that all flesh could be reconciled to God. Paul the Apostle pointed out how Jesus is our peace, and has made both Jew and Gentile as one new man, because He "*has broken down the middle wall of separation, having **abolished in His flesh the enmity**, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances. . . For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.*"<sup>6</sup>

God's ultimate plan was to come "*in the likeness of sinful flesh*"<sup>7</sup> and then die to reconcile man to Himself. In so doing He would fulfill the Law's requirement by shedding His own sinless blood to make atonement for the sin of all, once for all. Another way Jesus fulfilled the Law was through His own acknowledgment of the Father. He most often referred to God as "*the Father*," rather than "*my Father*." For God was not only Jesus' Father, but the One who would father all those born from above. In Colossians 1:18, Paul referred to Jesus as "*the firstborn from the dead.*"

There was nothing about the Law that could make man pure. The very detailed, intricate laws were so easily transgressed. And man's incapability to perfectly obey was exposed by the Law which served only to reveal the sinfulness of his fallen state and his need for God.

As long as there was the Law, there was transgression. “. . . For the Law results in [divine] wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression [of it either].” (Romans 4:15 Amplified). At the same time Jesus made a way for man to receive a new heredity, He removed the “*strength of sin [which] is the law.*”<sup>8</sup> Sin is the transgression of the Law, but Jesus nailed it to the cross: “. . . *having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*” (Colossians 2:14 NKJV).

Because of the Cross, “*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death.*”<sup>9</sup> Because of the Cross, the Law was fulfilled in those who walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh, for “***the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace... And they that are in the flesh cannot please God.***”<sup>10</sup> **The mind of flesh is full of the knowledge of good and evil – the same knowledge which resulted in man's eviction from the Garden of Eden.**

## Pleasing God

Jesus came to free man from himself and his own way. He did not make rules for man to obey. If God had expected man to adhere to rules and regulations, Jesus would not have had to die, but would have stayed on earth to monitor compliance to His rules. All of His teachings are truths to be lived out in the power of His life, which produces the fruit of righteousness.

We are told that “*without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing unto him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is [God,] and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after [Greek: crave]*”<sup>11</sup> *him.*” (Hebrews 11:6). If man relies on himself, through obedience to rules and regulations, he cannot be pleasing to God. It makes no difference whether it is man's religious laws or Moses' Law – man cannot please God. Only Christ in man can please the Father.

The well-known Ephesians 2:8-9 could be paraphrased: “*For by the divine influence on the heart have you been saved through relying upon Christ for salvation: not through deeds of the flesh, that no man should glory.*” With the Holy Spirit's influence on our hearts, we are led to rely upon Christ for our salvation. If there were any other way, such as obedience to some law, we would have cause to glory in our works.

## Israel's tutor

In explaining the true purpose of the Law, Paul poses a question: “*What then is the law?*” And he answers by saying, “***it was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made.***” (Galatians 3:19a) The Scriptures show

that all people were included in a common subjection to sin, until the promise through “*faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*” Paul’s next words relate wonderful news for God’s people Israel. “*But before faith came, we were kept in ward [Greek: protected]<sup>12</sup> under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. So that **the law hath been our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.** But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor. For ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*” (Galatians 3:21-26).

The men who revised the King James Version of the bible, between 1870 and 1885, wisely changed the word “*schoolmaster*” to “*tutor.*” *Schoolmaster* did not show the love of the Father but left the impression that God was standing over man with a whip, enforcing obedience to His rules. When we read the Old Testament and see the waywardness of Israel, we cannot help but begin to understand the depth of God’s love and His endless mercy toward them. They were God’s chosen people, His children. And He provided a tutor to bring them unto Christ and to teach them to acknowledge Him. He kept them “in ward under the law” for their own protection. “*But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them which were under the law.*” (Galatians 4:4-5a).

As good as the Ten Commandments are in principle, they can never make us righteous – and righteousness can never be legislated. In his misguided desire to “rule over” others, carnal man may try to bring others into submission by holding up the Ten Commandments as “law.” But as the bible tells us, “*Love is the fulfilling of the law.*” (Romans 13:10b) We know, then, that one who walks in love would never be found in violation of even one of Moses’ Ten Commandments.

1. Genesis 2:7
2. Exodus 7:3
3. Exodus 10:2
4. Deuteronomy 6:24-25
5. Deuteronomy 8:19
6. Ephesians 2:14-18
7. Romans 8:3
8. 1 Corinthians 15:56
9. Romans 8:2
10. Romans 8:4-8
11. Greek #1567
12. Greek #5432

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE LIFE IS IN THE BLOOD

The bible says much about the blood of Jesus, but until the Lord led me in the study of flesh and blood, I could not even begin to comprehend the meaning of Calvary. God’s plan for man’s redemption began at creation – even before the fall of man.

Man and animals were created with blood as the life of their flesh. Blood ran in the veins for no reason other than to reveal His plan to bring **real life** by the shedding of Jesus' blood. This is obvious with the Hebrew word for "blood" meaning, "*that which when shed causes death.*"<sup>1</sup> God's plan was that His people should be tutored in the shedding of blood, putting flesh to death until Jesus came to shed His blood.

The purposes of God are so intricately interwoven in our lives, yet we are taken up with this life and cannot see Him. Symbolism goes far beyond what is commonly understood. Within every aspect of life there are elements of eternal reality that should keep us mindful of God.

An example that reveals life according to God's scheme and how it relates to the life of the flesh is portrayed in the human body. When the blood flow is cut off from part of a limb, it results in numbness and, at times, much pain. If the blood flow is not allowed to return to the area, the limb will become gangrenous and die. Spiritually speaking, death to flesh can also be a very painful process. How many are truly willing to submit to the process necessary to crucify the flesh-life?

Leviticus 16:27-28 speaks of the filth of flesh in describing the sin offering. The blood of a bull and goat were brought in to make atonement for sin, while the skins, flesh, and dung were to be taken outside of the camp to be burned. With the life of the flesh having been poured out to make atonement, all that remained was dead flesh which would decay. It was necessary for the skin, which represented nakedness, and the "*dung [Hebrew: excrement]*"<sup>2</sup> produced by flesh to be completely destroyed by fire. After handling the filthy flesh, the person who burned the animals required cleansing before he could return to the camp where the people were.

According to the Law, if a man were to eat blood he was partaking of the life of the flesh, and would be cut off from among his people. It was symbolic. And it was a vital aspect of the tutoring of the people Israel. "***For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.***" (Leviticus 17:11 NKJV). There was no atonement available for those who ate the life of the flesh. The eating of blood, as such, was not the problem. This part of the law was given as an example to show how partaking of the life of the flesh would end in eternal separation from God.

Throughout the centuries, Israel should have learned the importance of the symbolism in bloodshed bringing death to flesh. They had constant reminders with the annual sin offerings made through the putting to death of the flesh of specified animals. Instead it became ritualistic, so that when Jesus came as their Messiah to shed His blood to free them from the flesh, they rejected Him. Paul gave a clear explanation in Romans 9:31-33, when he said that Israel failed at following after a law for righteousness because "***they sought it not by faith, but as it were by works. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone even as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stone of stumbling and rock of offence [Greek: cause of displeasure]:***<sup>3</sup> *and he that believeth on him shall not be put to*

shame.” The “Rock of offence” was to the Jews a cause of displeasure. It pleased them more to be taken up with the works of the law than to be watching for their Messiah, of Whom the Law had prophesied.

### Jesus’ flesh

Taking communion is very much a ritual in many churches today. It ought not to be so. Jesus instructed us to partake of the sacraments “in remembrance” of Him. The wine symbolizes His blood, the life of His flesh, which He poured out so man could have eternal Life. The bread symbolizes His body, which was broken for us. In partaking of these two elements, we are symbolically partaking of His life. Rather than being mere religious rhetoric, remembering the Lord’s death should be a celebration of what was poured out for us that we might die to our flesh and live new lives in Him.

The Scripture passage on communion is one of the most familiar ones.<sup>4</sup> If we choose to partake in the life of the flesh, going through the motions of partaking of Jesus’ life as one born again, we are not discerning His body. If we eat and drink “irreverently,”<sup>5</sup> it is as though we are guilty of shedding the Savior’s blood. Only those truly born again and living in a relationship of trust in Jesus have a right to participate in the sacrament of communion. To do otherwise is to deceive oneself and bring about consequences such as weakness, sickness, or death.<sup>6</sup>

Jesus referred to Himself as the Bread of Life when He said, “**the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.**” (John 6:51b NKJV) He is the true “Manna” from Heaven. He also said that His blood is drink and that, if we will eat His flesh and drink His blood, we will have eternal Life. This shows even more the fulfillment of the Law in His provision of Life through His shed blood. Remember, under the Law it was wrong to eat blood and those guilty would be cut off. But now Jesus says, “[U]nless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.” (John 6:53b NKJV) When Jesus is our Life we abide in Him and He abides in us. But if we do not partake of Him, we are yet flesh – there is no Life in us.

1. Hebrew #1818
2. Hebrew #6569
3. Greek #4625
4. 1 Corinthians 11:27-30
5. Greek #371
6. Greek #2837

## PART THREE: MAN'S RESPONSE

### CHAPTER SEVEN

#### GOD'S WORD OR MAN'S WORD

John's record of the Gospel begins with, "***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.***" (John 1:1) The Word spoke into being all that was created. Jesus is the Living Word, and later on we find these words from Jesus' lips: "*The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*" (John 6:63b NKJV).

Even though mortal man has chosen to present a multitude of bible versions, often resulting from his own bias, the Holy Spirit will continue to reveal Jesus – the Living Word.

There is no such thing as the "*perfect*" bible version because man has fallen into apostasy – even centuries ago. He has responded to Satan's lies rather than seeking the Spirit of Truth, and has become taken up with arguments over who has the REAL bible. Among many who are clamoring to be "*right*," Jesus has been forsaken. And forgotten are the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth century believers who gave their lives to preserve God's inspired words. One of these martyrs was even suspended in chains over a fire and roasted to death!

The more recent translations are promoted as being "*easier to understand*," but so much of the bible has been changed, distorted, or omitted. In many instances, errors have weakened the original thought and intent of God's heart, which is that His people may know Him and the lost may find Him. Satan is pleased when he can use carnal minds to translate God's precious words and obscure the truth. That serpent was even casting doubt on God's word when he asked Eve: "*Hast God said. . . ?*" I love how David wrote that the words and promises of God are "*pure words, like silver refined in an earthen furnace, purified seven times over.*" (Psalm 12:6b Amplified).

In spite of what man has done to the written word, it is ultimately the Holy Spirit who will speak Life to a seeking soul. My friend Helen found the Lord while reading a more recent bible version. Jesus captured her heart, taking her for Himself. There was no sermon, no preacher – only the Holy Spirit revealing Jesus. And now, many years later, she is still consumed with a passion for Him. This is but one example of how we know that God's Word (Jesus Christ, through His Spirit) will always be "*living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.*" (Hebrews 4:12b).

My husband inherited from his grandmother a number of very old books, including a large KJV bible. The bible is so old its pages have become brittle, and we have used many rolls of tape to hold it together to protect it from further deterioration. In my reading and study of this old translation, I became sadly aware of how some of the revisions have weakened the truth about flesh and the significant role flesh has played in the falling away of the Church. Jesus gave His all to redeem man from flesh and the knowledge of good and evil, yet many continue in oblivion to what Jesus accomplished on His Cross.

One example of a much distorted verse is Jeremiah 14:18. In the Revised KJV, the LORD instructs Jeremiah to say how he went into a field and saw some “*slain with the sword,*” then went into a city and saw others “*sick with famine*”; “**for both the prophet and the priest go about in the land and have no knowledge.**” The “authorized” KJV reads, “*yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not.*” The prophet and priest were without knowledge, lying to the people in saying there would be no sword or famine – which was the very reason for the slain with the sword and the sick with famine. The KJV changed the word “for” to “yea” and negated the blame belonging to the prophet and priest for prophesying lies, rather than speaking the word of the LORD. And the last phrase omitted the fact that they were without knowledge from God. The revisers made it appear as though the prophet and priest simply went “*into a land that they knew not.*”

### **The source of error**

God said His people perish for lack of knowledge. <sup>1</sup> The knowledge that Jesus came to set us free from the bondage of our sinful flesh ought to lead us to cry, “*Lord, change me!*” The cause of the error (flesh) is also the result of the error – flesh basically produces more flesh. This cause and its effect spin a very deadly, man-made web of deceit. It has obscured the true reason for Jesus’ coming in the flesh.

The error that has crept into the Church has masked our condition of flesh. We cannot even see ourselves! Until Christ comes in, bringing light to dispel darkness, we will remain in the dark. Jesus told Nicodemus that unless one is born again, he can neither see the Kingdom of God, nor can he enter it. (John 3:3, 5) Carnal man is blind to those things that can only be spiritually discerned.

Here is one example of how flesh has kept the masses from a clear understanding of the relationship the Father requires for His Son’s Bride: In 1 Corinthians 10:8, Paul said, “*Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.*”

Paul is referring to the account in Numbers of Israel’s unfaithfulness to God in taking up with a Moabitish deity. <sup>2</sup> Typically, throughout the Old Testament, words such as “*harlot*” and “*whoredom*” were used to describe the adultery of God’s people Israel. Their adultery was committed against the LORD God Himself. When Paul used the word

“*fornication*” in this passage, he was not speaking according to the understanding of fleshly minds which can see only the things of this life: he was referring to the adulterous [Hebrew: *apostatizing*]<sup>3</sup> acts of Israel with other gods, or “husbands [Hebrew: *baal*].”<sup>4</sup>

Regrettably, in one version of the bible, fleshly minds translated Paul’s word “*fornication*” to “*sexual immorality*,”<sup>5</sup> while another version used the phrase “*sinned with other men’s wives*.”<sup>6</sup> In these versions, a veil of flesh has obscured the most important relationship that ever was – or ever will be. (There is much more in the next chapter devoted to God’s relationship with man and why the Church is the Bride of Christ.)

As another example, in Revelation 2:20-22, the words “*fornication*” [Greek: *idolatry*]<sup>7</sup> and “*adultery*” [Greek: *apostasy*]<sup>8</sup> were used in the KJV. Again, these words were changed to reflect today’s understanding which has served only to dilute the spiritual impact of Jesus’ words when He spoke them to the church in Thyatira. Rather than showing the depths of Jezebel’s evil influence, the newer translations have simply made it seem as though she was seducing the people to commit “*sexual immorality*.” As evil as that practice is, the “*seducing*” to idolatry and apostasy is far more harmful because of the eternal consequences.

Due to the fact that so much can be lost in translation, I urge diligence in one’s bible reading. We cannot assume to know the meaning of a passage in the New Testament that refers to a passage from the Old Testament, without studying the referenced Old Testament passage as well. More importantly, we must trust the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to the understanding of scriptures. After all, He is the Spirit of Truth and will be the One to whom the remnant has surrendered.

1. Hosea 4:6
2. Numbers 25:3
3. Hebrew #5003
4. Hebrew #1167
5. New International Version
6. The Living Bible
7. Greek #4203
8. Greek #3431 & #3432

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### MARRIAGE – GOD’S PLAN OR MAN’S?

When God created man, He breathed His own breath into this magnificent masterpiece and equipped him with incredible capabilities. But God’s thoughts were on the eternal. He set in place a pattern, for man’s good, to keep man mindful of his Creator. The most vital of all patterns was that of marriage.

In the beginning all was perfect. The communion between the Creator and Adam and Eve must have been beyond comprehension. One can only imagine the pure interaction between God and man. It had to have been nothing short of blissful euphoria! The Spirit-to-spirit communication would be on such a level that only “*adams*” and their “*eves*” can understand as they experience incredible degrees of ecstasy in that spirit-to-spirit connection of the marital relationship. That ecstasy alone should be enough to cause mankind to acknowledge God as “*God.*” But does he?

During those times of intimacy, ordained for marriage by God Himself, there is a unique sense of incredible oneness. As our wonderful Creator said, “***they shall be one flesh.***” (Genesis 2:24b) God had created both male and female as one, taking Eve out of Adam’s side and giving her back to him to be his wife. Out of Jesus’ side poured water and blood.<sup>1</sup> And now His Bride, born of water and the Spirit<sup>2</sup> and cleansed by His blood, is given back to Him. She is the wife of the “*last Adam.*”<sup>3</sup>

Procreation was to be a result of the intimacy between a man and his wife. But most of all, this God-designed relationship was intended as a model in this life of the relationship of Christ and His Bride. Man was created, first and foremost, for intimacy with God. The life in the flesh is merely secondary, yet to self-centered man this life has become everything. The marriage act was intended to be a model of man’s intercourse with his Creator – the foreplay symbolizing praise and worship, then consummating in the ultimate ecstasy of His presence. The after-glow is to be symbolic of lingering in His presence with all the strength of flesh having been spent in total surrender. (For an even more graphic description of God’s desire for man, read the Song of Solomon.)

Gross error has blinded man to the reason he was created. It is the same error responsible for almost all deception invading the church – failure to understand that flesh-focused, self-centered man resulted from the knowledge of good and evil. Rather than knowing God’s desire for intimacy, man is taken up with himself and he offers to God mere tokens – all in the name of serving Him. What God wants is man! He wants a Bride for His Son. The pattern of this reality was made clear in the Old Testament, with God’s constant pleading for Israel to acknowledge Him as the LORD God.

### Jehovah’s “wife”

Israel was regarded as the spouse of Jehovah. He required exclusive loyalty, as the word “jealous” means.<sup>4</sup> Moses said, “. . . For you shall worship no other god; for ***the Lord, Whose name is Jealous, is a jealous (impassioned) God, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they play the harlot after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and one invites you, you eat of his food sacrificed to idols, and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters play the harlot after their gods and make your sons play the harlot after their gods.***” (Exodus 34:14-16 Amplified) It was not the intermarriage of the people that was adulterous: it was their “playing the harlot after” the gods of heathens that provoked the LORD to jealousy. Their idolatry was considered “*adultery*” as the Hebrew word indicates.<sup>5</sup>

When the word “Baal” appears in the Old Testament, it is capitalized and refers to a Phoenician deity. <sup>6</sup> In several other references, that same Hebrew word [baal] is translated “husband,” which is the true meaning. <sup>7</sup> Therefore, when the Israelites turned to trusting in Baal, <sup>8</sup> they were unfaithful because they had committed spiritual adultery [Hebrew: apostatizing] <sup>9</sup> against God with another “husband.”

Jeremiah gave further evidence of Israel’s adulterous acts against her Husband Jehovah. He told of how the LORD asked him, “Have you seen what **backsliding** Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there **played the harlot.**” The LORD, in His love for Israel, yearned for her to come back to Him, but she did not return. He told the prophet how, because of Israel’s adultery, He had given her a certificate of divorce; then “her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but **went and played the harlot also.**” The LORD referred to her casual harlotry, saying that she had “defiled the land and **committed adultery with stones and trees.**” In adulterously turning away from the One Who desired a relationship, Israel’s new “lovers” were stones and trees. Yet God continued to plead with her to return to Him, to be His wife: “Return, O backsliding children,’ says the LORD; **‘for I am married to you.’”** <sup>10</sup>

The Lord will restore his “wife” Israel to Himself. All He had ever wanted was to be their God, their protective Husband. He had made the first covenant with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt, but they broke the covenant even though He was a Husband to them. The Lord Himself will bring about His wife’s restoration and fulfill His heart’s desire for relationship. Jeremiah wrote about the new covenant the LORD will make with the house of Israel. “I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and **I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**” (Jeremiah 31:33b).

The words “harlot,” “whoredom,” “adultery,” and “bill of divorcement” had their origin with God. Their application had to do with man’s relationship to his Creator, yet mortal man believes life is all about him and his life in the flesh. He can see these words being defined as they relate solely to the sins of man, but this life consists of mere patterns of that which is real – the spiritual. This life is to be the training ground for eternity, with man seeing how God is so intricately involved in every aspect of his life. But man is obsessed with the things of the flesh, while God is forgotten.

God took very drastic measures in His dealings with Israel to draw them back, but they repeatedly forgot Him. He told them they were not mindful of the Rock Who bore them and the God Who travailed in their birth. Out of indignation He rejected them, calling them “perverse and unfaithful.” “**They have moved me to jealousy with what is not God; they have angered Me with their idols. So I will move them to jealousy with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.**” (Deuteronomy 32:21 Amplified). The people who are “not a people” are the Gentiles to whom God offered eternal life through His Son TO PROVOKE ISRAEL TO JEALOUSY. And again we see His great love for His wife when He said, “Yet I will leave a remnant, so that you may have some who escape the sword among the nations, when you are scattered through the countries.” (Ezekiel 6:8 NKJV).

The use of the words “*a foolish nation*” to describe the Gentiles (the non-Jews) tells us we are not nearly as important as we may think we are. God made it clear that He would send the Gospel to all other nations in order to make His wife jealous. I believe the greatest irony in the whole bible can be found in the story of Saul of Tarsus becoming “*Paul the Apostle.*”<sup>11</sup> Paul was an Israelite called by God and transformed by God to take the message of God to the Gentiles. Paul was the best of the best according to the religion of the Jews,<sup>12</sup> yet God chose one of their own to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the heathen. What an amazing account of the marvelous grace of Almighty God! Oh what love that He would come in the likeness of sinful flesh to die for a bunch of foolish “*nobodies!*”

The transformation making Paul an apostle also put within him the same godly jealousy that caused him to plead with the Gentiles to be faithful to Christ. “*For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ.*” (2 Corinthians 11:2).

### **A virgin bride**

Jesus was born of a virgin. He was not born of flesh, but only in the “*likeness of sinful flesh.*” His was conceived by the Holy Spirit – not by a creature of flesh!

We His Bride must be untouched by flesh. We must be without spot and prepared as a bride to join her husband. We must be a virgin Bride, a new creature in Christ Jesus, born of the Spirit. An impure bride is not a virgin Bride.

Matthew 25:1-13 tells the parable of the five wise virgins who had the Holy Spirit (oil in their lamps) and were fit for the Bridegroom. But the five foolish virgins who had no Holy Spirit (oil in their lamps) were shut out - the Bridegroom did not know them.

Paul’s words bear repeating, “*For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband; that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ.*” Faithfulness demands we keep ourselves only unto Him, as a pure virgin, unspotted by the world and the life of the flesh. Jesus, our Bridegroom, is waiting and longing for a pure virgin bride without spot or wrinkle.

### **The Bridegroom**

The Greek word for “*apostasy*” is closely related to the word for “*divorce.*”<sup>13</sup> This shows again how much man’s relationship with God is paralleled in the marriage relationship. There is another Greek word meaning “*apostate*” or “*male paramour,*” which is translated “*adulterer.*”<sup>14, 15</sup>

In the Hebrew, the words “*matrimony*” and “*rest*” both come from the same root word, which is also translated “*Noah.*”<sup>16</sup> Isaiah used that word when he said, “*And it shall come to pass in that day that the root of Jesse, which standeth for an ensign of the peoples,*

*unto him shall the nations seek; and his resting place shall be glorious.” (Isaiah 11:10). Marriage to Jesus will be glorious!*

Paul went to great lengths to explain the relationship for which the Bride of Christ is to be prepared. He took the law regarding earthly marriage and compared it with man’s marriage to Jesus. Paul explained how they could not be both married to the Law and “*married to Christ*” at the same time. As long as a woman’s husband was alive she was bound by law to her husband – but when he died, she was released from that law. At the same time, if she married another while her husband was still living, she was an adulteress. So it is with Christ. As Paul said, “*Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.*” (Romans 7:4 NKJV). When they were in the flesh, through the law they brought forth fruit “*to death.*” But now, having been delivered from the law and having died to that law through Christ, they could serve in newness of the Spirit instead of the letter of the Law.<sup>17</sup> If they tried to revive the Law, believing they could still be righteous through the Law, they would be committing adultery against their new Husband. **Christ, the new Husband, brought death to the Law in Himself so they could be married to Him.**

There are countless lovers vying for the affections of those who believe they are the Bride of Christ. And, as unbelievable as it may seem, these “lovers” are found within the churches where countless enticements lure people away from their Bridegroom. The most predominant of all lovers is flesh itself. Man loves to *do* because it makes him feel good. So easily do our affections turn to doing for Jesus and we forsake our first love for Him, thereby becoming unfaithful to Him. We are committing adultery against our Bridegroom and the Father’s heart is aching over the condition of His Son’s Bride.

If we search our hearts, we might hear the Son say, “So many of them think they are my Bride, but they are not prepared for our Wedding Day. The Bride has been told repeatedly to prepare to meet Me. Thousands of scrolls have been written which tell of the required apparel for that day when the heavenly chorus cries out: *‘Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.’*” (Revelation 19:7).

Maybe it is even possible that we can hear the Father say, “Those who call themselves by My Son’s Name, believing they are His Bride, must examine themselves and seek My Spirit for clarity of the Truth. If only they would stop running here and there and would spend time with Me, My Spirit would minister peace and rest to their souls. Then they would know that eternal life comes through My indwelling Spirit, and by obedience to the only commandment – Love! If only those who say they are a part of the Church would stop playing church and become called out. Jesus is My sinless Son and will take as His Bride only those who have been faithful to Him. He cannot accept one person who already has a *husband*. Whether that “husband” is church attendance, singing, teaching, tithing, preaching, or any other thing that appears holy – if it is rooted in the knowledge of good and evil instead of My Spirit, it matters not.”

The phrase “*sanctity of marriage*” is often heard in reference to earthly marriage. The reason marriage is sacred is that it is to be patterned after the relationship between God and man. In this life we see all kinds of deviations from what is rightfully considered normal. One such deviation of which we hear so often is that of common-law relationships. And in the church there are far too many who are satisfied with a “common-law relationship” with the Lord, and have no true commitment to Him. Are we content to be identified with Jesus for what we can get, without being totally and unreservedly His? Do we, like Cain, offer mere works of our hands<sup>18</sup> and expect to receive blessings from Him? All the while, Jesus is waiting and longing for the church to love Him “*with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.*” (Mark 12:30a NKJV).

We must also remember this: Faithfulness to Jesus means faithfulness to the husband or wife He has given us, or to remain pure as a single person. Paul spoke at length on this subject in 1 Corinthians 7. He also warned us to “*flee sexual immorality,*” saying that this one sin is against our own bodies which are the temples of the Holy Spirit. We are not our own – we belong to the One who puts His Spirit within us at the new birth.<sup>19</sup> How many are there in the Church today who have violated their own bodies and the bodies of others – all because of lust and a lack of self-control? This is a major problem even among Christians, and many have been exposed for the entire world to see, bringing shame to the Name of Jesus.

### **“Gay” flesh**

Homosexuality, the most prevalent deviation of all, is diametrically opposed to the pattern God intended for man to follow. The degree to which man has gone in his preoccupation with flesh has been manifested in what the world calls a “*gay lifestyle.*” Paul the Apostle explained the waywardness of man in spite of the evidence of God in all of His creation. Men did not glorify God as God, and “*their foolish hearts were darkened.*” While professing to be wise, they actually became fools and changed God into the image of carnal man – as well as birds, animals, and creeping things. They worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, so God gave them over to their fleshly lusts and the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves.<sup>20</sup>

What a description of man today! He is taken up with creatures of flesh – both himself and others. God does not hold first place in the hearts of the majority who name His Name. The lusts of their hearts have caused them to exchange the truth of God for a lie and to follow the dictates of mere men who also name His Name. God will not tolerate man being his own god and making “husbands” of other mortals.

How disgusted our Lord must have been, for He “*gave them up to vile passions.*” Both women and men forsook the natural use of their God-created bodies and turned to those of their own sex. Because they ceased to retain God in their knowledge, He gave them over to a “*reprobate mind*” to do things which are not fitting. They were filled with ALL unrighteousness and other fleshly manifestations, such as maliciousness, murder, strife, backbiting, haughtiness – to name a few. Paul says that these people

*“who, knowing the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also consent with those who practice them.”*<sup>21</sup> In essence, God is saying, “If you persist in your obsession with flesh, then flesh is what you will be. I take my hands off – go and do your thing, but the consequences are deadly as in all fleshly pursuits.”

Someone told me of a book given to her so that she might understand homosexuals. She learned that they are very self-centered. This self-centeredness is the manifestation of flesh being taken up with flesh. It is the exact opposite of all God ordained for man, because it is the literal living out of man chasing after man. Rather than mankind modeling in this life the relationship of the Bride and Bridegroom, homosexuals exhibit the extent to which man has gone in his unfaithfulness to God.

What kind of example is the Church if those who name the Name of Christ are self-centered? Could we even say that some in the Church, who are taken up with the things of the flesh, have rightfully earned the name “Sodom?” A fleshly Bride cannot attract others to join her in her pursuit if she is obsessed with mankind rather than the pursuit her Bridegroom. The Church cannot lead the world to Jesus if He is not resident in her, because only God’s Spirit can draw man to Himself. A *self* [flesh]-centered Church can only repel those people who have a real, God-given spiritual hunger.

God will work His purifying process in individuals to remove those things standing in the way of their relationship with Jesus. Those willing to submit to purification are the ones who belong to Christ’s true Church. The Church as a whole will be purified through the separation of the true from the false. Just as it was when the early Church was purified through the removal of the unfaithful who turned to other gods, so also will it be in the end time. In the early Church, many denied the Christ whom they had professed to know. And in these last days there are many also who deny Him with *self*-righteousness, churchianity, and religiosity. Are we more interested in denominational doctrines and following the precepts of men in a feeble attempt to please God? If Jesus is coming for a Bride without spot and wrinkle, I believe all those engrossed in deeds of the flesh are spots and wrinkles – they will not go in to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, but will be left “*without*.” They will not be a part of the remnant.

David understood about the marriage relationship. Could that be the reason he was the “*man after God’s own heart?*” He asked, “*Whom have I in heaven but You? And I have no delight or desire on earth besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the Rock and firm Strength of my heart and my Portion forever.*” (Psalm 73:25-26 Amplified). He went on to make a clear statement about those who depart like harlots from the Lord: “*For behold, those who are far from You shall perish; You will destroy all who are false to You and like [spiritual] harlots depart from You. But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God and made Him my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works.*” (Psalm 73:27-28 Amplified).

1. John 19:34
2. John 3:5
3. 1 Corinthians 15:45

4. Webster's New World Dictionary – Simon & Schuster Inc. 1986
5. Hebrews #2181
6. Hebrews #1168
7. Hebrews #1167
8. Judges 2:13
9. Hebrews #5003
10. Jeremiah 3:6-10,14a NKJV
11. Acts 9:3-16
12. Philippians 3:4-6
13. Greek #647
14. Greek #3432
15. Luke 18:11
16. Hebrew #4496, 4495, 4494, 5117
17. Romans 7: 1-6 NKJV
18. Genesis 4:3
19. 1 Corinthians 6: 18-19
20. Romans 1:20-25
21. Romans 1:26-32

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE CHURCH – JESUS' BODY OR MAN'S EDIFICE?

If a person on the street were asked to define “*church*,” he most likely would say it is a building where people go on Sundays. Have we who call ourselves the “*Body of Christ*” been deceiving unbelievers through our deeds by building churches? Have we denied the One Who died so that He could birth the true Church?

Jesus asked His disciples who the people said He was; they replied that some thought He was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets. Then Jesus asked, “*But who do you say that I am?*” Simon Peter answered, “*You are the Christ [Messiah]<sup>1</sup>, the Son of the living God.*” (Matthew 16:15b-16 NAS) So Jesus told Peter that His Father in Heaven – not flesh and blood – had revealed it unto him. “*I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.*” (Matthew 16:18 NAS)

Jesus was referring to Himself when He said, “*upon this rock I will build My church.*” He had spoken of Himself as “*this temple*” when He told the disciples about His death and resurrection. <sup>2</sup> He was also called the “*Chief Corner Stone*” “*in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*” <sup>3</sup>

Peter's name was “*Simon Peter*” until his brother Andrew brought him to meet Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “*You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas (which is translated, A Stone).*” (John 1:42b NKJV) “*Cephas*” means “*rock*,” having its origin in a Hebrew word, which more precisely means “*hollow rock.*” <sup>4</sup> There is another Greek

word translated “*Peter*,” which means “*rock*,”<sup>5</sup> but Jesus had cause to call Peter “*Cephas*.” I believe Jesus was telling Peter of his need for the Holy Spirit to fill up that hollow rock. And it was Peter who led the way, being the first apostle to proclaim the Gospel. He preached with the Spirit’s power, having been filled while in the upper chamber with the others.

This Spirit-filled Peter was no longer the Peter whom Jesus rebuked as a stumbling block because he was not “*mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.*”<sup>6</sup> And no longer was Peter the man who denied Jesus three times after vowing his faithfulness. All it took was one look from Jesus, and “*Peter went out, and wept bitterly.*”<sup>7</sup> Peter had been full of himself, but I believe he was humbled by that sad look from Jesus that caused him to weep bitterly. The Spirit of Jesus filled that same hollow Peter, making him a fiery and forceful proclaimer of the message of the Cross of Jesus Christ. And Peter was the first to see souls added to the Church through his preaching of Jesus.<sup>8</sup>

Paul the Apostle describes the Church as God’s “*building*” of the Body of Christ. “*And he gave some to be apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.*” If God gave these to be His ministers, He surely would have equipped them with the Spirit’s power. Through the Holy Spirit, they would have built up the body of Christ, resulting in unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God. Those under their ministry would mature, being complete in Christ, “*no longer children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error.*” They would have spoken the truth in love so that the people would “*grow up in all things unto Him, which is the head, even Christ.*” This Church, built by Jesus through His own ministers, would show “*increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love.*”<sup>9</sup>

Is the Church of today being “*equipped*” by hollow ministers who leave the believers as children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, deceived by the wiles of error? How many are in error because of *hollow ministers*? Where are those ministers of God, full of His Spirit, speaking truth in love and causing the Church to mature and increase through their discipling? **Every believer and every minister of God should “*check his pulse,*” to see if he has within him the Life of God.** If he abides in the Vine, he is alive and he WILL be fruitful.

## **Church building**

Apostasy, or the straying from truth,<sup>10</sup> has permeated every aspect of what man considers “*church.*” This multi-faceted error has brought somewhat of a death to the Church. Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh for the express purpose of crucifying flesh, yet a resurgence of flesh has caused the greatest devastation of all time. The very thing Jesus gave His life to destroy has been embraced and coddled to keep it alive. Yet He waits patiently for His Bride to let go of flesh and come to Him. The Church has desecrated itself by conforming it to look like the world, rather than seeking to **be** transformed into His image.

Man is more desirous of “*doing*” church, than he is of *being* the Church. His concept of church reveals what he has done to Jesus. His Name is used by so many who profess to know Him, calling themselves “*Christians*,” but in reality they have denied Him. There is a day coming when this will be painfully evident. It will be the worst day ever for all who refused to receive the love of the Truth.<sup>11</sup>

The writer of Hebrews speaks of a “*sanctuary of this world*”<sup>12</sup> (made by hands), comparing it to the true tabernacle built by the Lord Himself. The service by the priest and high priest, in the “*sanctuary of this world*,” was a large part of the tutoring of Israel to bring them to Christ. But now Christ is our High Priest seated at the right hand of God, “*a Minister in the holy places and in the true tabernacle which is erected not by man but by the Lord.*” Jesus, our Advocate, is in the very presence of God, appearing on our behalf.<sup>13</sup> Through the shedding of His own blood, Jesus offered up Himself and entered in once for all into the “*holy place*” made without hands. He did away with the necessity for mere flesh to make atonement for other flesh in a tabernacle constructed by hands of flesh.

Jesus said **He** would build **His** Church. Where, then, does man get the idea he must build a house FOR God? That which man builds is not God’s House, as churches are often referred to. The true Church is the “*habitation of God through the Spirit.*”<sup>14</sup>

God is looking to build His own Temple in “*him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles*” at His word. After saying that Heaven is His throne and the earth His footstool, He asks, “*Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?*”<sup>15</sup>

Why is it that thousands of churches are erected where pastors “*minister*” to the people? When there are gatherings, it should be for leading people in ministry to God through praise and then worship, if He graces the gathering with His presence. There can be no worship without the presence of God. And if we do not first enter in with thanksgiving and praise, without the baggage of flesh, we cannot claim to be in His presence. If the Church would truly gather in His Name and acknowledge Him as the Preeminent One, He would manifest His presence there. But the Church must have its ritualistic order. Is it possible that if only two or three hungry souls desired Him, He would longingly wait amid the crowd to receive their worship and fill the hungry ones with Himself? But just when it would appear He has found the “*place of His rest*,” the order of service is changed to accommodate ritual. With tears streaming down His face He leaves, disappointed once again at being rejected by those who “*came to worship Him.*” Jesus said the time has come when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.<sup>16</sup> These are the ones the Father is seeking – but sensual man, caring more about programs and increasing membership, makes true worship very rare in the Church.

We are deceived if we think our man-made programs can foster a move of God and bring about revival. It is a grievous thing to be so presumptuous that we would expect

God to take our plans and programs and use them to bring souls into the Kingdom of God. If we believe that growth in numbers at church is an indication God is at work, we must always ask the question, “*Is it true revival, or a revival of religious flesh?*” We can be certain that Satan will produce a pretty deceiving counterfeit.

If we are going to truthfully refer to the Church as the “*Body of Christ*,” it must have no division. There must be unity in the faith. In view of that, it should become obvious to us that denominations are divisive. “*How can that be?*” you say. Look at it this way: armies have divisions, and they go to war. But the church also has divisions called “*denominations*,” and for many years they have been at war one with another, fighting over doctrinal differences and clamoring for superiority. Where is the unity in the Faith? **Jesus’ true Church is One Body with One Spirit.**

Not only are there wars between denominations, but there are wars even within those denominations. These internal wars cause church splits and result in an abundance of what Paul calls “works of the flesh” in Galatians 5:19-21. These obvious works – “***enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, envyings***” – are listed right along with “*fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, heresies, drunkenness, and revellings.*” How can we call ourselves “the Body of Christ” if we so blatantly manifest a body of flesh? He is the crucified Christ! Are we truly *in Him* if we have uncrucified flesh? As Paul said in verse 21, “***they which practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.***”

### **The living Church**

In the earlier years of the first millennium AD, persecution by the enemies of the Gospel forced the true believers to meet in caves, upper rooms, or any other secret place they could find to fellowship and encourage one another in the faith. I believe this is what the writer of Hebrews was speaking of in chapter 10:25: “. . . *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*” (NKJV) The afflicted Church in the early centuries desperately needed encouragement and building up in the faith. Without this exhorting of one another, they may have been numbered with those who denied the faith when persecution came.

For short periods, between times of dreadful persecution, the Christians would become complacent and careless. The next wave of persecution served only to purify the Church as, in the face of martyrdom, other believers would emerge to take their place in spreading the Gospel. If they were banished to strange countries among heathen tribes, they would preach the Gospel there. There was no stopping the true Church of Jesus Christ. Their faith in Jesus was so real that nothing could deter them from spreading the Good News.

Today, in many parts of the world, Christ’s true Church is still a persecuted Church. The underground Church in China is a part of the true Church, and the believers there

suffer horrendous atrocities. The faith of those Christians is so real that they are willing to die for Jesus Christ. The message they share is the Gospel of the **real** Jesus – not a watered down version that leaves out the Cross of Christ.

In many other countries, to say that one is a Christian brings little or no opposition. For instance, in North America a person is almost admired if he goes to church. And those churches are often little more than grand buildings with steeples to announce their presence. We wonder why today's Christianity is not a threat to the worldly. Is it because people in the world have seen nothing to challenge their godless ways? Such a Godless church is actually more likely to stir up the world's anger because of the visible hypocrisy in its members who claim to be Christians. So why would anyone persecute a harmless, ineffective church?

God has His people everywhere, so it would be wrong to suggest that all proclaimed Christians who attend the institutional church are not truly born again. We are all on a journey, seeking to have that inner void filled by the only One Who can satisfy. He is all we need. Religion and church can never replace a relationship with Jesus. We need to ask the question, "**if all else were gone and we had only Jesus, would He be enough?**"

Are we willing to allow Jesus to be everything to us? Paul told Timothy: "*Yes, and all who desire to **live godly in Christ Jesus** will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.*" (2 Timothy 3:12-13 NKJV) Religious, hypocritical man will certainly persecute those who would dare to live godly in Christ Jesus. To go against the grain, and separate oneself from superficial Christianity can be a very lonely road – but a road worth traveling with Jesus.

I read a true story of a believer in a European country who risked his life to take the written word of God into neighboring Communist countries. His belief – his trust – was in the REAL Jesus, and his bible was precious to him. He knew that if he could get bibles into the hands of others, the Spirit of Truth would bring them to the Savior. With little regard for his personal safety, he repeatedly crossed the borders into Communist territory, smuggling bibles to be distributed by fellow believers. He was viciously beaten and imprisoned many times, but God always freed him so he could return with more bibles. The Communists feared this Sword of the Lord more than any weapons this believer might have carried.

Do Christians fear the Sword of the Lord today? Or, are we content to hear of all the benefits we can receive from God? Paul said the time will come when they will not endure [Greek: put up with] <sup>17</sup> the sound doctrine, "*. . .but having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and **will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables.***" (2 Timothy 4:3-4) Many will not put up with sound doctrine because they prefer fables rather than truth. It seems fables are more palatable, since they do not promote uncomfortable things like brokenness and complete surrender to God.

If a trial were held to determine those guilty of being true believers, would there be sufficient evidence to prove that some might deserve persecution for the cause of Jesus Christ? Would they find even a small part of the remnant?

1. Greek #5547
2. John 2:19
3. Ephesians 2:20-22 NKJV
4. Greek #2786 from Hebrew #3710
5. Greek #4074
6. Matthew 16:23b NKJV
7. Luke 22:62
8. Acts 2:14-41
9. Ephesians 4:11-16
10. Greek #646
11. 2 Thessalonians 2:10
12. Hebrews 9:1
13. Hebrews 8:1-2 & 9:24 Amplified
14. Ephesians 2:22
15. Isaiah 66:1-2 NKJV
16. John 4:23-24
17. Greek #430

## CHAPTER TEN

### “PASTORS”

God has given apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers for the reasons found in Ephesians 4:11-16. In the New Testament, the word “apostle” [*ambassador of the Gospel*]<sup>1</sup> appears more than seventy five times, while “prophet” [*inspired speaker*]<sup>2</sup> appears almost one hundred fifty times. “Evangelist” [*preacher of the Gospel*]<sup>3</sup> can be found in only three places. “Teacher” [*instructor*]<sup>4</sup> occurs in ten places, while “doctor” and “Master,” also translated from the same Greek word, can be found in other verses.

Although there are thousands of pastors in churches today, the word “pastors” appears only ONCE in the New Testament, in Ephesians 4. The word “pastor” is translated from the Greek word for “shepherd,” which is used as a literal shepherd of sheep in four places and figuratively as a shepherd of people in thirteen places. Jesus said, “*I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd risks and lays down His [own] life for the sheep. But the hired servant (he who merely serves for wages) who is neither the shepherd nor the owner of the sheep, when he sees the wolf coming, deserts the flock and runs away. And the wolf chases and snatches them and scatters [the flock]. Now the hireling flees because he merely serves for wages and is not himself concerned about the sheep [cares nothing for them].*” (John 10:11-13 Amplified). Unless a shepherd is called by God, equipped by God, and caring for the flock in truth, he is a mere hireling and cares more about himself than the sheep. He is a flesh pastor, and will be held accountable for exposing the flock to wolves that scatter them.

A true shepherd must feed the sheep and lead them to the great Shepherd. As in the example laid out by Jesus, the shepherd's role is to see that not one is missing from the fold. And it does not mean "*always in church for every service.*" The true fold is the Shepherd's fold. Jesus is the true Shepherd, but He became a Lamb and gave His life so that His fold might be full. The names of those in His fold can be found in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The revisers of the bible in the late 1800's used the more correct word "shepherd" rather than "*pastor*" in Jeremiah, which is the only book in the Old Testament where "pastor" can be found. "**Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!** saith the LORD. Behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings. . . . And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase." (Jeremiah 23:1, 2b, 3 KJV) Jeremiah also wrote, "*For the shepherds are become brutish [stupid] <sup>5</sup>, and have **not inquired of the LORD: therefore they have not prospered, and all their flocks are scattered.**" (Jeremiah 10:21). Would God be any less harsh in His words to pastors today who scatter the sheep instead of feeding them? There are hungry souls going from church to church looking for bread from the Lord, but are they finding the true Bread of Life?*

If God's messengers are to speak words of life to the hearers, they must speak under the inspiration of God. A prophet is one who "speaks by inspiration" as the Hebrew language shows. <sup>6</sup> A man may not be seen as a "*prophet,*" but before he speaks as a man of God, he must first have been with God to receive that "inspiration." The LORD gives a warning to not listen to false prophets, saying, "**They teach you vanity** (*emptiness, falsity, and futility*) and fill you with vain hopes; they speak a vision of their own minds and **not from the mouth of the Lord.** . . Behold, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who use their [*own deceitful*] tongues and say, **Thus says the Lord.**" (Jeremiah 23:16b, 31 Amplified). Although these words were spoken regarding the prophets of Israel, the same words would apply today because God is still the same God. Regardless of their title, every man and woman called of God has a solemn responsibility to seek God's face for the words He would have them speak. If they speak a vision of their own minds, using their tongues to say "*He says,*" they are answerable to God Almighty.

How many are there who lead people to believe the words they speak are God's words, when in reality they are the empty, barren words of false prophets? If God's Word (Jesus Christ) is not taught in purity, the teacher is ministering death to the hearers. Without the Life of God, flesh will remain flesh and will certainly decay (perish).

A.W. Tozer said, "*The flesh, smiling and confident, preaches and sings about the cross; before that cross it bows and toward that cross it points with carefully staged histrionics - but upon that cross it will not die, and the reproach of that cross it stubbornly refuses to bear.*" <sup>7</sup> Unless we are willing to go the way of the Cross, our words will be meaningless and Lifeless.

Paul told Timothy to diligently present himself approved unto God, a teacher who needs not to be ashamed, correctly expounding the word of truth. He cautions

Timothy to “*shun profane babblings, for they will proceed further in ungodliness, and **their word will eat as doth a gangrene.***” (2 Timothy 2:16-17a). Is the Church gangrenous because of the Lifeless messages being preached?

Just as God created the human body and breathed His breath [spirit] <sup>s</sup> into it to give it life, He must continually breathe Life into the Body of Christ. Without the breath of God – His Spirit – the Church will die. Because of their lack of understanding, Jesus’ disciples struggled when He taught them that He was to be their Life. So He reminded them, *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.* (John 6:63 NKJV).

Without pure water to drink, the human body will become dehydrated. Once dehydrated, it will begin to degenerate and will eventually die. The Church has become dehydrated and has the degenerative disease called “*flesh.*” Before it is eternally too late, the Church must come and drink of the Living Water which only Jesus Christ can provide. Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit, Whom He would send to be Life in all who put their trust in Him, when He said, “*If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.*” (John 7:37b-38 NKJV) Unless a minister is born from above, his fleshly words can speak only death. On the other hand, if he truly is born from above, “*out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.*” And the thirst of the hearers will be satisfied – there will be no dehydration.

### **The works of God**

A minister’s greatest work is to nurture an intimate relationship with Jesus and have complete faith in the Living God. Out of that relationship will come fruit which God values because it is of Him. When Jesus was in Capernaum, the people were looking for Him. When they found Him, He told them that they sought Him because of physical food. They were fascinated, but not moved, when He performed signs to prove Who He was – their only interest was in satisfying their flesh. Then He admonished them not to labor for food that perishes but for the food which endures to everlasting life. The people then asked Jesus what they must do to work the works of God, and His answer was simple: “***This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.***” (John 6:29 NKJV) To do the work of God is to have faith [believe] <sup>o</sup> in Him whom He sent, but the apostate church has forsaken relationship in pursuit of works of the flesh.

In this age of apostasy, there is an abundance of “*ministers.*” They may be known by any number of titles, depending on their religious affiliation/denomination, education, elevated position in the church, or even their own desire to be somebody. The latter would most likely be the hireling of whom Jesus spoke. Do people not realize the danger of going into ministry for any reason other than a true calling of God and submission to His will and His ways?

No minister makes the decision to become a false teacher. But he is a false teacher if he relies on his own flesh and traditions handed down by others, rather than seek the face of God.

The Apostle Paul said that not many wise “*according to the flesh,*” or mighty, or noble are called by God. Rather, He chooses the lowly and the weak to put to shame the high and mighty. And He chooses the despised and those who are nothing to bring to nothing those who think they ARE something. His reason is this: “***that no flesh should glory in His presence.***” But Paul gives hope, saying that when we are in Christ, He is our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption.<sup>10</sup> Sadly, many churches still desire a pastor who is “*wise, mighty, and noble*” according to fleshly standards.

Jesus’ words in Luke 16:15 say it all: “. . .*THAT WHICH IS EXALTED AMONG MEN IS AN ABOMINATION IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.*” If people are exalting their beloved Reverend Pastor – and he is allowing it – he is “an abomination in the sight of God.” These are strong words, but God will not share His glory with flesh and blood.

### Touching God’s anointed

Over the last century or more, there has been a growing tendency to place the pastor above the people, keeping them in fear of “*touching God’s anointed.*” In the absence of discernment, God’s “*anointed*” (as they are perceived to be) include both hirelings and those called by God.

The correct context of “*do not touch my anointed ones, and do my prophets no harm*” is recorded in 1 Chronicles 16:22. A covenant was made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give them the land of Canaan for their inheritance when they were very few in number. “***When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, He permitted no one to do them wrong; yes, He rebuked kings for their sakes, saying, ‘Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm.’***” (NKJV) We must not take a portion of a sentence and use it to control “subordinates” in the Body of Christ. The remnant will be made up of those who have allowed self to be crucified – there will be no “*subordinates*” and no “*lords.*”

Due to ignorance of the role which flesh plays in the Church, man has been led to believe all ministers are of God’s choosing, placed above the people to *rule over* His Church. Even the title “*Reverend*” is of man’s design. And pastors are revered when ALL reverence belongs to God alone. Have some pastors even become idols to people, all because flesh has not been crucified?

1. Greek #652
2. Greek #4396
3. Greek #2099
4. Greek #1320
5. Hebrew #1197, #1198
6. Hebrew #5012
7. The Pursuit of Man, by A.W. Tozer
8. Genesis 2:7
9. Greek #4100
10. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### PROSPERITY

Ministry has become big business, especially in North America. Common sense tells us that the moment a ministry becomes an organization it is no longer ministry in the true sense. All too often it becomes a part of organized religion, with all the baggage that comes with organization. Depending on the size of a ministry, there may be a need for administrative staff with department heads for accounting, media relations, maintenance, and every other department known to business enterprise. Then there is the ever-increasing need for income to keep the enterprise profitable. Jesus said, **“No servant is able to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stand by and be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (riches, or anything in which you trust and on which you rely).”** (Luke 16:13 Amplified). As Jesus spoke those words about money and servitude, the Pharisees – those covetous money lovers – began to sneer and scoff at Him. But Jesus always had an answer for them. He said, **“You are the ones who declare yourselves just and upright before men, but God knows your hearts.”**<sup>1</sup> A minister may have been called of God at one time, but the demands of growth can detract from his pursuit of God to the point that he turns to chasing after mammon. Without realizing it, he can become a *“lover of money.”* It is one of those subtle things happening in the Church due to ignorance of the truth.

If a ministry is large it is assumed to be *“good.”* By the same token, people may assume of a small ministry that *“God must not be in it, otherwise it would be growing.”* God does not gauge growth numerically – He looks for growth on the inside of man where His Spirit dwells. He will accept only the fruit of His Spirit.

There are many of the *“prosperity persuasion”* who believe that only good can come from God, and when difficult times come, they blame Satan. Lamentations 3:38 (Amplified) asks, *“Is it not out of the mouth of the Most High that evil and good both proceed – adversity and prosperity, physical evil or misfortune and physical good or happiness?”* Satan is more than happy to have man erroneously blaming him so he can keep man from knowing the truth. As long as we keep our eyes on Satan as the bad guy, we will not recognize the evil of our own flesh – or even the fact that a loving God may be desiring to get our attention.

Some teach that God wants man to prosper financially, and if a Christian is prosperous, he must be godly. The bible tells us we are proud – knowing nothing – if we teach other than the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are also told that those *“knowing nothing”* are obsessed with arguments over words, *“from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.”* We are to withdraw from those destitute of

the truth, knowing that we brought nothing into this world and will certainly take nothing with us – but “*having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.*”<sup>2</sup>

Paul followed up with some advice regarding those who suppose that “*godliness is a means of gain.*” He said that those who desire to be rich “*fall into temptation and a snare and many harmful, foolish lusts*” which lead to destruction. “*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after, have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*” (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

Paul then urges Timothy to “*charge them that are rich in this present world*” not to set their hope in the uncertainty of riches, but rather to hope in God Who gives us all things to enjoy. It is better to be rich in good works, liberal in giving to lay up a good foundation for the days ahead, “*that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed.*” Timothy is then encouraged to shun profane babblings and struggles against so-called “*knowledge,*” which some have professed and have “*erred concerning the faith.*”<sup>3</sup>

Many believe that “*success and prosperity*” is the message of 3 John 2, but the context proves otherwise. John is writing to only one individual, Gaius, when he says, “*Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*” John was rejoicing at hearing testimony of Gaius’ walk in truth, and told him that he had no greater joy than to hear that his children were walking in the truth. The “*children*” had borne witness of Gaius’ love, and John encouraged him to escort them on their journey “*worthily of God: because that for the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.*”<sup>4</sup> We would do well to follow Gaius’ example and John’s advice. How many ministers of the prosperity gospel TAKE FOR THE SAKE OF THE NAME, when *for the sake of the Name* they SHOULD TAKE NOTHING?

There is a favorite phrase often spoken in some Christian circles: “*God gives power to get wealth so He can establish His covenant.*” The interpretation suggests that man can help God establish His covenant by attaining wealth. However, the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy holds the context. The first verses speak of how God humbled Israel in the wilderness to reveal what was in their hearts and to know whether or not they would keep His commandments. He allowed them to hunger then fed them with manna to teach them that man lives by every thing that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. He promised them a land of plenty, but warned them to obey the LORD their God, not forgetting Him and His provision, lest they become puffed up. The scriptures tell us that if the Israelites were to exalt themselves because of all the LORD had provided, they might say in their hearts that it was the power of their own hands that had gotten them wealth. Then they are admonished to remember the Lord their God, for it is He Who gives power to get wealth “*that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.*” (Deuteronomy 8:18b Amplified) The LORD continued by telling them that if they did forget Him, they would perish in the same way He destroyed their enemies. The emphasis was on the fact that it is God **alone** who gives power to get wealth, and that He should be acknowledged. The emphasis was not on “*getting wealth.*”

The Apostle Peter told of false teachers who will come, surreptitiously <sup>5</sup> bringing in destructive heresies and “*denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.*” Many will follow these false teachers in their lascivious ways, and **through** <sup>6</sup> **them the way of truth will be blasphemed** [vilified] <sup>7</sup>. “*And in covetousness shall they with feigned [fictitious] <sup>8</sup> words make merchandise of you: whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not.*” (2 Peter 2:1-3). “*Make merchandise of the people*” means that they make a living by feeding fictitious words to the “itching ears” of the hearers. This passage speaks of all those who make a living by preaching “another gospel” that fails to point the hearers to Jesus Christ, Son of the living God.

1. Luke 16:14-15a Amplified
2. 1 Timothy 6:3-8 NKJV
3. 1 Timothy 6:17-21
4. 3 John 1-7
5. Greek #3919
6. Greek #1223
7. Greek #987
8. Greek #4112

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### SPURIOUS “HELPERS”

To say the words “I am a Christian” is not always a profession of faith in Jesus. There are Christians with no true spiritual discernment who are deceived by other “Christians.” These naïve believers may be delighted to meet a “fellow-believer,” thinking they can fellowship in unity, but their new friend also may unwittingly be a pseudo-Christian. All of this results from failure to understand the truth about flesh and blood, and the reason Jesus came. THE ERROR WHICH HAS INVADED THE CHURCH HAS LEFT NO AREA UNTOUCHED – deception is everywhere!

The very nature of deception is stealth and subsequently not obvious to the undiscerning. Even the Christian is not impervious to Satan’s craftiness and misleading ways. This master deceiver has created in the Church gross error that is not perceptible to the mind of the flesh. Jesus warned us to take heed that no one deceives us! We must be diligent in pursuing an intimate relationship with Jesus and surrender our mind to the mind of Christ in order to escape the pitfalls of the enemy.

Satan’s ambition is to keep people from knowing the true Christ. Although he will constantly attempt to deceive the true believers, Satan knows who they are and he is extremely fearful of them. At the same time, he has no fear of those who only think they are believers as a result of the doctrines of man. He knows they are fair game, and that he can use them for his own purposes. After all, he has disguised himself as an “angel of light.” <sup>1</sup> And he has a host of demonic beings ready to carry out his orders. They delight in their work because they can go anywhere the “Christians” are to keep

them in their deluded state. Satan wants to keep these deceived souls from Jesus, so he runs an operation that appears identical to the real thing. He has desensitized the pseudo-believers to the degree that they are not aware they are steeped in flesh.

Religious spirits and controlling spirits seem almost inseparable. Their ability to deceive is nothing short of amazing, even to the deceiving of (fleshly) “*spiritual giants*.” Because of that, these spirits can make greater inroads into the Church. They will look for people who desire to be exalted. Religious spirits and controlling spirits love to find willing vessels who will take them to the inner sanctum of churches and ministries, where they can create strategies to keep people from coming to the Truth. They will equip their willing vessels with a false spiritual maturity, while these deceived ones believe they are growing in the Lord. Through lack of discernment, many can easily be led astray if they rely solely on the profession of faith from the lips of these deluded ones who have unwittingly become messengers of Satan.

There are some in the Christian community who will warn us not to be looking for demons behind every rock. But if the devil already has the world in his control, the Church is where he will go to find flesh-minded souls he can deceive with his crafty devices. The days in which we live are extremely dangerous ones, and Satan’s demons will come along and use souls disguised as “*anointed Christians*.”

In Revelation 2, Jesus warned of a self-proclaimed “*prophetess*” Jezebel. In the spirit realm there is neither male nor female, so this spirit can be found operating through both men and women. It is significant that Jesus should single out Jezebel as one we must be wary of. As with all evil spirits, the Jezebel spirit will be so convincing that she will deceive many. When Jesus spoke to the Church at Thyatira, He said that their latter works were more than their earlier works. (Revelation 2:19) Could it be that they were overly “*works-minded*” and therefore “*flesh-minded*”? He went on to tell how they had allowed Jezebel to seduce His servants to commit fornication (*idolatry*) and to partake of things offered to idols. (This would be the filthy flesh left over from offerings made to idols.) Has the Church become so flesh-minded that the false prophetess Jezebel has been welcomed, while those who speak truth are rejected? Is the Church so lacking in discernment that this spirit is allowed to function undetected?

We read about the evil deeds of the original Jezebel and Ahab against God’s true prophets, in 1 Kings 16,18,19,21, and 2 Kings 9. Although there is no suggestion that the Jezebel of Revelation is related to the one in the Old Testament, I believe that Satan’s assault against the Lord’s pure word would not end with Queen Jezebel’s nasty demise. Would he not come back with a similar spirit to war against the Church more vigorously in the last days?

The Jezebel spirit at Thyatira was a stubborn one because she would not repent of her idolatry, even after being given time to do so. Because of this, we know it is difficult for those who have that spirit to be freed. And these days, those in her control will even vehemently deny the very existence of a “*Jezebel spirit*.” Jesus’ final words are terrible for those who have been deceived by Jezebel into committing adultery (*apostasy*). They

have bought into her lies about how “*spiritual*” she is, with her capability to act the part of a “*Christian*.” Her tactics are never blatant, but are acceptable to the undiscerning because they have the appearance of godly deeds and words. She knows how to quote Scripture, and because it “*sounds right*” many are led away from Truth. Jesus said, “***Behold, I do cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works.***” (Revelation 2:22-23). What a dreadful end for those who have received her, and never held her accountable for her works that have undermined the purposes of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Jesus also said that there were some who did not “have” [Greek word “*echo*”] <sup>2</sup> the doctrine which Jezebel taught. They had not “*known the depths of Satan,*” so He promised not to put any “*other burden*” upon them. (Revelation 2:24 Rev. KJV) If we always remember that we have been crucified with Christ, and continue to walk by His Spirit with keen discernment, we will not know “*the depths of Satan.*” Therefore, we can escape the judgment that will befall those whom Jezebel has deceived.

### **The test that tells**

Jesus’ true Church is a relational one, with one-on-one interaction and gathering together to commune with Him. In our dealings with one another, if we are not sure who or what we are dealing with, we can always rely on Paul’s list of the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23) Most of all, *love* will be evident in one who is truly born from above and walking by the Spirit.

A second test would reveal the presence, or absence, of *peace*. The Holy Spirit’s presence in one who is born from above will be sensed with an almost tangible peace. If we find it difficult to maintain a sense of peace while in the company of another, we can be certain that “*another spirit*” is resident in him or her.

In one who walks by the Spirit, free of any evil influence, the remaining fruit of the Spirit will be evident: “*joy, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control.*”

When we are full of the Holy Spirit we will know that *inner Witness* that tells us if something is amiss. We must always be attuned to His voice and follow Him – even if it means severing ties with a “*friend,*” or some other “*respected person.*”

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. (2 Corinthians 3:17b). But where religious flesh is, we can almost always find evil spirits parading as “*anointed*” vessels. Without keen discernment we will be “*taken in*” by one with a false anointing. The devil’s servants know how to act and talk like the Lord’s servants – but they are counterfeit, and we must learn to recognize them by their fruit. They are all around us and will continue to increase in number as the Coming of the Lord draws near.

We must be wary at all times, and also ever watchful that we ourselves are surrendered to the Holy Spirit's control and walking in His power as opposed to the power of our flesh. May we never assume we are Spirit-filled because of having once been "filled." We must surrender our flesh to the Spirit daily. As John 3:30 tells us, "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*"

### **Intercession**

Evil spirits (especially Jezebel) can often gain easy access to the Church through so-called intercessors – particularly the one to whom a pastor may turn and ask, "*What is the Lord saying?*" That crafty devil can come up with some pretty convincing answers which an undiscerning pastor may receive from the intercessor and act upon.

Intercession can be an arena of heavy battle, and one that Satan desires to influence. It is a dangerous place to be, unless there is absolute surrender to God and death to one's own flesh. Intercessors must be vessels void of pride, having a pure heart before the Lord. If their motivation be impure, God's work will be hindered. True intercessors must guard themselves against any trace of deception, keeping the ears of their spirits open to hear only the voice of the Spirit of God. Otherwise, they may unwittingly open themselves to a voice that is not the Lord's.

**Flesh is the door through which Satan walks** – he planned it that way from the beginning. He has no regard for "religious" flesh.

### **The tares**

God is no respecter of persons. He does not regard good intentions as "*righteousness.*" If men and women are **not** truly born from above by the Spirit of God and are not protecting themselves from the wiles of Satan, they will be as the tares in Jesus' parable in Matthew 13:24-30. The sower's servants asked if they should gather the tares from the wheat field, but he told them "No," lest they root up the wheat along with the tares. They must allow both to "*grow together until the harvest*": and when harvest time comes, the reapers are to gather up the tares in bundles to be burned, while the wheat is to go into the barn. In explaining the parable to His disciples, Jesus told them that the good seeds are "*the sons of the kingdom*" sown by the Son of Man, while the devil sows his own sons as tares. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. (Matthew 13:37b-39).

Jesus could have used the word "*weed,*" which would have referred to just any weed, but He did not. He used "tares" with all that it represents. *Tares* is translated from a Greek word which means "*darnel,*" or "*false grain.*"<sup>3</sup> The word "darnel" means "*stupefied,*" and its seed is prone to infestation by a fungus which makes the darnel seeds poisonous.<sup>4</sup> In relation to the present spiritual condition of North America in particular, Satan's infested *tares* are spreading their stupefying poison in the Church. But Jesus knows His own and His own know Him, so in the end He will separate the false from the true, as He explained to His disciples. At the end of this age, the Son of Man

will send His angels to gather out of His kingdom all who turn others away from Him and who practice iniquity; they all will be cast into the furnace of fire. *“There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”* (Matthew 13:42b-43 NKJV).

Jesus also said we must enter in by the narrow gate, for the way that leads to destruction is wide and many are going that way. *“Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”* (Matthew 7:14-15 NKJV). “Narrow,” in verse 14, comes from a Greek word meaning *“narrow (from obstacles standing close about).”*<sup>5</sup> There will be many obstacles – especially the false prophets who are *ravenous wolves* in sheep’s clothing – crowding the gate and keeping souls from Jesus.

The wolves may start out as sheep, but without complete surrender to the Spirit’s working within, the door of their flesh is wide open for Satan to begin his work. We MUST go the way of the Cross and allow our flesh to be crucified with Christ if we desire to escape the entrapment that produces “wolves.”

1. 2 Corinthians 11:14
2. Greek #2192
3. Greek #2215
4. Webster’s New World Dictionary – Simon & Schuster Inc. 1986
5. Greek #4728

## PART FOUR: GOD’S WAY OR MAN’S WAY?

### CHAPTER THIRTEEN

#### FAITH

Genuine faith is rest in Christ’s finished work on the cross and through trust in His Life within us.

Faith is God’s precious gift to man, available solely through the death of His only Son. But in many instances, today’s concept of faith is leading the naïve away from true faith. A mentality of “exercising faith” and “receiving by faith” to satisfy the flesh has caused many to turn their eyes from Jesus, and back to self.

Jesus gave His life so that man could rely on Him for salvation [Greek: *faith*].<sup>1</sup> There is a similar Greek word translated “believe,” which is defined as “to have faith” and “entrust (especially one’s spiritual well being to Christ).”<sup>2</sup> Faith is simple, but to grow in faith requires death to flesh and entering into the rest found only in Christ.

## Modern-day “faith”

Paul’s words to Timothy in this next passage were very forceful, but they are mild compared to the words that will be heard by those who think nothing of changing the truth of God into lies. Paul was not speaking from his own mind, but tells how the Holy Spirit said, “. . .in the latter times some shall **depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing** [misleading] <sup>3</sup> **spirits, and doctrines of devils; through the hypocrisy** [deceit] <sup>4</sup> **of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience** as with a hot iron [rendered insensitive].” <sup>5</sup> (1 Timothy 4:1b-2) The lies are branded in their consciences, and they honestly believe they walk in the truth. They have been rendered insensitive and are actually blind to the truth.

We must be wary, and keep our ears open to the Holy Spirit when listening to some of the teachings available today. What “lord” is spoken of when some say, “Thus says the Lord?” How can Jesus be Lord of something so diabolically destructive to the truth for which He died? Many have been led away from true faith, simply because they have embraced the “spiritual” talk, “bible” teaching, “powerful prayers,” testimonies of “faith,” and that manipulative lie, “the Lord told me.”

The bible clearly shows what the end will be for those who depart from the truth, and trample on His precious Son with their lies. That they were deceived will not excuse them or render them innocent. It is idolatrous to set up false doctrines, especially about faith. “**And there shall in no wise enter into it [Holy City] any thing unclean, or he that maketh abomination [idolatry,] <sup>6</sup> and a lie: only they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.**” (Revelation 21:27) As Paul told Timothy, “**‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’**” (2 Timothy 2:19b NKJV).

After Paul had spoken of espousing the Corinthians to “one Husband,” <sup>7</sup> he went on to say that there were some who would preach another gospel and bring another spirit, but that he (Paul) would continue in the truth of Christ. Referring to those who did not know the truth, he said that such men “**are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.**” He added that it is no wonder, for Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. He further said that we should not be surprised to see his servants also “**disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.**” <sup>8</sup>

Before reading or quoting the words “faith comes by hearing, etc.” in Romans 10:17, it is best to understand that Paul is answering the question, “What is the righteousness of faith?” He explains that the word of faith he was preaching was near them, in their mouth and in their heart. Then he tells them, “**If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.** For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession [Greek: acknowledgment] <sup>9</sup> is made unto salvation.” <sup>10</sup> Paul is not giving a formula to follow; he is preaching that righteousness comes with the heart “relying upon Christ for salvation,” and with the mouth acknowledging that Jesus has come to be their Lord. Remember how

Israel's problem was their failure to acknowledge God as the LORD God? <sup>11</sup> Now Paul is telling the saints in Rome that they must rely on Messiah with their whole heart, and willingly acknowledge Him verbally (at the risk of persecution).

The same Lord is Lord of all, so, whether Jew or Greek, whoever calls on His Name shall be saved. The question arises as to how they can hear and believe and call without a preacher. Paul then repeats Isaiah's words, "*How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!*" <sup>12</sup> *But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?"* So then **faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.** (Romans 10:16-17 NKJV).

Because some revisers have removed the name "*Christ*" and replaced it with "*God*," many have come to believe that reading and quoting the *Word of God* will make our faith grow. If we are not born from above, there is no genuine faith – whatever "*faith*" is professed is flesh-based and can never please God.

### **True faith**

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is known as the "*faith*" chapter. The last five verses of chapter ten could well have been the first verses in chapter eleven, because the continuity of chapter ten flows into chapter eleven. The subject is salvation and the hope of eternal life. "*For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 'For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry.'*" (Hebrews 10:36-37 NKJV) We are told "*the just shall live by faith*" (vs. 38) and that God would be displeased with anyone who drew back. Then this: "*But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe [rely upon Christ] to the saving of the soul. Now faith [reliance upon Christ for salvation] <sup>13</sup> is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.*" (Hebrews 10:39, 11:1-2 NKJV) The elders, whose accounts of faith make up chapter eleven, lived with God-given hope of the One Who is "*coming and will not tarry.*"

Abraham, the mighty man of faith, also had the hope of the future City of God. He "***looked for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God... By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise,***" while dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob who were heirs of the same promise. They all died in faith, "***not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar.***" <sup>14</sup>

Toward the end of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, reference is made to *many* who, with firm trust in God, had suffered unthinkable things. Though they had great faith, they did not immediately receive the Promise. But since Jesus came and gave His Life, we ALL have opportunity to partake of His resurrection. "*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*" (Hebrews 12:1-2 NKJV). If the "*great cloud of witnesses*" recorded in the faith chapter could

persevere, how much more should we lay aside all that would cause us to shrink back in unbelief? **The sin which so easily ensnares us is the sin of unbelief.** The only hope for the Church is steadfast reliance upon Christ for salvation, for only in the remnant will true faith be found.

### **Faith to receive**

The bible clearly tells us that if we ask *in faith*, we will receive. When we are His through the new birth, and abide in Him as a branch abides in the vine, God WILL answer our prayers. A branch cannot bear fruit unless it is connected to the life-giving vine. So it is with Jesus the true Vine – without Him, we can do nothing. Jesus said, ***“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”*** (See John 15:4-8 NKJV).

If our trust is truly in Christ we have His Spirit within us. God is then our Father, and when we come to Him in prayer it is in Jesus’ Name. Because of the Son, the Father answers our prayer, especially when we walk in love as He commanded. There is no formula for praying *“in Jesus’ Name,”* for it is the reality of His presence in us that makes the prayer effective. This is what Jesus meant in John 14:12-17, where He tells how those who believe in Him will do greater works than He did. It is because of His Spirit. Jesus said, *“And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”*<sup>15</sup> What a powerful reality – Jesus in us, glorifying the Father! It is all about Him, not us. But we are the beneficiaries.

In 2001, when fires were raging through an area of Northern California and endangering the homes of many, my friend Marsha asked me to pray for her brother and his wife, whose home was in the path of the fires. I agreed to pray and went on with what I was doing, unsure of just how to pray. Immediately the Lord stopped me in my tracks, causing me to pray in a specific way. When I next spoke with Marsha, I jokingly told her I would not share how I had prayed. She said, *“Okay,”* and we continued our conversation. A few days later she phoned and asked me how I had prayed. When I told her, she broke into tears. My prayer had been answered in a spectacular way! I had asked the Lord to miraculously protect that home so there would be no doubt it was His work and that He would be glorified. *“Miraculous”* is the only word to describe what God did that day.

The fire was racing up the hill devouring everything in its path. When it reached our friends’ home, it burned all around but left theirs untouched. It was as though a protective dome had been placed over their property. The closest the fire came was across the lawn up to a wooden retaining wall. Firefighters, seeing a firestorm headed their way, took shelter close to this house which was seemingly immune to the destructive force. Their lives were spared because God’s hand was upon that home. This amazing miracle got the attention of the local news media, and much was said about it.

When the owners were allowed to return up the hill to their properties, Marsha's brother's home was the only one left – all else was destroyed. He entered his house (which had not even a smell of smoke in it), walked out the back door, and ate some fruit from a tree in their backyard. The heat of the fire had caused very little damage to his orchard, even though the well in the yard had been sucked dry by the force of the fire. There was also his wife's beautiful rose garden close to the house, still in full-bloom and completely unaffected.

What a wonderful Lord, to bring glory to Himself in this way. I will forever be grateful that He taught me this lesson! Since that time, I always pray that God will be glorified in all I ask of Him.

1. Greek #4102
2. Greek #4100
3. Greek #4108
4. Greek #5272
5. Greek #2743
6. Greek #946
7. 2 Corinthians 11:2
8. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 NAS
9. Greek #3670
10. Romans 10:8-10 NKJV
11. Chapter 5
12. Romans 10:11-15
13. Greek #4102
14. Hebrews 11:8-10,13-16
15. John 14:13 NKJV

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### FORGIVENESS AND THE NEW BIRTH

Now that we see how, for the most part, faith/belief is “relying upon Christ for salvation,” we must look at the subject of forgiveness in relation to the new birth.

**The preaching of faith and belief in Jesus has been replaced with the preaching of “*forgiveness*” of our sins.** The focus has been turned from Jesus back to mortal man. Rather than preaching a need for the whole man to turn to Jesus (*repentance*), a simple message of putting away sins (*forgiveness*) is preached.

The word “*forgiveness*” was first used in the Law of Moses. The Jews continually transgressed the Law, so they were required to make atonement with a sin offering which they practiced year after year, and century after century. Each time the sin offering of blood was made, God granted them forgiveness. But it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin, and forgiveness itself most surely could

never take away sin. The sin offerings were merely a pattern of that which was to come.<sup>1</sup>

Only Jesus' blood could cleanse the people so there would be no more conscience of sins, as this passage from Hebrews shows: "***The worshippers having been once cleansed would have had no more conscience [moral consciousness] of sins.***<sup>2</sup> ***But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.***"<sup>3</sup> (Hebrews 10:2b-4).

Man's heredity as mortal flesh was the problem, even before the Law brought the knowledge of sin to the Jews. After the first Adam [man], all were sinners, having been born in the flesh. We did not become sinners because we sinned – our deeds came as a result of what we had already become. **To be forgiven for deeds of the flesh does nothing to alter the source of our deeds.** There has to be the birth of a new creature [Greek: formation]<sup>4</sup> in Christ Jesus.<sup>5</sup> If forgiveness could make a new creature, Jesus died for no reason. If forgiveness could make a new creature, the blood of bulls and goats would have been sufficient for atonement.

### **Lost in translation**

When an English-speaking person hears a bible term, he perceives its meaning according to his present day understanding of the English language. The term he hears may mean one thing to him, while the Greek or Hebrew word has a specific meaning within the given context. Numerous times a word translated from Hebrew in the Old Testament would be repeated in the New Testament. The challenge there was that a Greek word could not be found to carry the meaning without losing its significance. The English translators found it necessary to use words that actually diminished or altered its original intent in the Hebrew text. The word "*forgive*" is a prime example of how meanings can be lost in translation.

The Hebrew word translated "*forgive*" means "*forgive.*"<sup>6</sup> While Jesus walked on this earth, the Jews were still under the Law. They understood forgiveness according to their Hebrew language and how the blood atonement preceded forgiveness. Jesus used the word "*forgiveness,*" and in some instances Paul and others would use the word "*forgiveness.*" But in both cases, they were addressing the Jews – not Gentiles.

There are four Greek words translated into the English word "*forgive.*"

1. *Aphiemi* means "to send forth,"<sup>7</sup> and was translated "*forgive*" in Matthew 6:12: "***And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.***" This was in reference to the relationships between people.

Several other words were used to translate the same Greek word, with none being synonymous with "*forgive*". It is vital that we grasp this. For example, these are some of the words that were used: "*uttered*" (Mark 15:37), "*left*" (Mark 1:18), "*neglecting*" (Mark 7:8), and "*did not allow*" (Luke 8:51 NAS).

2. *Aphesis* means “freedom” (or “pardon”).<sup>8</sup> The translators used four English words to convey its meaning: “forgiveness,” “liberty,” “release,” and “remission.” Whichever of the preceding six words we use, the intent is to describe the gift Jesus provided through His shed blood. For example, He granted “forgiveness” [pardon] to all – we need not ask for it. Like He said, “It is finished.” (John 19:30). The Greek definition for “finished” is “to end, that is, complete, execute, conclude, **discharge (a debt).**”<sup>9</sup> Jesus provided “freedom” from flesh and its penalty of death, and now man must surrender his self-life – the flesh-life – to the regeneration by the Holy Spirit. The pardon provided through the blood of Jesus canceled the death sentence upon flesh for all who would receive Life in God’s only begotten Son.

This next verse uses two of the synonyms for “pardon.”

- *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; he hath sent me to proclaim **release** to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at **liberty** them that are bruised.* (Luke 4:18).

3. *Apoluo* means “to free fully, i.e. (literally) relieve, release, dismiss, (figuratively) let die, pardon, or (specifically) divorce.”<sup>10</sup> It was used in these two examples in Jesus’ words:

- *But I say to you that whoever **divorces** his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is **divorced** commits adultery.* (Matthew 5:32 NKJV).
- *Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. **Forgive**, and you will be **forgiven**.* (Luke 6:37 NKJV).

4. *Charizomai* means “to grant as a favor, i.e. gratuitously, in kindness, pardon or rescue.”<sup>11</sup> Two examples of English words used by the translators are:

- *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, **forgiving** one another, even as God in Christ **forgave** you.* (Ephesians 4:32 NKJV).
- *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and **given Him** the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* (Philippians 2:9-11 NKJV).

Although the word “forgive” was used in translation of each of the four main Greek words we just discussed, we cannot assume that they are synonymous. Whatever we perceive to be the meaning of “forgive,” we must remember that forgiveness/pardon was granted through Jesus’ shed blood. And now, we must follow Jesus by way of the Cross and die to the flesh so His Spirit can be our Life.

The most important type of forgiveness Jesus taught was the *forgiveness* that we as believers must give and receive as we live on this earth. If we expect the Father to forgive our “trespasses” [Greek: *side slips*],<sup>12</sup> we must be willing to forgive the trespasses

of others.<sup>13</sup> How can we not follow the example Jesus set on the Cross when He cried, “*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do?*” (Luke 23:34).

Flesh-obsessed man is also *sin-obsessed*. This obsession has infiltrated every avenue of teaching, preaching, and evangelism. More often than not in our “*evangelizing*,” we focus on the sin and sins, rather than upon the new birth. Unless the Spirit of God does a REAL work in the heart of man, there will be no conversion.

If we as Christ’s ambassadors would go the way of the Cross, preaching Christ and Him crucified, we would see many more souls brought into the Kingdom of God. Old things would pass away and all things would become new. Our proclamations of the Gospel would continually lift Him up and He would draw those out of darkness into His light. **We are all born without Him, and that is why we need Him. Sinners are simply souls without a Savior, seeking to find satisfaction in this life.** They need to hear there is a Savior Who wants them for His own.

Smith Wigglesworth said, *The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. He is ever unveiling, making manifest, breathing upon humanity in a great way, burning, quickening, until men cry out, “What must we do to be saved?”* Do we think our persuasive (and condemning) words will convince a man of his sinful state? We need to be like Wigglesworth, and allow the Holy Spirit to do His work! We simply must proclaim the need for going the way of the Cross – that “need” being a solution to our condition of flesh.

If Charles Finney or Smith Wigglesworth were preaching, lives would be changed and sin would literally fall away under the Holy Spirit’s conviction. Can we almost hear those preachers proclaiming how “*peace cannot be found in a bottle,*” but in Jesus, the Prince of Peace Who calls sinners to come to Him? When faced with the reality of the Son of God, preached with power, sinners would be convicted of their sinful condition and they would come to the Lord. Sin would no longer have control over them because they have come to Jesus, the Light of the world. Even so, many a sinner has been convicted of his need for a Savior, yet foolishly never responded to Christ.

Several Greek words have been translated into the one English word “*light*.” One of these words is used in reference to Jesus being the Light of the world<sup>14</sup> and has its own specific definition: “*to shine, or make manifest.*”<sup>15</sup> Just as light dispels darkness when the switch is turned on, so does Jesus dispel the darkness of death when He enters a person’s life. If a person wanted light in a room he would not tell the darkness to “*go away.*” Asking forgiveness for sins committed would be about as effective. Yes, Jesus would forgive someone for his sins, but what He wants is to bring about the new birth. If there were one thing for which we should ask forgiveness, it would be this: rejecting Him for so long and not responding sooner to His call to “*come.*”

The bible tells us, “*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.*” (James 4:8). We must open the door to Him and be willing to surrender “*self.*” If we remain full of *self* and offer to Him only our sins to be forgiven, His Spirit must look elsewhere for a temple to fill.

If the Holy Spirit is drawing a person into a relationship with Jesus, what is it that He is drawing him away from? The answer lies in the Greek definition of the word “repentance.” According to Strong’s Greek dictionary, repentance is “by implication, reversal (of [another’s] decision).”<sup>16</sup> Who can the “another” be but man in the Garden of Eden?

In Acts 5:30-31 Peter was speaking to the Jews when he said, “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew hanging him on a tree. Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, **for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.**” Why would Peter use the words “for to give repentance to Israel?” Simply for this reason: God sent His Son as a Savior to give Israel “reversal of Adam’s decision,” and “pardon [remission] of sins.” He made a way for them to turn from the heredity of flesh and receive pardon from its death sentence. And that is true repentance – the only way to Life. Peter also said, “The Lord does not delay and is not tardy or slow about what He promises, according to some people’s conception of slowness, but He is long-suffering (extraordinarily patient) toward you, not desiring that any should perish, but that all should **turn to repentance.**” (2 Peter 3:9 Amplified).

The Greek word exclusively used as “repent” literally means “to think differently or afterwards, that is, reconsider (morally to feel compunction).”<sup>17</sup> In every verse where this “repent” is used, “reconsider” could well have been used in its place.<sup>18</sup>

For many years I have noticed the inescapable “calls to repentance,” regardless of denomination or affiliation. Without exception, the hearers are told they must ask God to forgive their sins. In reality, they should be told what Peter said: “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38).

Even young children are condemned into repenting of their sins. Just think of a little boy, listening to a Christian tell him that he is a sinner. All he can recall at the moment is the lie he told his parents that morning. He feels guilty and asks God to forgive him. Later, as he is thinking about the events of the day, he cannot help but wonder what will happen to him if he slips up and tells another lie. He is filled with fear of sinning and “going to hell,” like he heard about from the Christian. Unless the Master arrests for Himself the heart of the little boy, what will he grow up to become? The knowledge of good and evil is the force behind all this – there is no knowledge of the pure Truth. How many ministers of the Gospel are preaching condemnation to the hearers, when they ought to be proclaiming Life?

### **The new birth**

The Old and New Testaments have been preserved for the express purpose of teaching how man became separated from God and how Jesus brought reconciliation by means of His death on the Cross. “For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.”

(Romans 5:10). To be saved by His life is to be born from above. **Jesus reconciled all mankind to God through His death, but to be saved man must be born anew with His Life.**

The bible revisers of the late 1800s used the more accurate word “anew” rather than “again.” The true meaning of the translated word “anew” is “*from above.*”<sup>19</sup> Man is born flesh, the offspring of flesh, and for that to change he must be born from above. The word “born” means “*regenerated*” according to the Greek word from which it was translated.<sup>20</sup> A more exact translation of Jesus’ words would be: “*You must be regenerated from above.*” (John 3:7).

John 1:11-13 explains how it is solely the work of God when a person is born anew. “*He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that **believe on his name:** which were born, not of blood, nor of the **will of the flesh,** nor of **the will of man,** but of God.*” It is not by man’s own will, nor the will of another, that a person is born from above – it is only **of God.** We must not think that the new birth will transpire because of repeated emotional pleas, using music and dramatic stories to tug at the heartstrings. Though the new birth experience can be emotional, it **MUST** be a work of God’s Spirit, revealing the sinfulness of the flesh life.

The phrase “**believe on his name**” is found exclusively in John’s record of the Gospel. Jesus’ name means “*Jehovah frees (or saves).*”<sup>21</sup> Matthew’s gospel says, “*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for it is he that shall save his people from their sins.*” (Matthew 1:21). The meaning of His name was emphasized, and Joseph heard “*Jehovah saves*” when the angel of the Lord spoke the name “*Jehoshua (JESUS).*” When a person believes on the Name of the Lord, or calls on the Name of the Lord, he is declaring that “**JEHOVAH SAVES.**” He is acknowledging Jesus as the Son of Jehovah and receiving Him as Savior.

### **“Just say this little prayer after me”**

The present-day concept of what it means to be born again is also based on the error that has invaded the Church. We must fully understand the relationship between the knowledge of good and evil, flesh and blood, the Law of Moses, and the Cross of Jesus Christ. Man-made doctrines have reduced the born-again experience to a simple formula where saying a little prayer after the preacher makes us “*born again.*” Where is the inward change? How can a formulated prayer make a new creature in Christ Jesus? Where is the surrender to the Holy Spirit?

The idea of praying “*the sinner’s prayer*” was derived from this passage in Luke:

“*Also He spoke this parable to some who **trusted in themselves that they were righteous,** and despised others: Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector,*

*standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for **everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.***" (Luke 18:9-14 NKJV).

We dare not take this publican's prayer and make it a formula for being born anew, suggesting that mere words can make us a new creature. Unless we humble ourselves and cry out from our helpless state as the penitent publican did, our words will be empty, and no door will be opened for the Holy Spirit to do His work.

In Isaiah 6, the prophet Isaiah speaks of how he "saw the Lord." "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." (Isaiah 6:5) If only we could "see the Lord" in all His Glory! Then we too would cry out to be cleansed of our uncleanness. **To be holy as He is Holy would be our greatest desire.**

## Judgment

The familiar John 3:16 is followed with: "For God sent not the son into the world to judge [Greek: try, condemn, punish] <sup>22</sup> the world; but that the world should be saved through him." (Verse 17).

When every person is born, he is born judged – simply because he is flesh and has not yet come to rely upon Christ for salvation. As Jesus said, "He that believeth on him is not judged: **he that believeth not hath been judged already**, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:18).

If Jesus did not come to judge, why should we? He tells us, "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." (Matthew 7:1-2 NKJV). In Jesus' compassion and love, He courts man to draw him into a relationship with Himself. If we are without loving compassion, we can drive away others from a relationship with Jesus. They may even conclude that God is a judgmental taskmaster who expects perfect performance once they become Christians. We must point them to Christ and let the Holy Spirit do His work.

Through the knowledge of good and evil and the Law of Moses, the Jews believed they were righteous by adhering to the Law. They were reticent about receiving the Messiah, preferring their own righteousness. Jesus told how they loved the darkness and would not come to the Light, lest they be admonished <sup>23</sup> for their evil deeds. "But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God." (John 3:21) All works are evil when rooted in the knowledge of good and evil. But the works of one born of the Spirit are wrought in God. He has a new heredity as a new creature in Christ Jesus. Therefore, since he is "doing the truth," He is not afraid to come to the light.

The Law of Moses was the accuser of Israel because it exposed their guilt. When Jesus was explaining to the Jews how Moses' Law had borne witness of Him, He told them, "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me." (John 5:45-46 NAS)

One day, a group of scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman they had found in the act of adultery. According to the Law of Moses, an adulteress was to be stoned to death. But Jesus took the opportunity to teach a valuable lesson, even to those who were yet under the Law. He said that whoever was without sin was to cast the first stone at her. There was not one without sin, and they all left the woman alone with Jesus. When she realized that no one had condemned her, <sup>24</sup> Jesus told her, "**I do not condemn you either.** Go on your way and from now on sin no more." (John 8:11b Amplified) Then in verse 15, Jesus also spoke these words, "You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one." (NKJV).

1. Hebrews 10:1-2a
2. Greek #4893
3. It is interesting to note that the Greek word, translated "sins," is actually singular. The translators, however, made it plural in almost all verses in the New Testament.
4. Greek #2937
5. 2 Corinthians 5:17
6. Hebrew # 5545
7. Greek #863
8. Greek #859
9. Greek #5055
10. Greek #630
11. Greek #5483
12. Greek #3900
13. Matthew 6:14-15
14. John 8:12
15. Greek #5457
16. Greek #3341
17. Greek #3340
18. Matthew 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15; 6:12; Luke 13:3,5; 16:30; 17:3,4; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; 26:20; Revelation 2:5,16,21
19. Greek #509
20. Greek #1080
21. Greek #2424, taken from Hebrew #3091
22. Greek #2919
23. Greek #1651
24. John 8:3-11a

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### BAPTISM AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Having explored both the modern-day concept of being born again and the misconstrued forgiveness doctrine, we must take a closer look at the Holy Spirit's role. He is the Power of the Trinity and begins His work in us through Baptism.

The word “baptize” means “*makewhelmed.*”<sup>1</sup> The Greek dictionary shows no definition for “whelmed,” but Webster’s dictionary shows two words merged to make the word “*whelm.*” Those two words mean “to overwhelm” and “to cover,” so the resulting definition of “whelm” is “*to submerge, cover, or engulf.*”<sup>2</sup> Strong’s Greek dictionary shows that the word “baptize” is also translated “wash.”

There are two types of baptism mentioned in the bible: the ceremonial baptism in water and the baptism by the Holy Spirit. Water baptism is widely used by many denominational and non-denominational groups. Whether this baptism should be by sprinkling or by total immersion is controversial. But that is not the issue here. We must get back to the true meaning of baptism according to the bible.

John the Baptist introduced Jesus, the One Who had “existed before him,” saying, “***I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.***” John told how he “*saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.*” John recognized Him because he had heard the words, “*Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.*”<sup>3</sup> ***John came baptizing with water so that Jesus should be revealed to Israel – Jesus, the One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.***

John baptized Jesus to show Israel this One Who came to die so that He might give His Spirit to be the Baptizer. Israel had been given the Law of Moses by which to live in acknowledgement of God as the “*LORD God*” and to reveal their sinfulness.<sup>4</sup> The Gospel (good message) of Jesus Christ was given so they might no longer be bound to the Law, but be freed by God’s Spirit. They could now be washed clean by the Spirit’s presence and become alive unto God instead of dead in sin.

The ritual of water baptism is intended to signify the death and burial of flesh and the rising to new life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Do we fail to comprehend the profound significance and symbolism attached to water baptism by immersion? For the most part, baptism in water has become so ritualistic the true message is lost.

## **Tongues**

The baptism of the Holy Spirit has been given a much different meaning. There is one sign in particular that is looked for, which is “*speaking in tongues.*” Even though it means “*fiftieth*”<sup>5</sup> (day after Passover), the word “*Pentecost*” has been adopted from the book of Acts and made into a denomination. There is a lesson in “*Passover before Pentecost.*” It is this: we can only receive Pentecost if we have first come by way of Passover – the Cross.

Sadly, in some circles, the use of tongues is cherished as a sign of “*having arrived.*” But where is the teaching on the fruit of the Spirit? The fruit should be of far greater significance than the evidence of tongues. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13 that speaking in tongues is nothing but a jangling noise if we have no love. A believer who has been

baptized by the Holy Spirit will unconsciously emanate the “*fruit of the Spirit*” – and it begins with love.

For one who is freed from his flesh and full of the Holy Spirit, the unknown language (tongues) is a precious gift to be utilized in times of prayer. It is a language only God and His Spirit can understand. There is no demon in hell that can comprehend the language of the Holy Spirit and attempt to interfere in an answer to prayer. The Holy Spirit, through the unknown language, makes intercession **for** the saints according to the Father's will. <sup>6</sup>

The Apostle Paul explained to the Corinthians that there are tongues and interpretations of tongues, as well as guidelines for their proper operation in a group setting. <sup>7</sup> But that is another topic. The focus here is on the primary work of the Holy Spirit to be Life from God in one who is truly born from above. It is a work of God's Spirit when He comes to dwell in a surrendered vessel, renovating (regenerating) His new abode. **His purpose is to purify us from all the flesh life, and to be the Power living through us.**

In his letter to Titus, Paul said, “*But when the kindness of God our Savior, and His love toward man appeared, not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*” (Titus 3:4-5) No works of righteousness done in our own strength can begin to compare to the work of God's Spirit. **We cannot duplicate fruit of the Spirit in our lives. No counterfeit fruit could ever please God or touch the lives of others as effectively as the real thing – we NEED God's Holy Spirit.**

Paul, in his wonderful admonition to the Church, cautioned us to be careful how we walk, not being foolish in these evil days. “*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*” <sup>8</sup> It is more desirable to be full of the Spirit than to be intoxicated with wine. A young friend said to me one time, “There is no high like the Most High.”

### **Why another tongue?**

Before Jesus ascended to the Father in Heaven, He charged His apostles to wait in Jerusalem to be baptized with the Holy Spirit as the Father had promised. They asked Him if this is the time when He would restore the kingdom to Israel. But He told them it was not for them to know times or seasons that only the Father knows. Then He said to them, “*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” (Acts 1:8 NKJV) Only when they had been filled with the Holy Spirit could they be witnesses to Him, because the Holy Spirit was the Power within Who would minister through them and point others to Jesus.

Yes, there were other tongues as Acts 2:4 tells us, but look at the reason: They were in Jerusalem; it was fifty days after Passover, and Jesus had ascended to the Father. His Spirit came from Heaven with a sound like a rushing, mighty wind filling the room with

His presence. The people saw upon each other what appeared to be tongues of fire, and all were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages. When the Jews from other nations heard those full of the Spirit speaking in their languages, they were amazed and said, “**Are not all these who are talking Galileans? Then how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own (particular) dialect to which we were born?**” (Acts 2:7b-8 Amplified).

Only the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, speaking through those who were filled, could get the attention of the devout Jews who had been steeped all their lives in the legalism of Moses’ Law. Peter could have preached in his own strength with full understanding of the truth, but without this work of the Holy Spirit, the true Church never would have been born. And today, without the work of the Holy Spirit no preacher will be effective.

Paul spoke the simple truth when he wrote that the mind of the flesh is enmity [Greek: *hostility*]<sup>9</sup> against God. **If we are in the flesh we cannot please God.** But if the Spirit of God dwells in us, we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit. “**But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.**” (Romans 8:9b) Here, we see the difference between death and Life. The flesh produces dead works, while the work of the Spirit yields fruit.

1. Greek #907
2. Webster’s New World Dictionary – Simon & Schuster Inc. 1986
3. John 1:30-33 NKJV
4. Chapter 5
5. Greek #4005
6. Romans 8:27
7. 1 Corinthians 14
8. Ephesians 5:15-20
9. Greek #2189

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### WORKS OF THE FLESH AND FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

The Apostle Paul’s letter to the Galatians most eloquently exposes works of the flesh for what they really are. After the salutation where he emphasizes his calling by God,

he tells them he was amazed at how quickly they were being influenced away from the Gospel of Christ toward “another gospel.” He warned of those who would agitate them and pervert [Greek: *corrupt*]<sup>1</sup> the true Gospel.<sup>2</sup> He goes on to say that the Gospel he preached did not come through the teaching of man, but through the revelation of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> No man could take the credit for having taught Paul. It was the Lord who revealed Himself and the truth of the Gospel to Paul.

God had separated Paul from all others to unveil the mystery of Christ to him. When he returned, he did not immediately confer with flesh and blood. <sup>4</sup> That which God had given him was a sacred trust. He knew better than to allow the flesh-minded, legalistic, opinions of others to influence his calling. He knew that the things of the Spirit must be spiritually discerned, and “*flesh and blood*” would never have understood.

Paul’s conversion was amazing – a miraculous work attributable solely to God. The former “*Saul*” was a true Pharisee, believing that salvation came through circumcision and adherence to every other minute detail of the Law of Moses. What a marvelous wonder that one such as Saul could be changed from a Pharisee to a true believer in Jesus Christ and His Gospel! This transformation was evident to those of the Church, and some were heard saying, “*He who used to persecute us is now proclaiming the very faith he once reviled and which he set out to ruin and tried with all his might to destroy.*” (Galatians 1:23 Amplified).

Jesus captured the heart of Paul and transformed him into a passionate minister to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul’s heart had changed so drastically that he willingly gave his all to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. He suffered many things, including imprisonment, <sup>5</sup> but his faith in Jesus never wavered. His deep love for God, the One Who had opened his eyes to behold Messiah, compelled him to go forward at any cost.

### **Spirit versus flesh**

Paul fully understood the difference between a life lived in the flesh and a life lived by the Spirit. He said in Galatians 2:20 that he had been crucified with Christ, and now it was Christ Who lived through him. Even though Paul lived in the flesh, he lived it with faith in the Son of God. He added, “*I do not make void the grace of God; for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought.*” (Verse 21). Paul’s life was a wonderful testimony to the transforming power of God.

The division of chapters 2 and 3 interrupts the message where Paul called the Galatians “foolish” and asked them who had “fascinated them by false representations [bewitched]” <sup>6</sup> that they should not obey the truth, even after seeing their Lord revealed as crucified. They wanted to revert to obedience to the Law, not realizing they could be perfected only by the Holy Spirit – not by works of the Law. Paul said, “*This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*” (Galatians 3:2-3 NKJV). They could not seem to grasp the reality that they would grieve the Holy Spirit by turning from Him to their own works.

Even some Gentiles had the idea they should be under Moses’ Law. So Paul explained to them how relying on the works of the Law meant certain failure and would put them under a curse, as the Old Covenant shows. In God’s eyes, the Law justifies no man because the righteous man shall live by faith. The Law is NOT of faith because Abraham had received the promise four hundred and thirty years before the Law was given.

Jesus redeemed the Jews from the curse of the Law so that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Him. They would receive the promise of the Spirit only through faith – not by placing themselves under Moses' Law with its fleshly works.<sup>7</sup>

Because the Law was to bring Israel to Christ, it was necessary that it be removed when Jesus died. The Law had served its purpose and was fulfilled in Jesus. Allow me to repeat Paul's words: "*Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? **Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?***" (Galatians 3:2b-3 NKJV).

Having full knowledge of the ineffectiveness of the Law for righteousness, Paul had to plead with even the Gentiles and explain to them the folly of becoming entangled in a yoke of bondage. If any Gentile believes he must abide by even one part of the Law, he becomes obligated to keep the whole Law. And in so doing he is turning away from Christ of his own volition.<sup>8</sup> As Paul said, "*You have become **estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.** For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.*" (Galatians 5:4-6 NKJV). They had been freed from the flesh through Jesus. And now, in Christ Jesus, the only thing that counted was "*faith working through love.*" Paul called them "*my little children,*" saying how he was travailing until Christ would be formed in them. Then he pleaded with them, "*Tell me, **ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?***"<sup>9</sup>

Paul told them they were called to freedom; in that freedom, they should serve one another in love, instead of exhibiting works of the flesh in unkindness. He then warns them not to bite and devour one another, lest they destroy each other, for if they walk by the Spirit they will not give in to the lust of the flesh. **The "lust of the flesh" is the tendency to operate in the natural.** But if they were led by the Spirit, their obedience would not be according to the Law, since obedience to Jesus' one commandment – to love – was according to freedom as led by the Spirit.<sup>10</sup> As Paul said in Romans 8:2, "*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*" (NKJV).

Paul went on to tell the Galatians how works of the flesh will manifest. He was essentially saying, "Look, if you think you can walk by your flesh, and it is no big deal whether you love your neighbor or not, let me tell you of other ways in which the flesh manifests. '*. . . fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like...they which practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*'"<sup>11</sup> Paul was exposing flesh for what it is. He was not listing a bunch of "*thou shalt nots,*" as the Law does. Rather, he was explaining that the practice of such things is the evidence of unregenerate flesh. And this *unregenerate flesh* is the reason they will not inherit the kingdom of God.

## Unruly evil

The tongue is the most unruly part of our flesh. It is the member we use when we “*bite and devour*” one another, as Paul spoke of in Galatians 5. The bible has much to say on the subject of this one small member.

Solomon said, “*A man’s belly shall be filled with the fruit of his mouth; with the increase of his lips shall he be satisfied. Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.*” (Proverbs 18:20-21). Wisdom tells us that if we love to talk, we will reap the consequences of what comes out of our mouths. If we speak words out of a fleshly heart, we will reap destruction. But if we live by the Spirit in daily surrender, our words will be sweet; we will speak life to others, and we will reap life everlasting as Paul said in Galatians 6:8. Solomon also said, “*Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.*” (Proverbs 21:23 NKJV).

It is so easy for us to react from our flesh when provoked. But we can never truly justify the damage our tongue may do to others, and we most certainly can never take back those words once they leave our lips. James said, “*If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless.*” (James 1:26 NAS). Stated simply, we are hypocrites if we call ourselves Christians yet fail to control our tongues. We could even ask ourselves these questions: “Is my ‘*righteous indignation*’ sometimes merely my flesh speaking?” and “Is God pleased with how I’ve spoken to others?”

James likened the tongue to a ship’s rudder, saying it can do a lot of damage even though it is a small member. And like a small fire can quickly become a very large, destructive one, so too can the tongue cause much damage. James goes on to say that man is able to tame all kinds of creatures but is unable to tame the tongue – that member described as a restless evil and “*full of deadly poison.*” (See James 2:1-8).

In Matthew 12:34-37, Jesus spoke of trees being known by their fruit. He followed this by asking how evil people can speak good things, when “*out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*” On the Day of Judgment, we will account for every useless, idle word we have spoken. By these accounts, we will either be justified or condemned. This sobering topic ought to drive us to our knees in surrender to the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to purge us of this deadly evil.

## Dead works

The flesh-driven Church has unwittingly moved God’s people from a place of rest in Him to a performance-based Christianity. Many have come to believe that their deeds make a difference to God one way or the other – to do good is *to please God*, and to do evil is *sin*. The knowledge of good and evil is so deeply rooted within man it is not recognized as the source of ALL fleshly manifestations. If our “*goodness*” flows from the Holy Spirit within, it is “*fruit*” – not dead works done by our flesh. We are told how the blood of Christ cleanses our “*conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*” (Hebrews

9:14) And as Paul told the Ephesians, we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works according to His plan for us. <sup>12</sup> Yes, there are outwardly visible deeds, but they spring from the new heredity in one born from above.

Isaiah spoke some sobering words which must be included here. *"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"* (Isaiah 5:20) How many of us believe we can please God through deeds of our flesh, omitting surrender to the Spirit's work in us?

### Workers of iniquity

In Matthew 7, we find much of Jesus' wonderful teaching. He speaks of the narrow way to Life, trees yielding good fruit, *"wolves in sheep's clothing"*, etc. Then Jesus tells of the many who will plead with Him over the things they *did in His Name*. Even if they call Him "Lord," He said that only those who do the will of the Father may enter the Kingdom of Heaven. In the end, everyone else who ignored the will of the Father will hear these dreadful words: *"I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* (Matthew 7:23b) What is the Father's will? If it is the one commandment Jesus gave, then "love" is the answer. It would make sense for Jesus to say, "I never KNEW you," in view of these words in 1 John 4:8: *"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."*

Jesus sometimes repeated words or phrases written by David, so it is essential to look for those meanings in the Hebrew dictionary. David also referred to "workers of iniquity" in the Psalms. <sup>13</sup> The word "iniquity" means *"to exert oneself, usually in vain; to come to naught."* <sup>14</sup> On the Day of Judgment, Jesus will be saying to those who *"work iniquity"* that they had *"exerted themselves in vain – they have come to naught."* They should have been seeking to love Him and to know Him. They should have been feeding the hungry souls and leading the thirsty to the Water of Life. Isaiah the prophet said, *"For the vile person will speak villany [Hebrew: foolishness] <sup>15</sup>, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise profaneness [Hebrew: wickedness] <sup>16</sup>, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and to cause the drink of the thirsty to fail."* (Isaiah 32:6).

### Fruit of the Spirit

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul said, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law [Greek: regulation]."* <sup>17</sup> (Galatians 5:22-23). If we are Christ's, we have crucified the flesh and all it represents. So if we live by the Spirit, let us walk by the Spirit and allow His fruit to manifest in our lives.

The emphasis in the fifth and sixth chapters of Galatians is on the relationships we have with one another. It can also be seen in Romans 13:8-10, where Paul said, *"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment,*

are **all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.**” (NKJV).

The well-known passage on sowing and reaping is also about walking in love. But we must not be deceived – God will not allow Himself to be mocked. We will eventually reap whatever we sow. If we sow to our own flesh, we will reap corruption [Greek: decay, ruin]<sup>18</sup> – but if we sow to the Spirit, we will reap eternal life.<sup>19</sup> A man who sows to “his own” flesh is selfish, but a man who sows to the Spirit is “self-less” and has died to the flesh. “*And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of faith.*” (Galatians 6:9-10).

Jesus’ one commandment “love” is not a mere suggestion. According to the Greek language, “commandment” is an “authoritative prescription.”<sup>20</sup> This prescription requires the power of the Holy Spirit because the flesh is weak, making it impossible to love as Jesus taught. But if a believer sincerely walks by the Spirit, maintaining a close intimate relationship with Jesus, love WILL manifest in his life. The “afterglow” of that intimacy with the Bridegroom will cause love to flow out to others. There will be no thought of turning away one who is in need. The lover of the Bridegroom will be fully aware of the still small voice prompting him to go here or go there, or to give when the fatherless, the widowed, and strangers are brought across his path.

The consequences are dire if we fail to love as Jesus asks us to love. We will be as the goats in His parable about the separation of sheep from the goats. All nations will be brought before the Lord, with the sheep on His right hand and the goats at His left. The sheep are the righteous who are told to come and inherit the Kingdom prepared for them. Represented as the King in the parable, Jesus tells the sheep how He was hungry and thirsty, and they provided food and drink. He was a “stranger” and the sheep gave Him lodging; He was naked, and they clothed Him; He was sick and in prison, and they ministered to His needs.<sup>21</sup> When they asked the King how they had done all these things for Him, He said, “*Truly I tell you, in so far as you did it for one of the least [in the estimation of men] of these My brethren, you did it for Me.*” (Matthew 25:40b Amplified). The goats, on the other hand, were told, “*Begone from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels!*” (Matthew 25:41b Amplified). They had not given the King food or drink, nor taken Him in, nor clothed and ministered to Him. When they asked Him what He meant, He replied, “*Solemnly I declare to you, in so far as you failed to do it for the least [in the estimation of men] of these, you failed to do it for Me.*” (Matthew 25:45b Amplified).

Jesus’ final words should cause us to examine our lives to see how we have treated “the least”: “**And these [goats] shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.**” (Matthew 25:46).

1. Greek #3344
2. Galatians 1:6-7
3. Galatians 1:11-12

4. Galatians 1:15-16
5. 2 Corinthians 11:23
6. Greek #940
7. Galatians 3:10-14
8. Galatians 5:1-3
9. Galatians 4:19 & 21
10. Galatians 5:13-18
11. Galatians 5:19-21
12. Ephesians 2:10
13. Psalm 14:4
14. Hebrew #205
15. Hebrew #5039
16. Hebrew #2612
17. Greek #3551
18. Greek #5356
19. Galatians 6:7-8
20. Greek #1785
21. Matthew 25:32-36

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### RIGHTEOUSNESS AND GRACE

What is it that makes a person righteous? It most certainly is not something we do (or don't do). If it were, Jesus died in vain.

The story of Abraham's faith in God is well known. He simply believed in the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous. <sup>1</sup> God had spoken, and Abraham believed the promise that his offspring would someday be as numerous as the stars.

After their son Isaac was born and Abraham and Sarah had spent several years raising this miracle child, God tested Abraham's faith to see if he loved his only son more than he loved God. Just imagine the kind of trust it took to actually take his son up the mountain and prepare to sacrifice him! His faith was so strong that he knew God was able to raise Isaac from the dead, even if he had gone through with slaying him.

Would we be willing to trust God as much as Abraham did? James, the Lord's brother, said that we should be joyful when we "*fall into manifold temptations* [Greek: adversities]<sup>2</sup>; *knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience* [Greek: constancy]." <sup>3</sup> (James 1:2b-3). The more our trust in God is tried (put to proof), the more steadfast we will be in that trust (faith).

James also brings out the fact that Abraham was justified by works when he obeyed God by preparing to offer up Isaac on the altar. Abraham's trust in God was evident in his works as he went up the mountain with his son – his faith was proven in his obedience. James tells us, "*The Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED*

GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,' and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone." (James 2:23b-24 NAS).

Saul of Tarsus had been very much the Law-abiding Pharisee until Jesus claimed him for His own, transforming him into "Paul the Apostle." Paul wrote that he counted all things as "loss" if only he could know Christ, and he did suffer the loss of all things. He also said that everything was "dung" compared to knowing the excellency of Christ. (The Greek word for "dung" means "what is thrown to the dogs.")<sup>4</sup> His desire was this: ". . . that I may gain Christ, and be **found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God by faith.**"<sup>5</sup>

Jesus put to death the flesh of man in Himself, and that is the reason Paul said Jesus was made to BE *Righteousness* unto us.<sup>6</sup> Jesus **is** Righteousness to all who rely on Him for salvation and entrust their spiritual well-being to Him. The remnant will be made up of all who have received Jesus as their Righteousness.

### **Self-righteousness**

We may think of self-righteousness as being a haughty or better-than-thou attitude. Although such an attitude may often be evident, true self-righteousness is far more destructive.

A religious life apart from a relationship with Jesus Christ and the Grace of God is a life of self-righteousness. This was evident with the Jews, because the righteousness of the Law was a flesh righteousness – obeyed in the strength of flesh. The Israelites had a problem letting go of their own righteousness. They were so entrenched in the Law that many rejected Righteousness (Jesus) and the freedom available through trust in Him. They had a zeal for God, but it was not according to knowledge of Him. Being ignorant of His righteousness, they went about attempting to establish their own through the works of the Law. As Paul told the Romans, the requirements of the Law ended at the Cross – fulfilled in Jesus. It had pointed the Jews to Messiah, and from then on righteousness can be found only IN HIM.<sup>7</sup>

### **What is grace?**

Much of the Church is bereft of understanding as to the true meaning of grace. Somewhere along the way, someone coined the phrase "God's unmerited favor" to define God's Grace. This erroneous man-made definition has spread like wildfire throughout the Church. It is accepted without question simply because someone passed it on, along with all the other erroneous traditions of man.

The Hebrew language does define grace as "favor" within the context of its use in the Old Testament.<sup>8</sup> For instance, Genesis 6:8 says, "But Noah found **grace** in the eyes of the LORD." Another verse uses "favour," translated from the same Hebrew word: "But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him **favour** in the sight of the keeper of

the prison.” (Genesis 39:21). The “grace” of the Old Testament was simply that of finding favor in the eyes of God or, sometimes, man.

In the New Testament, “grace” has a completely different meaning. James Strong defined the Greek word “*charis*”<sup>9</sup> as “graciousness (as gratifying), of manner or act. . . literally, **figuratively, or spiritually: especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude.**” This definition was translated into the following English words: “acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, grace (-ious), joy, liberality, pleasure, thank (-s, -worthy).” The words shown in bold print (my emphasis) reflect the meaning of “Grace” in the majority of verses throughout the New Testament.

God’s *divine influence* is the work of the Holy Spirit in all who come to rely upon Christ for salvation. When we surrender to the Spirit of Grace we are “*entrusting our spiritual well-being to Christ.*” Paul made clear the understanding of both Faith and Grace when he said he had been crucified with Christ, and Christ’s life now lived through Paul because of Paul’s faith in Him. The simple reality is that Paul relied on the Life within him. He followed with the words, “*I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought.*” (Galatians 2:21). If Paul had attempted to be righteous under the Law, he would have been denying Christ in him. God’s Grace is the power of the Holy Spirit in us – it is so much more than mere “favor!”

Paul’s words in Romans 3:21-26 help us understand “*righteousness through faith by God’s Grace.*” He tells how the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus has been manifested apart from the Law. This righteousness was foretold by the Law and the prophets and given to all who believe – both Jew and Gentile. Paul adds, “*for there is no distinction; for all have sinned [missed the mark]<sup>10</sup>, and fall short of the glory of God; **being justified [rendered innocent]<sup>11</sup> freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**”*

The verse “*For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God*” is often used in evangelism. But Paul, in the above quote, was simply pointing out that God makes no distinction between Jews and Gentiles: ALL fall short of God’s glory and need His grace to “*render them innocent.*”

Like James, Paul spoke of Abraham’s righteousness because of his faith in God, but Paul went on to show how Grace relates to works. He asked those at Rome what was learned from Abraham’s obedience. If Abraham was justified through works, he would have had cause to boast in himself, and God would have owed Abraham righteousness as payment for his works.<sup>12</sup> But the Word tells us he “*believed God,*” and that is why he was reckoned as “*righteous.*” We must keep this in mind: if we could achieve righteousness through works, it would mean that God owed man because of his efforts, and Jesus would have died for no reason.

Faith and Grace are inseparable gifts from God. Without Faith, God’s Grace cannot do His work in a believer, and without Grace, faith [-fullness] is nearly impossible. We could use word meanings to make this more understandable, and say, “*Without entrusting one’s spiritual well-being to Christ, God’s divine influence upon the heart is prevented.*”

*And without the Divine influence upon the heart, it is almost impossible to entrust one's spiritual well-being to Christ." Paul said, "For **by grace have ye been saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is **the gift of God: not of works**, that no man should glory." (Ephesians 2:8-9).*

Before His death and resurrection, Jesus taught His disciples that He was the Vine and they were the branches. Without Him, they could do nothing. And **THAT is Grace – God making it possible for us to abide in Him because He abides in us**. Jesus said, "If a person does not dwell in Me, he is thrown out like a [broken-off] branch, and withers; such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, and they are burned." (John 15:6 Amplified). There will be only a remnant found abiding in the Vine, while too many will be cast into the fire and burned. Tragically, they will have preferred the bondage of self and flesh over the way of the Cross.

1. Genesis 15:6
2. Greek #3986
3. Greek #5281
4. Greek #4657
5. Philippians 3:8-11
6. 1 Corinthians 1:30
7. Romans 10:2-4
8. Hebrew #2580
9. Greek #5485
10. Greek #264
11. Greek #1344
12. Romans 4:1-5

## PART FIVE: WHERE HAS THE FLESH LED US?

### CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

#### BONDAGE

While the children of Israel were in Egyptian bondage, they had become accustomed to their daily routine. Though they suffered at the hands of Pharaoh and were forced to endure hard labor, they had food and shelter. After God freed them from Egypt, they spent forty years in the wilderness. God had brought them out of bondage so He could be their God, and they would be to Him a people, but they resisted Him each step of the way. They even found fault with the food He provided for them each day. He gave them manna, but they got tired of that and wanted meat. And when He sent them quail meat, they grumbled about that too. <sup>1</sup> For forty years they were in training, but rather than learn to trust Him as Healer and Provider and to acknowledge Him as the LORD GOD, they murmured and complained. They desired to be back in Egypt where at least they had good food and fresh vegetables to eat.

Several years ago, as I spent time in prayer, I was overwhelmed with the memory of the picture of the Church as God sees her and the agony of the Father's heart. I had been lying on my bed, about to get up, when I saw words moving across what appeared to be a narrow banner. The words I saw were "*THE SIN IS EGYPT.*" I wondered what this meant, but in more recent years the Lord has given me the answer: "***bondage has a stranglehold on the present-day Church.***" The desires of the flesh, through the knowledge of good and evil, have caused the Church to remain where the "food" is more pleasing to the flesh – she has little desire for fresh Manna from Heaven.

The Church is enslaved to the vain traditions handed down from generation to generation. These traditions include doctrine other than that of Christ, ritualistic "worship," programs to regulate church life, communion rituals, and baptism rituals, etc. There is no desire to get out of the rut of complacency. Those who believe they are "*the Church*" go to church week after week, sit in the same pew, talk to the same people, sing the same songs, give their tithes at the appointed time, listen to a sermon, say the proper prayers, and leave at the usual time. Unconsciously, they are in bondage. If they were to allow God to free them, would they be willing to trust Him to be all they need? Would they come to fully acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of the Living God, the One Who died to free man from the flesh? Would they hungrily feed on the Manna from Heaven? Or would they murmur and complain, wanting to go back to "*Egypt*" with its structured "*Christian*" bondage?

Many in the apostate church quote Hebrews 10:25 to manipulate others into coming to church. Why? Is it the "*circumcision*" of which Paul spoke? Is it because faithfulness to church is seen as "*faithfulness to God?*" Is it because "*more people in church*" translates into a "*smaller mortgage?*" Or is it ritual because church attendance is expected? In the majority of churches, the answer is "yes" to all of the above questions because the knowledge of good and evil has produced nothing but religious flesh.

### **Bondage to flesh**

Much of the Western Church, particularly in North America, offers the lost little more than condemnation and a plethora of rules to follow. People believe they are actually pleasing and obeying God, as they listen to grand sermons based on pretexts which are bible texts taken out of context. These man-made masterpieces of oratory appeal to the flesh and promise God's "*blessing*" if the people will do all the right things. This leaves the impression that if they fail to do the right thing, they will miss God. Insidiously masked behind eloquence and happy faces, these "*twins*" – condemnation and rules – have become the "*gospel*" message. If sinners respond to such a message, they may go from the bondage of flesh to the bondage of MORE flesh, in the form of religiosity and churchianity with its inherent demands to measure up. In their own strength, they may try to live up to standards set by man, believing that these are God's standards.

Why has the Church strayed so far from pure devotion to Jesus? Are seminaries producing ministers who never question the traditions and doctrines? Only by God's

Grace will some church attendees find a real relationship with Jesus. But after that, if no one disciples them in the truth, they too may be swept into the mainstream of religion and forsake their first love.

Several years ago I met a lady whose future daughter-in-law had introduced her to Jesus. The lady put her trust in Him, experienced His unforgettable power in being delivered from a smoking habit, and went about sharing her new-found faith. She found a church where there seemed to be “lots of life” and became deeply involved, attending every meeting and eventually becoming an elder. This lady went from sharing her excitement over Jesus to the bondage of *churchianity* with all its legalistic practices. Although she had been freed from a smoking habit, it had taken its toll on her body. She developed lung cancer and became very weak. But in her remaining months, when she could no longer go to church, she rediscovered Jesus and once again He became everything to her. She shared with her daughter-in-law how she now understood that all Jesus wanted was a relationship, not enslavement to “*servicing Him.*” They had a joyous and tearful time as they said “good-bye” for the last time – on earth.

Pastors who lead new believers into bondage will one day stand before God. What will they say in answer to the question, “*What have you done with my Son?*” Jesus had something to say about those who cause new believers to turn from trust in Him: “*And whosoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it were better for him if a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.*” (Mark 9:42) Although Jesus was referring to the children, I believe He sees new believers as “little children.” They are babies in Christ who need nurturing to grow and mature in Him – they ought not to be turned away from Him.

In the apostate church, there are multitudes ready and willing to embrace a new believer and bring him into the fold. Then they begin the process of “*circumcision*” by introducing man-made laws. They seem to believe they are helping God in His work of regenerating a new Christian. Creatures of flesh are taking over the work belonging to the Holy Spirit. It is little wonder God’s written word tells us that judgment will begin in the house of God. <sup>2</sup> Peter asks the question, “***If it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?***” (1 Peter 4:17b-18).

What a sobering statement Peter makes in the above verse! We the Church will be judged before all others. And if we have not obeyed the Gospel of God, what will our end be? We must let go of our obsession with self and flesh, completely surrender to the One Who gave Himself for us, then take time for a one-on-one relationship of praise, devotion, and worship. Otherwise, how can the corporate Body ever reach the place where God’s presence will be so rich the lost will be drawn in because Jesus is in the Church? What REALLY happens when a “*stranger*” enters a church?

There has arisen a serious social problem not recognized by much of the Church. If a person is not involved wholeheartedly in every aspect of “church” life, he may be seen as unfaithful, an outsider, or even an unbeliever. If that person does not attend one of

the church's home groups or a cell group, he may have a difficult time being acknowledged by the tight-knit group of insiders. How many people are lost because they were rejected by the church to which they went in search of God? If He is not there, neither is love.

### **Men's hands**

Is it possible that we are so in bondage to self that we see the power of our hands as being of value to God? The bible has much to say about the works of men's hands. As both the Hebrew and Greek words show, "hand" indicates "power" or "means."<sup>3,4</sup>

One of the first references to man's new-found ability is in Genesis 3:22. Man had become like God, knowing good and evil, so the Lord God said, "[A]nd now, lest he **put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life** and eat, and live forever. . ." Man cannot take hold of eternal life by the power of his own doing, but that seems to be the perception among so many today.

Genesis 4:3-8 tells how God rejected Cain's offering of the **works of his own hands**, but He accepted Abel's offering which represented the death of flesh. So what was Cain's response? In self-righteous anger, he murdered his brother.

God has pleaded constantly with man to forsake the works of his hands, and come to Him in complete surrender. We see just one example of this in Deuteronomy 4:28-31. The people were serving gods made with wood and stone, "**the work of men's hands.**" But the Lord told the people they would find Him only if they would seek Him with all their heart and soul.

After he completed writing the books of the Law, Moses spoke to the elders of the tribes of Israel. He foretold the evil that would come upon them in the latter days because they had provoked the Lord to anger through the works of their hands.<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah also spoke of how the people of Judah had forsaken the LORD when they burned incense to other gods and "**worshipped the works of their own hands.**" (Jeremiah 1:16).

Gross error has invaded the Church and deceived man into trusting in his own works. How many of us ignorantly idolize the works of our own hands? Idolatry is raging, and Jesus has been forsaken!

James said, "*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. **Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.***" (James 4:8). In the eyes of God, the works of our hands are polluted – we are sinners and must cleanse our hands and purify our hearts, becoming single-minded in our devotion to God.

In Revelation 9:20, John relates how, even after the deadly plagues, many people "**repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood.**" Has the church made idols of her

gold and silver? Do we as Christians hold in adoration our churches of “brass, and of stone, and of wood?”

In Acts 17, Paul was speaking to the people in Athens about their worship of “AN UNKNOWN GOD.” (Verse 23). He proceeded to tell them about this God Who created all things – the Lord of Heaven and earth Who dwells not “**in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything,** since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.” (Acts 17:24b-25 NKJV). In verse 28 he says, “**for in him we live and move, and have our being.**” God wants nothing and needs nothing from the hands of man. It is His will that we take care of one another – especially the fatherless and widows, as well as the strangers in need of shelter and food. As quoted in a previous chapter, Jesus said if we care for His brethren who are “the least,” it is as though we have done it unto Him. He is never impressed by the seemingly great things we do for Him. What truly matters to Him is how we treat one another.

The above quotes on the works of men’s hands are a mere sampling of all that is in the bible, but I believe they sufficiently reveal how God sees our efforts. Even though man may be impressed by what flesh can do, it is abomination in the sight of God. He is calling out a remnant with clean hands and pure hearts, freed from the bondage of flesh.

### **Personal bondage**

Many walk in bondage today because of unhealed hurts and unresolved issues. Living in fear of rejection, fear of failure, or fear of offending, these wounded ones carry burdens even from childhood. To the wounded ones these fears are very real. Psychologists call them “*phobias*.” The enemy of our souls would love to keep us in such bondage to fear that he can destroy every relationship we have – especially our relationship with God. And he will, unless we learn that in Christ Jesus we have a God Who is greater than all fear – a God Who is longing to free every seeking soul. His Spirit can free us from all strongholds if we are willing to surrender fully to His resurrection power.

We may have suffered physical, sexual, mental, or emotional abuse, which leave scars affecting every facet of our lives. Jesus is the Answer – His presence in the Person of the Holy Spirit is waiting to fill our beings until there is room for nothing else. What freedom He gives and what joy will come as He heals and makes us whole! Once whole, we then are capable of extending forgiveness to those who have hurt us – whether or not they know they did.

1. Book of Exodus
2. 1 Peter 4:17a
3. Hebrew #3027
4. Greek #5495
5. Deuteronomy 31:29

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### TITHING – OLD OR NEW COVENANT?

What you are now about to read may make a lot of people very angry, so let me ask this question: Is tradition of greater importance than the Truth which came through Jesus? *“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”* (John 1:17 NKJV). Many people in the Church today are enslaved to the “law” that one MUST tithe to the local church in order to please God, to avoid being cursed, and to finance the spreading of the Gospel. This bondage has spread its suffocating tentacles throughout the institution which man considers *“The Body of Christ.”*

Satan, the deceiver, has achieved his greatest dream, but to the deceived church, it is an undetected nightmare from hell itself. Satan has masterminded the ultimate deception, and used it to draw the Church into his deadly clutches. He has relied on the western world’s god of money to hold the attention of the large and prosperous churches. Tithing is not a new idea, but over a period of more than one hundred fifty years, it has become increasingly popular among those who need to increase the church income. What better way to fill that “need” than to obligate people and establish a budget, knowing there will be a definite level of income? The admonition to tithe causes people to believe this is a commandment from God.

In reality, the church is on *“life support.”* For all intents and purposes, she is dead – the Life of God is lacking, as is faith. So churches rely on tithes to keep the doors open. Does the Church prefer to trust in tithing out of fear of poverty, rather than trust in God and have confidence in His provision?

There are man-made monstrosities needing enormous financial support to maintain them. They can be seen on the street corners of every city in North America. Because of television and other media, they are highly visible, referred to as *“God’s houses”* and *“gospel ministries.”* They speak great promises from God such as, *“If you tithe, God will bless you.”* And if you give above the *“tithe”* you can add the word *“abundantly”* to those three little words that people love to hear – *“will bless you.”* What is the real motive behind the doctrine of tithing? Is it so the people can be blessed? Or is it because the large business of *“ministry”* needs the capital to remain viable? Does any one truly know what Church money is primarily to be used for? It is to feed the hungry and provide for the widowed and the fatherless.

Within the Law of Moses there were curses which carried promises of death, destruction, or expulsion. One such law had to do with the treatment of the widows and the fatherless. *“You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If you afflict them in any way and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; and My wrath shall burn; I will kill you with the sword, and **your** wives shall be widows and **your** children fatherless.”* (Exodus 22:22-24 Amplified). There was no tolerance for those who afflicted the widows and the fatherless.

One aspect of the Law regarding the tithe required the people to lay up the tithe within their gates so that the priest, the stranger, the fatherless, and widow would have food to eat. Every three years, they were to bring a tenth of their increase of that third year. The Levite priests' inheritance was God Himself, so they relied on the people for their food. Strangers passing through were without home and food, and the fatherless and widows had no one to care for them. The tithe was to be their provision. The bible gives the reason for this practice: "**so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.**"<sup>1</sup> Although this phrase applied only to those under the Law it has been quoted to justify present-day "tithing."

The Father's heart has always been toward the widowed and fatherless. In the New Testament, James said, "*Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*" (James 1:27). And that is what we must keep in mind – it is the real heart of the issue.

### **Truth from the bible**

Knowing I was not yet ready to receive the truth about it, the Father did not initially reveal to me the error regarding the tithe. I had spent my whole church life believing that I *must* tithe. My husband and I had faithfully tithed for many years and found that our tithing provided no protection from any "*devourer.*" It could almost be said that we tithed our way to the poor house. We have heard similar reports from people who have literally gone broke because they believed that they must tithe no matter what.

As God led me throughout the truths of scripture, He revealed to me the error, and even abuse, surrounding today's practice of tithing. Moses (the Law) said "*Tithe,*" but Jesus says, "*Give.*" It is vital that we understand both the Law and Grace in terms of the tithe.

Although this may seem like a hard message, it is a good message. In the end, it will mean freedom for those willing to humble themselves and receive it. God has opened the eyes of many, and they have experienced freedom from this bondage – though sometimes with criticism from the "*faithful*" tithers. But nothing can deprive a true believer of his new-found joy and the freedom of simply giving. This is something my husband and I have found. Ever since being freed from the bondage of tithing, we have done so much better financially. We are free to give where the Lord directs us to give, and we have been so blessed financially as well as spiritually.

Denominational borders seem to be non-existent when it comes to this one practice within the church. Books have been written both for and against, but most are only partially Biblical, with verses taken out of context. Those who are for the practice of tithing will choose only those verses supporting their beliefs, and those who are opposed will do the same. I even came across a web site offering help to churches and ministries so they could maximize their income by increasing the tithes. Maybe it

would be more correct to call this kind of help “coercion.” If only they would search the scriptures to discover what He has to say.

A lot of the controversy is based on whether or not tithing was a part of the Law. There is not a lot of clear teaching about the fact that Moses’ Law does not apply today, yet the promoters of tithing tell how Abraham tithed before the Law – so now under Grace it is okay to tithe. But what most people don’t realize is that the “*tithe*” of the Old Covenant consisted of farm crops or animals – it was never money. And the tithe was required only from those who raised crops or animals. A person in any other occupation was not required to tithe anything.

The word “*tithe*,” or “a *tenth*,” was first introduced in the account of Melchisedec’s receiving of a tenth of the spoils of battle from Abram. <sup>2</sup> Notice that it was a tenth of “*the spoils of battle*” – not a tenth of Abram’s income. It was a one-time event, with the remainder of the *spoils* going back to the king of Sodom.

Abraham was very special to God. He had been tested and proven, so that God made him the “father of all those who believe” <sup>3</sup> and gave him the promise of righteousness, which would come through faith in Jesus. <sup>4</sup> God’s chosen people Israel were the great-grandchildren of Abraham. Abraham’s son Isaac was the father of Jacob, whose name God changed to “Israel,” <sup>5</sup> making his descendants “*the children of Israel*.” In earlier chapters the rebellion of Israel and the necessity for the Law has been explained. The various aspects of the tithe were a large part of the Law to cause Israel to acknowledge the LORD God.

The writer of Hebrews distinguishes between the fleshly priesthood (which was under the Law) and the Priesthood of Christ Who came to destroy all that is of the flesh. Jesus became the High Priest of both the Jews and the Gentiles, seating Himself at the right of the Father to make intercession on behalf of His own. He did away with the old priesthood, which was only a “*shadow*” to reveal what He would accomplish through His death and resurrection.

Much of the New Testament (Covenant) was written by Paul the Apostle to proclaim the good news that Jesus’ New Covenant replaced the Old. Paul’s teaching was so thorough that if any person were to read all of his writings without stopping, as though reading a book, there would be no questions left unanswered. And all aspects of the Law, such as the tithe, would become clearer.

The continued explanation in Hebrews clearly shows that the law regarding the tithe actually did have its origin in Abraham’s gift to Melchisedec. “*And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi* (Jacob’s son), *who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren [Israel], though they have come from the loins of Abraham. . . Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him.*” (Hebrews 7:5, 9-10 NKJV). When Levi was yet in the loins of his father (being a “*seed*” of Abraham) he was present when Melchisedec met him. The promise of righteousness through faith was given to Abraham, but the Law was given to his son Isaac’s grandchildren – the

children of Jacob. Even so, the Law would not negate the promise and would continue only until Messiah came.

The next passage further illuminates the difference between the carnal and the spiritual. A question is asked: if the Levitical priesthood (received under the Law) could bring perfection, why was it necessary for Jesus to come according to the order of Melchisedec? The priests, after the order of Aaron and then Levi, performed their duties with sacrifices and offerings at the altar. But once there was a change in the priesthood (Jesus) it was necessary that the law be changed. As the writer of Hebrews said, "**For he of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.**" (Hebrews 7:13-14 NKJV). Jesus descended from Judah, of which tribe there were no priests according to the Law. Judah was one of Jacob's (Israel's) twelve sons and a brother to Levi, but the priesthood belonged only to the descendants of Levi. This tells us that both the Law and Grace came out of the loins of Abraham – the Law through Levi and Grace (Jesus) through Judah.

Under the Levitical priesthood, man gave attendance at the altar and the practice of bringing tithes to the Levite priests was a work done by man of flesh, and received by a man of flesh.

This same chapter of Hebrews also explains how God made Jesus a priest after the order of Melchisedec: "*not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. . . For there is a disannulling [cancellation] <sup>6</sup> of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness.*" (Hebrews 7:16, 18). Because it was weak and unprofitable (being a part of Moses Law) tithing was canceled at the Cross.

It must be emphasized that, although He became God's Priest, Jesus had no priestly duties as did those who were under the Law. Therefore, He does not require tithes from the hands of man, nor does He want them. HE WANTS THE WHOLE MAN! This was what Paul was teaching when he asked the Romans, "*For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?*" *For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world [age] <sup>7</sup>, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*" (Romans 11:34-36 & 12:1-2 NKJV). (It is unfortunate that man chose to interrupt Paul's message with a chapter break.) Jesus wants all or nothing. By presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice, we offer our flesh to be crucified with Him, thereby allowing His Spirit to mortify the deeds of our body. We must remember that "*IN HIM we live, and move, and have our being.*" (Acts 17:28a) It is abominable to think we can keep Him at arm's length, offering Him a mere tenth of our substance because we have been "conformed to this age." Jesus strongly rebuked the scribes and Pharisees in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. There was no stronger word than "woe" when Jesus rebuked anyone. He repeatedly said to the scribes and Pharisees, "Woe unto you," and called them "*hypocrites*" as He pointed out their self-

righteous performance. He chided them for meticulously paying a tithe, even of spices, while neglecting weightier matters like justice, mercy, and faith. He told them, *“These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.”* (Matthew 23:23b NKJV). The earlier part of the chapter tells how they were taken up with themselves rather than showing judgment and mercy and giving honor to God. When Jesus told them not to leave the tithing undone He had not yet nailed the ordinances of the Law to His Cross. At that point, it was still required of some of the Jews to tithe. Jesus was not telling those NOT under the Law to tithe. Jesus spoke of “tithing” only in reference to the Pharisees.

### **Bring the “whole” tithe**

The majority who promote tithing cite Malachi 3:10, where the people were told to bring the whole tithe into the storehouse so there would be food in God’s house. This verse is only a part of the message given to Malachi for the unfaithful Israelites, particularly the Levite priests. They had been offering polluted sacrifices, because the animals were blind, lame, or sick. So the LORD asked if He should even receive this offering from their hand, saying, *“But **cursed be the swindler** who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal.”* (Malachi 1:14a NAS).

The first verse of Malachi 1 shows that He is indeed addressing the Israelites. Then again, in Malachi 3:6, God says, *“For I the LORD change not; therefore ye, O **sons of Jacob** are not consumed.”*

Throughout the first two chapters, the priests continually asked “Why?” or “How?” or “Wherein?” at everything the LORD spoke to them regarding their disobedience and unfaithfulness in carrying out their priestly duties. They had also been unfaithful to their wives.

Malachi 3:7 begins the full context of the popular “proof” that one MUST tithe. Here the LORD speaks of how the Israelites had strayed from His statutes for so many years. He says, *“Return to Me, and I will return to you. . . But you say, 'How shall we return?' Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings.”* (Malachi 3:7b-8 NAS). He follows this by telling them that the whole nation of Israel is cursed for robbing Him, and that they must bring the whole tithe into the storehouse. The LORD challenges them to test Him and see if He will not open the windows of Heaven, bringing great blessings upon them and putting an end to the destruction of their crops. Again, we must keep in mind He was addressing the Israelites.

After chiding Israel for their arrogance toward Him, the LORD saw how a remnant of the people feared Him. Malachi tells how *“. . . a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. ‘They will be Mine,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him. So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.”* (Malachi 3:16b-18 NAS).

## Various “tithes”

Leviticus 27:30 is often quoted: “Thus **all the tithe of the land**, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, **is the LORD’S**; it is holy to the LORD.” Verses 26-29 and 31-34 are omitted because they support the fact that tithing was a command given to Israel: “**These are the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses for the sons of Israel at Mount Sinai.**” (NAS).

Likewise, Deuteronomy 14:22-27 would NEVER be quoted to promote tithing. The people were told to bring a tenth of all they produced in the field each year. “You **shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God**, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, **the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and your flock, so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.**” (Vs. 23 NAS). If the distance was too great to the place of the Lord’s choosing, they could sell their tithe. Upon arrival, they would spend the money “. . . for **oxen, or sheep, or wine, or strong drink, or whatever your heart desires; and there you shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household. Also you shall not neglect the Levite who is in your town, for he has no portion or inheritance among you.**” (Vs. 26b-27 NAS).

As seen within the above context, the tithe was to be eaten by the tither in the place that the LORD chose. The suggestion of wine or strong drink would horrify a lot of Christians, because the focus has traditionally been on money for the church. The same bible we claim to obey will undo our misguided beliefs if only we would read the words of God as opposed to accepting the word of man.

If the Church is determined to adhere to the law of the tithe, she must return to the whole Law, and abide by every part.

## Giving or tithing?

The words “tithe” and “give” are often used interchangeably. Some books and sermons say the passages in the New Testament on giving refer to “tithing.” After what Jesus went through to cancel the Law of Moses and free His people from adherence to carnal (fleshly) commandments, it is unthinkable that Gentiles should adopt any part of that Law to govern the finances of what has become an apostate church.

The New Testament teaching was on “giving,” never “tithing.” Still, somehow, 1 Corinthians 16:2 is used to promote tithing: “On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” (NKJV) The last phrase indicates a particular occasion in Paul’s day, as we will soon discover.

In the above verse, where was Paul coming from and where was he going with the money? He was not telling the Corinthians to take the money to church to pay the pastor and to cover a mortgage payment, utilities, janitorial services, computers,

photocopiers, paper, etc. The background and full context of Paul's letter tells the story. He was telling the Corinthians to do the same thing he had told the churches at Galatia to do – to lay aside something on the first day of the week. Paul was coming with offerings from the Macedonians, the Achaean, and the Galatians. His plan was to pick up the Corinthians' gifts, according as they had prospered, and carry on to Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup> There were many poor among the saints at Jerusalem, and Paul's mission was to provide aid to those who were in need.<sup>9</sup>

There is more on giving in 2 Corinthians 9. However, this chapter is also the source of even more verses taken out of context and used to support the doctrine of the tithe. This chapter continues the same context as that of the previous paragraphs, where Paul was admonishing the Corinthians to join with the Macedonians and the Achaean in giving to the poor saints at Jerusalem. He said, "*Therefore I thought it necessary to **exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation. But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity [distress]***"<sup>10</sup>; for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:5-7 NKJV).

What carnal man has made from these verses could be called "a basis for extortion through means of distress." They have nothing to do with "giving at church," but have everything to do with providing for the poor saints at Jerusalem in Paul's day. If there were principles to be learned from the above verses, they would be these: "sow sparingly, reap sparingly; sow bountifully, reap bountifully," and "God loves a cheerful giver."

Paul instructed the saints on how to share with one another out of their supply, so as to bring equality. He said, "As it is written, '**He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.**'" (2 Corinthians 8:15 NKJV) Amassing earthly wealth is of no eternal value, but having faith in God and generosity in the grace of giving will guarantee that our needs will always be met. If we would only let go of all that is in our hands, it is certain that our hands will never be empty.

Even Jesus' own words have been taken out of context to justify man-made doctrines. One partial verse often found in sermons and books is, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." (Luke 6:38a Rev. KJV). Here is the full sentence from which it was taken: "**Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.** For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." (Luke 6:37-38 Rev. KJV). The measure measured and returned applies to all of the above admonitions Jesus spoke – not only the giving. And every admonition, if followed, would fulfill the requirement in Jesus' one commandment – "love". The full context begins in Luke 6:27 and includes, among other things, "**love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you,**

*pray for those who mistreat you.*” And He ends verse 36 with, “*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*”<sup>11</sup>

### The big question

The question remaining would be “How does the preacher get paid?”

There are some who believe that Galatians 6:6, where Paul speaks of communicating with others, means “*paying the teacher.*” I believed this also until recently, when the Lord corrected me as I pondered this passage and the Greek word translations.

Following his exhortation in chapter 5 to walk by the Spirit, Paul said, “*Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear [receive]<sup>12</sup> ye one another’s burdens [authority]<sup>13</sup>, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.*” (Galatians 6:1-3). This speaks of correction and ministering one to another within the Body of Christ. We are all equal in Christ and must be open to receive the authority given to fellow believers. We see this concept of sharing in verse 6: “*But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto [share with]<sup>14</sup> him that teacheth in all good things.*”

According to Galatians 6:3, if we think we are something when we are nothing, we deceive ourselves. Paul’s next words tell how we must be open to one another, not sowing to our own flesh. “*Be not deceived [caused to roam from truth]<sup>15</sup>; God is not mocked [ridiculed]<sup>16</sup>: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*” God will not be ridiculed by man who sows to his own flesh rather than to the Spirit. “*For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.*” (Galatians 6:7-8).

Paul did give some instruction to the Corinthians regarding a minister and his support. “*Do you not know that those men who are employed in the services of the temple get their food from the temple? And that those who tend the altar share with the altar [in the offerings brought]? [On the same principle] the Lord directed that those who publish the good news (the Gospel) should live (get their maintenance) by the Gospel.*” (1 Corinthians 9:13-14 Amplified). Although Paul the Apostle supported himself by making tents, and never once received financial support, he taught that a minister of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ has a right to “*live by the Gospel.*” This “*living*” would come through the support of those to whom he ministers the Word of Truth.

A minister is not worthy to bear the name “*minister of the Gospel*” if he does not proclaim the good news of the Gospel – that JESUS DIED TO FREE MAN FROM THE FLESH. If he preaches any other “*gospel,*” he is a deceiver. Even though the deceiver will fully account for his deceit, would those who support such a one be any less accountable for their part in supporting him?

## The tragedy

Without question, tithing was established under the Law and has no place in the Church. It is no light matter to choose to adhere to the Law. And the consequences are most severe for those who would place others under the Law, even with a seemingly harmless matter such as tithing.

Materialism has invaded the Church, so to guarantee survival in a materialistic society, this would-be Body of Christ is willing to go against all Jesus accomplished in His death and resurrection. How can Jesus be the Head of a Body that is in such bondage to flesh?

The preceding pages have sufficiently revealed the Truth about tithing and giving in relationship to the Law and Christ's command to "love." It should now be clear that all the demands of the Law, including tithing, became history at the Cross. It should also be clear that the Law was never intended for the Gentiles in the first place. Paul the Apostle said, "***I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought.***" (Galatians 2:21) Paul also said, "Now that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, is evident: for, The righteous shall live by faith. And ***the law is not of faith: but, he that doeth them shall live in them.***" (Galatians 3:11-12). Let us not grieve the precious Holy Spirit by turning to trust in a law never intended for us.

James said, "If ye fulfil the **royal law** according to the scripture, ***Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well. . . For whosoever shall keep the whole law [Moses' law], and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all.***" (James 2:8, 10). This means that if a man is convinced he *must tithe* but does not, he is guilty of murder, adultery, and every other transgression under the Law. Is this the desire of the Church? I think not. But this is the choice she has made by choosing the knowledge of good and evil over the knowledge of God or, "*full acknowledgement of God.*"<sup>17</sup> Let us not be double minded – we must choose between flesh and Spirit, Law and Grace, unbelief and Faith, self and Love. Flesh, the Law, unbelief, and self are in total opposition to *Spirit, Grace, Faith, and Love.*

Again, every person who chooses adherence to any part of the Law of Moses is obligated to abide by the whole Law and will be judged according to that same Law. The verdict is guaranteed to be "***GUILTY!***" The punishment is ETERNAL SEPARATION FROM GOD. And to all who choose the path of Law and flesh, God the Father will say, "***YOU HAVE REJECTED MY SON.***"

A man or woman may desire to break free from the bondage of tithing, while continuing to give in obedience to the Lord's prompting. It may be to provide for someone in need or to support a minister of truth. We should forget percentages and follow the Lord's leading – He will never see "*the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread,*" as David said in Psalm 37:25.

Repentance is the only hope the Church has to be a part of the remnant. She must turn from self, flesh and unbelief, and rest in Jesus' fulfillment of the greatest law which is, of course, LOVE.

1. Deuteronomy 14:28-29 Amplified
2. Genesis 14; Hebrews 7:1,2,4
3. Romans 4:11
4. Romans 4:13
5. Genesis 32:28
6. Greek #115
7. Greek #165
8. 1 Corinthians 16:1-5
9. Romans 15:25-26
10. Greek #318
11. New American Standard
12. Greek #941
13. Greek #922
14. Greek #2841
15. Greek #4105
16. Greek #3456
17. Greek #1922

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### HERESY

In recent years, the number of cults has increased worldwide. These cults are easily recognized because of the overt nature of their beliefs. Their leaders are always mere mortals, many times quoting the bible and professing Christian beliefs, but Jesus Christ is never rightfully revered as Deity.

Unlike cults, heresy is far more likely to be clever and insidious. We may even see it simply as a doctrine with which we disagree. We must keep in mind that Satan always uses stealth when attempting to deceive. A daily walk of surrender to the Holy Spirit will enable us to have keen discernment and escape the dangerous pitfalls of the devil, that "*angel of light.*"

What is heresy? It is translated from the Greek word *hairesis*,<sup>1</sup> defined as "choice," "a party," or "disunion." It is also translated "sect," which means "denomination" as well as "faction."<sup>2</sup>

Also shedding light on the subject is the word "heretic," which is translated from a Greek word meaning "schismatic."<sup>3</sup> A "schismatic" is "a person who causes or participates in schism."<sup>4</sup> We must follow this with the definition of "schism":

1. - a split or division in an organized group or society, especially a church, as the result of difference of opinion, of doctrine, etc.
2. - the offense of causing or trying to cause a split or division in a church.<sup>5</sup>

Anyone who strays from the true Gospel of Jesus Christ is bringing schism to the Body of Christ. Paul referred to “*factions, divisions, and heresies*” as works of the flesh which will keep us out of the Kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> It is no light matter to see denominations as simply “*parts of the Body of Christ.*” Some members of the true Body of Christ may well be worshiping among denominationalists – but are these divisions truly pleasing to God? I believe we must seriously consider the bible and the meanings of these words that relate to heresy. Jesus is coming for a Bride without spot or wrinkle. Will He accept a Bride where there can be found schism? I believe we need to ask the Lord what His plan is for His Body.

### **Flesh spots**

The Apostle Peter told of “*destructive heresies*” which would be brought in by false teachers, who will blaspheme the way of truth, using “*feigned [fictitious] words*” <sup>7</sup> to “*make merchandise*” of the people. He said that “*their destruction slumbereth not.*” <sup>8</sup> In the remainder of the chapter, he explains that their end will compare to that of the angels that fell, the wicked of Noah’s day, Sodom and Gommorha, and others who were destroyed because of their disobedience to the voice of God.

Jude’s epistle has much the same message as 2 Peter 2. He speaks of the same false teachers and compares them in the same way Peter did. Jude says, “*Woe to them.*” He likens them to Cain, who offered of the works of his hands, and Balaam, who was willing to prophesy falsely to God’s people for monetary gain. Jude calls them “*spots in your love feasts, while they **feast with you without fear, serving only themselves.***” He sees them as being empty and dead, as “*wandering stars [erratic teachers] <sup>9</sup> for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.*” Jude’s forthrightness seems to express some anger, as he describes the ungodliness of the false teachers who were audaciously speaking against the Lord. They walked according to the flesh, with “*great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.*” Jude then refers to the other apostles who warned of the “*mockers [false teachers] <sup>10</sup> in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions [disjoin] <sup>11</sup>, not having the Spirit.*” <sup>12</sup> These false teachers are mere flesh, not having the Spirit, and are more interested in impressing other flesh. It is to their advantage to deceive with self-serving words which lead people astray. Do we think God will tolerate game-playing by those who erroneously see themselves as the Body of Christ?

Jude ended his letter with an admonition to the true believers: “*But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, **keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear [alarm] <sup>13</sup>, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.***” (Jude 20-23 NKJV). Those who are true to Jesus will show mercy toward those who are in doubt – some of those will be *pulled out of the fire* before it is too late. Even others whose garments are spotted by the flesh can be turned to Christ. We must heed Jude’s message and speak a word to any one whose garment is spotted by the flesh of religiosity, pointing him to Christ Who is the only Way to Eternal Life.

Jude's final words are self-explanatory. "**Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.**" (Jude 24-25 NKJV).

### The shaking

Before Jesus returns, God will shake both the heavens and the earth. Those things that are of His Kingdom will remain, for they cannot be shaken. The writer to the Hebrews warned them to heed the voice of God from Heaven, since they had refused to hear Moses' warnings. In Moses' time the voice of God shook the earth, and He has promised, "**Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only but also the heaven.**" The passage ends with the words, "**for our God is a consuming fire.**"<sup>14</sup> Many will perish, including those who believe they are a part of the true Church but have chosen the way of flesh. They have "*turned away from Him Who warned from Heaven.*"

In more recent centuries, God has sent His servants like Charles Finney, and others, to bring messages of the dire need for revival in the Church. As a result, at times, great revivals have swept many souls into the Kingdom. Yet the apostate church has flourished, and there is only a remnant who has remained true and is ready to meet the Bridegroom. The remnant is made up of people from all over the earth, with vast numbers of true believers being found where persecution still exists. The Spirit of God is moving throughout the earth, bringing into His kingdom all those who will respond to His call, yet there are many who will continue to break His heart by choosing the life of the flesh.

Jesus said "*many*" in that day will claim to have done works in His Name, but because they did not have His Spirit and a relationship with Him, they will hear the words, "*DEPART FROM ME, I NEVER KNEW YOU.*" Many of the things we Christians believe are pleasing to God mean nothing to Jesus – He is coming for a Bride who has responded to His wooing. Then that passion for Jesus will spill over into the lives of others. His true Bride is the one who loves Him with all of her heart, soul, mind, and strength.

We must not assume we will spend eternity with Jesus simply because we confess that we are "*Christians.*" "*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*" (Romans 8:9). There will be no heretics or schismatics among the remnant – only those in whom dwells the Spirit of Christ and who have survived the shaking.

1. Greek #139
2. Webster's New World Dictionary – Simon & Schuster Inc. 1986
3. Greek #141
4. Webster's New World Dictionary – Simon & Schuster Inc. 1986
5. Ibid.
6. Galatians 5:19-21
7. Greek #4112
8. 2 Peter 2:1-3
9. Greek #4107

10. Greek #1703
11. Greek #592
12. Jude 11-19 NKJV
13. Greek #5401
14. Hebrews 12:25-29

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### MYSTERY BABYLON

Many have speculated as to the identity of Mystery Babylon described in Revelation. The word “*Babylon*” comes from the Hebrew word “*babel*,” meaning “*confusion*.”<sup>1</sup> As in the days of Nimrod, when the tower of Babel was built, so it is in these last days. Even after the Great Flood, *self-exaltation* emerged once again with Noah’s great-grandson Nimrod. Genesis 10:10 tells us that the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, in the land of Shinar. The people had become as one, with one language, and together began to build a tower to “*reach unto heaven*.” God was not pleased with their attempt to reach Heaven by their own devices so He brought confusion and scattered the people over the whole earth.<sup>2</sup> We need to consider this: How will He deal with the opposition from apostate man in the last days?

In John’s visitations by angels, he was shown every aspect of the last days and the end that awaits all who have opposed God. The words of God are clear as to the role this great harlot will play: “[And] ***Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God***, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the ***fierceness of his wrath***...And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls, and spake with me, saying Come hither; I will shew thee the judgment of the great harlot [idolater]<sup>3</sup> that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication [idolatry]<sup>4</sup>, and they that dwell in the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication [idolatry].” (Revelation 16:19 & 17:1-2) In Revelation 17:15, the angel identified the “*many waters*” as “*peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues*.”

Keeping in mind that words like “*harlot*” and “*fornication*” indicate unfaithfulness to God, it becomes easier to understand the depth of evil in Mystery Babylon. This is not a rebuilt Babylon of ancient times, but a Mystery Babylon having a spiritual impact on the nations of the world. The *great harlot* has sold her adulterous gods of materialism and her anti-God “*gospel*” to the kings of the earth. Riches and all the things that please the senses have become the gods of the people of Mystery Babylon.

Written on the forehead of the great harlot were the words, “*MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH*.” (Revelation 17:5) This Mystery Babylon has given birth to the apostate church, with its idolaters and disgusting idolatries (abominations) that have spread around the world. John saw the great harlot “*drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the*

*martyrs of Jesus.*” (Verse 6) Being already drunk with the blood of saints and martyrs, she had enticed many into apostasy. But God, being God and knowing all things, has put in the hearts of the nations to join with the beast in his hatred for the harlot to destroy her in one day. <sup>5</sup> The beast wants no competition in his bid to rule the nations of the world.

John heard a voice from Heaven, calling the people to come out of the great harlot and to avoid being subjected to the plagues which will come upon her. **“God has remembered her iniquities,”** and the voice calls for the harlot to be repaid doubly according to her sinful deeds. John heard the words, **“To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, ‘I SIT as A QUEEN AND I AM NOT A WIDOW, and will never see mourning.’”** In one day, bringing pestilence, mourning and famine, the judgment of God will burn her with fire.<sup>6</sup>

As John was shown, the greatness of the materialistic harlot had become well known and had great power in the world. It is little wonder the beast hated this self-exalting city! Her destruction had a profound effect that rippled around the globe. The people *“were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What city is like the great city?’ And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth [magnificence], for in one hour she has been laid waste!’”* (Revelation 18:18-19 NAS). The great harlot had become puffed up and arrogant as she spread her prosperity “gospel” to many nations. But worst of all, she is the *“Mother of Harlots,”* causing many to worship another god. Before Jesus returns, the true God will leave no error hidden – all will be exposed. John was instructed to say, *“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.”* (Revelation 18:20 NAS)

After writing of the total destruction which will befall the great harlot, John wrote, *“[F]or your merchants [tradesmen] <sup>8</sup> were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived [caused to roam from truth] <sup>9</sup> by your sorcery [poison] <sup>10</sup>. And **in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.**”* (Revelation 18:23b-24 NAS). She was guilty of the blood of those who had given their lives for the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. *“After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ‘Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments, because **He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication [idolatry] <sup>11</sup>; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.**”* (Revelation 19:1-2 NKJV).

With the definitions of some Greek words added, the bible presents a chilling profile as to the identity of the *“great harlot”* who has caused so many to be unfaithful to Jesus. We must always go back to the beginning of time and the fall of man when attempting to understand the strong language used in the bible. Of even greater importance is the relationship that God desires with mankind. So THAT must be the standard by which

we gauge the vital messages of His written word. It has always been about the relationship of God and His “wife” Israel, and Jesus and His Bride, the TRUE Church.

1. Hebrew #894
2. Genesis 11:1-9
3. Greek #4204
4. Greek #4202
5. Revelation 17:17
6. Revelation 18:4-8 NAS
7. Greek #5094
8. Greek #1713
9. Greek #4105
10. Greek #5331 & #5332
11. Greek #4202

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### ANTICHRIST – A MAN?

We often hear the word “*antichrist*” from the lips of end-time preachers. There are many suggestions as to who this “*man*” is and where he will come from. Some have even named individuals whom they believe will be this great end-time deceiver. But does the bible really say that antichrist is a man? Or is it the anti-Christ spirit in opposition to the true Anointed One?

John referred to false teachers as “*antichrists*” in 1 John 2:18-22, saying that it was the last days and that many antichrists had arisen. These antichrist false teachers had once been among John and the others, but not having true faith in Christ had left. John told the faithful: “***And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things.***” True believers and all true teachers have the Holy Spirit. They know the Truth, and they speak only Truth. John wanted his “*little children*” to understand how the antichrist “*liars*” were denying [Greek: rejecting] <sup>1</sup> both the Father and Jesus the Messiah.

John again referred to antichrist in 2 John 7: “***For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.***” The antichrist “*teachers*” will never teach the real reason Jesus came. And the REAL Jesus has been obscured by so much error that millions will be unable to distinguish between the true and the false.

The afore-mentioned verses from 1 and 2 John are the only places where the word “*antichrist*” can be found, and it is not capitalized. The book of Revelation speaks of a “*beast*” as well as a “*false prophet*,” <sup>2</sup> and the book of Daniel uses the term “*abomination that desolates*.” <sup>3</sup> Paul the Apostle spoke of the “*son of perdition*.”

“Abomination of desolation” is a term Jesus used in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14. Matthew recorded Jesus’ words: “*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*” (Matthew 24:14-16 NKJV). Jesus is teaching His disciples that there is coming an impostor who will try to deceive God’s chosen people Israel. Daniel also spoke of this deceiver. And according to the Hebrew language, the “abomination of desolation” means the “*idolatry that stupefies.*”<sup>4</sup> This stupefying, idolatrous pseudo-Christ will attempt to deceive the Jews into seeing him as their “*messiah.*” Some Jews may be very susceptible to this deception, since they are still looking for their Messiah.

Jesus told His own people that they should flee to the mountains when the impostor appears in the “*holy [sacred] place*”<sup>5</sup> – they are not to be deceived by him. Jesus explains that there will be a time of “*great tribulation*” like never before. He tells them, “*And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect’s [select] <sup>6</sup> sake those days shall be shortened.*” (Matthew 24:22) Jesus warned of those claiming to have “*seen the Messiah,*” and He tells them what to look for and how they will recognize Him. “*For as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of man.*” (Matthew 24:27)

Using Hollywood-style theatrics, creatures of flesh have portrayed an “*antichrist*” as a man using man-made weapons in his bid to bring people under his control. There WILL be a beast and, without question, his greatest control will be through lying signs and wonders with power from Satan. His deeds will be so spectacular that all those without firm faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will be deceived. The deceptive, miraculous powers of this beast will appear as genuine, but they will be Satan’s counterfeit. Revelation 13:18 tells us to “*count the number of the beast, for it is the **number of a man.***”

The word “*beast*” could well have been used to describe creatures of flesh in two places in the New Testament. The first passage was where Peter was speaking of false prophets in the last days: “*But these, as **creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed, railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, shall in their destroying surely be destroyed.***” (2 Peter 2:12). In the second passage, and using similar strong words, Jude is speaking of the same false prophets who would come: “*But these rail at whatsoever **things they know not: and what they understand naturally, like the creatures without reason, in these things they are destroyed.***” (Jude 10).

False prophets are “*religious impostors*” according to the Greek dictionary. Any person preaching or teaching a gospel other than the true Gospel of Jesus Christ is a *religious impostor*.<sup>7</sup> He understands according to the flesh (naturally), and will be destroyed like any other “*creature without reason,*” for all that is flesh will perish.

Religious impostors will also include those who are yet flesh, and have allowed other anti-Christ spirits to operate through them. These anti-Christ spirits may be the

Jezebel spirit and religious and controlling spirits – a mere sampling of all that the devil has equipped to do his bidding.

### Son of perdition – the lawless one

Paul told the Thessalonians that they should not let any man deceive them, for Jesus will not return until after the falling away [Greek: *defection from truth, apostasy*]<sup>8</sup> and the man of sin is revealed. Paul tells how this “son of perdition” “*opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*” (2 Thessalonians 2:4 NKJV). There is a direct link between the earthly, apostate man and the man of sin – the son of perdition – who is full of that anti-Christ spirit.

The word “antichrist” means “*opponent of Messiah.*”<sup>9</sup> Because Messiah came to free man from the flesh, it should be obvious that antichrist would promote bondage to flesh. I believe this spirit of *antichrist* has set himself up in man’s spirit – the temple intended for the Spirit of God – and has caused men and women, young and old, to oppose Messiah through the efforts of flesh and *self* (some call it “*servicing God*”). How many are there today who have *antichrist’s* spirit but, because they are yet flesh, “*feel*” they have Christ’s Spirit?

The day of which Paul spoke is coming soon when the “*lawless one*” will be revealed for what he is. He will be powerless in the presence of Jesus, the One whose very breath will consume His opponent and destroy him with the brightness of His coming. 2 Thessalonians 2:9 tells us the beast is coming “*according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.*” The lawless one has received his power from Satan to manifest deceitful signs and wonders that will mislead those who did not love the truth. “*And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure [approved of]<sup>10</sup> in unrighteousness.*” (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 NKJV).

How many “*anointed*” signs in the apostate church are “*the working of Satan?*” How many Christians “*approve of the way of unrighteousness*” out of ignorance? Has God already sent the “*strong delusion,*” causing them to believe the lie so that they would be condemned? We are living in extremely dangerous times, when counterfeit anointing is rampant. Unless we daily deny self in complete and humble surrender to the Holy Spirit, we most surely will be deceived.

The danger we face is not some man, but a deceiving anti-Christ spirit that will stupefy us into submission to the “*beast*” of Revelation. This great leader of all flesh will continue in his worldwide campaign of deception, until Jesus comes with the flaming fire of His jealousy to destroy FLESH forever!

Will we take up our cross [Greek: *exposure to death, self-denial*]<sup>11</sup> and follow the true Christ? Jesus said, “*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his*

cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.” (Luke 9:23-24 NKJV).

1. Greek #720
2. Revelation 20:10
3. Daniel 11:31
4. Hebrews #8251, 8074
5. Greek #40
6. Greek #1588
7. Greek #5578
8. Greek #646
9. Greek #500
10. Greek #2106
11. Greek #4716

## PART SIX: THE END TIMES

### CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

#### THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Only God knows the timing of all things, so even though we cannot know the hour of His coming, He did say there would be signs pointing to the approaching time. There has always been tribulation, as can be seen throughout the New Testament, but the “*Tribulation*” of which Jesus spoke is seen by many as a specific seven-year period which takes place just before the Second Coming of Christ.

Jesus’ disciples asked for signs of His return. He told them His return would be preceded by a “*great tribulation*,” a period of time so terrible that no one would have experienced anything like it from the beginning of time, or ever again. <sup>1</sup>

While exiled on the Isle of Patmos, John saw in his visions the souls of the martyrs who were slain during this horrible time. He said that he was also the “*brother and partaker*” with them in the “*tribulation, kingdom and patience which are in Jesus*”; even at that particular time in history. <sup>2</sup> If John recognized the signs of the times of which Jesus spoke, how much more might we today!

The word “tribulation” comes from the Greek word “*thlipsis*,” which means “*pressure* (literally or figuratively)” and is translated into these English words: “*afflict(-ed, -tion), anguish, burdened, persecution, tribulation, trouble.*” <sup>3</sup> Jesus said, “***In the world ye have tribulation [pressure]: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.***” (John 16:33b). Then,

in Acts 14:22b, we find that “*through many tribulations [pressures] we must enter into the kingdom of God.*”

To use the correct meaning of “*tribulation*,” we must emphasize that people will experience great pressure. Those who refuse the mark of the beast will be unable to buy or sell. Many will suffer physical afflictions, but more than anything the pressure will be spiritual because Satan’s primary focus is on keeping man from the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The work of the antichrist spirit is so deceptive that man cannot begin to fathom its insidiousness.

Paul the Apostle spoke of the pressures and the reason for them: “. . . so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and **tribulations [pressures] that you endure**, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, **that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.**” (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5 NKJV).

To be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, we must endure tribulation and persecution – we cannot avoid its purifying effect. The final purification of the Church will be accomplished through the *Great Tribulation*. The apostate church will have a final opportunity to follow Jesus, but it will not be easy. As Jesus said to the Church at Philadelphia, it will be **an hour of trial**, “*which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*” (Revelation 3:10b).

Following this, Jesus said that He is coming quickly, and we are to hold fast that which we have so as not to be robbed of our crown. If we overcome, we will be made a “*pillar*” in God’s temple, never to go out again. Then Jesus said, “***I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which descends from My God out of heaven, and My own new name.***” (Revelation 3:12b Amplified).

All true believers will maintain a steadfast faith in Jesus, while some pseudo-believers, who are yet flesh, will turn against Him. In their fleshly minds they will believe they have been “*faithful*” to Him, but they will have missed the mark. The beast has deceived them, and it is too late. Oh, how easy it is for God’s people to be deceived, unless we hold to a love of the truth! <sup>4</sup> It is little wonder there will be only a remnant saved! Jesus also said, “*Howbeit when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*” (Luke 18:8b). During the great “*pressure*,” many will be robbed of their faith in Jesus through the deceitfulness of the antichrist spirit.

It is no secret that Paul the Apostle suffered much. After describing some of what he had endured for the sake of the Gospel, he said, “*For our light affliction [pressure], which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.*” (2 Corinthians 4:17). His faith never wavered, and he said that the “*things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*” (Verse 18).

## **Last days**

Throughout the New Testament many references can be found regarding the last days. Peter made one such reference, as he spoke of Jesus' coming as Savior and how He was "*manifest[ed] in these last times for you.*"<sup>5</sup> Peter speaks of the last times being as early as the Lord's first coming, which tells us that the past two thousand years have been the "*last days.*" Hebrews 1:2 also tells us, "[God] *hath in these last [Greek: final] days spoken unto us by his Son.*" (KJV). With this in mind, we might refer to the Great Tribulation as the "*last of the last days.*"

The bible teaches us that evil will become more prevalent in the end times. We can see just how evil in Paul's words to Timothy: "*But know this, that **in the last days** grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection [hard-hearted toward kindred]<sup>7</sup>, implacable, slanderers, without self control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof: from these also turn away.*" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Have we, the Church, reached a place where we simply overlook those things which Paul said would make for "*grievous times?*" Look at what he said about those mentioned above: "*For of these are they that creep into houses, and take captive silly women laden with sins, led away by divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*" (2 Timothy 3:6-7).

### **Why should we escape?**

Movies have been produced and books written describing all the dreadful things that will befall those *terrible sinners* after the *Church* is rescued from the terror of tribulation. Why does an apostate church believe she is so favored by God that she should not suffer, when true believers have suffered persecution since the Church was born?

The prophet Jeremiah spoke of this frightful time as "*Jacob's trouble*"<sup>8</sup>, and Daniel gave a detailed description of war against and the "*wearing out*" of saints.<sup>9</sup> Daniel also speaks of the destruction of the "*mighty and the holy people.*"<sup>10</sup> The book of Revelation adds confirmation by warning us that the beast will wage war on the saints.<sup>11</sup> This raises an important question: If all the saints are raptured before the tribulation, why are these saints mentioned as being on earth during the *Great Tribulation*?

In His mercy, God is calling His people to "*come out of her [Mystery Babylon].*" (Revelation 18:4). And during the final years of tribulation, God will separate the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares, and the true from the false. We need only look around us to see this is already beginning to happen. Jesus is preparing His Bride and calling forth the *Remnant* who has been faithful to Him.

What will happen at the very end of the Great Tribulation, when the deceived and deceivers, the goats, the tares, and all those who rejected Jesus see Him coming? John tells how he saw Jesus open the sixth seal, after which followed a great earthquake. The sun, he foretold, will turn black and the moon will be blood red. There will be a

mighty shaking of both the heavens and earth. It will be a time of great terror, as these next verses show. **“And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’”** (Revelation 6:15-17 NKJV). It is a day of wrath for all who have chosen to continue in the flesh – they cannot *stand* in the presence of the Son of God. Like Adam and Eve, they will try to hide their condition of flesh, but there will be no place to hide.

1. Matthew 24:21
2. Revelation 1:9
3. Greek #2347
4. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12
5. 1 Peter 1:20b
6. Greek #2078
7. Greek #794
8. Jeremiah 30:7
9. Daniel 7:21-25
10. Daniel 8:24
11. Revelation 13:7

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

### RAPTURE – WHEN AND WHY?

The end-time phenomenon called the “*pre-tribulation rapture*” of the Church has captured the thoughts of many. The concept has become a basis for multimillion-dollar enterprises producing books, Christian television shows, and movies. It is a theory that I had believed for most of my life. My friend Ann shared with me how she and her husband no longer believed a “*pre-trib*” rapture theory and offered me a book to read. I skimmed through the book, but because I was convinced I knew the truth, I went to the bible with the intent to prove to our friends that what I believed was correct. I researched the topic in depth, examining every aspect of the *Second Coming*. The more I learned the more convinced I became that I could no longer embrace my former belief. I was overwhelmed with a sense of grief – the hope to which I had clung for so many years was gone. But my grief was short lived as I realized that this is GOD’s words, and His ways are higher than man’s ways!

The truth I learned from the study of the Lord’s *Second Coming* is monumentally important. We cannot take lightly the timing of Christ’s return – it is closely linked to the entire message of this book. It is not enough to say that as long as we are ready it is irrelevant whether Jesus returns “*pre-trib*,” “*mid-trib*,” or “*post-trib*.” We must understand precisely what Jesus’ Coming will mean to the true believers, as well as to the pseudo-believers and the unbelievers. In this chapter, we will discover that Jesus returns at the end of the Great Tribulation, and the reason He does.

If we think the pre-tribulation rapture theory is merely a difference in beliefs among Christians, we are sadly mistaken. Do we not realize how vastly widespread the enemy's deception is? Satan's desire is to see everyone spend eternity without Christ, and those looking to escape the beast's clutches will be most vulnerable to his deception. The idea that they will not suffer any tribulation will have made them blind to the full implication of all that is transpiring. Sadly, millions have bought into the erroneous belief of a pre-tribulation rapture, and the majority will be further deceived with the increasing power of the beast.

Even in these deceptive days, many have responded to the Holy Spirit's call to open their eyes to the truth and become a part of the *remnant* prepared as a Bride to meet Jesus.

In the earlier part of 1 Corinthians 15, Paul expounded on the natural and the spiritual, death and resurrection, and the hope of the believer in Christ. In the fiftieth verse we are told "**that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption [decay] <sup>1</sup> inherit incorruption [undecaying, immortality]**"<sup>2</sup>. (NKJV). Then Paul speaks of "*a mystery*." He says that all will not die but will be changed in "*the twinkling of an eye*," when the last trumpet sounds.<sup>3</sup> The bodies of those who died in Christ will rise from their graves and receive a new, immortal body. Those still alive will receive immortal bodies to replace the mortal bodies of this life. Verse fifty-two is emphasized as "*proof*" that the Church will be raptured before the Tribulation begins. But Paul told the Thessalonians that those who are "*alive, and are left [Greek: survive]*"<sup>4</sup> will be caught up to meet Jesus as He returns at His Second Coming.<sup>5</sup>

Jesus told of what His Return would mean for the elect who have remained faithful to Him. At the end of the Great Tribulation, the sun will be obscured, the moon will not give any light, "*the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken [disturbed]*"<sup>6</sup>; **and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven.** The people of the earth will mourn when they see Jesus coming "*with power and great glory.*" At this point, as the "last trumpet" is heard, the Lord's angels will "**gather together his elect from the four winds [quarters of the earth],<sup>7</sup> from one end of heaven [the sky]<sup>8</sup> to the other.**"<sup>9</sup>

Here is a familiar passage used by end-time preachers: "*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice [cry of incitement]<sup>10</sup> of the archangel, and with the trump [trumpet]<sup>11</sup> of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then **we that are alive, that are left**, shall together with them be **caught up** in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Many who are of the pre-tribulation rapture persuasion say that "caught up" means "rapture." We must not be taken up with argument over whether or not the definition is correct, but we do need to understand the timing of the Advent.

The Greek word "*harpazo* [seize],"<sup>12</sup> translated "caught up," was used in several other verses throughout the New Testament. Here are some examples of where the Greek word "harpazo" was used:

- In this passage, the words in bold print tell the story.

“And when they came up out of the water, the **Spirit of the Lord [suddenly] caught away Philip**; and the eunuch saw him no more, and he went on his way rejoicing. **But Philip was found at Azotus**, and passing on he preached the good news (Gospel) to all the towns until he reached Caesarea.” (Acts 8:39-40 Amplified)

- “Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and **take him by force**, to make him king, he withdrew again into the mountain himself alone.” (John 6:15).

- “And on some have mercy, who are in doubt: and some save, **snatching them out of the fire**; and on some have mercy with fear; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” (Jude 22-23).

The word “*rapture*” could never be used in place of the above bold words.

This “pre-trib” rapture concept has become so popular that numerous Christians believe there are two stages to Christ’s Return. The bible does not support such thinking. The message is clear – Jesus’ Second Coming is a one-time event. This is evident in the meaning of the Greek word translated “coming,” which is used in **all** verses that speak of Christ’s return. James Strong tells us the Greek word is “*parousia*,”<sup>13</sup> and literally means “*the return of Christ to punish Jerusalem, or finally the wicked.*”

As Jesus said, His Coming will be seen by all: “**For as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of man.**” (Matthew 24:27). There will be no question that it is Jesus – His coming will be seen around the world as His brightness, like flaming fire, lights up the sky from one side of the heavens to the other. There are some who claim Jesus’ Coming will be seen on television, but God does not need man’s technology to accomplish His purposes. His Coming will be a spectacular display of power like no man could ever have dreamed possible.

Whether we call it “*rapture*” or not, the Scripture clearly shows that all who are in Christ WILL be caught up to meet Him. At His coming, a part of His *remnant* will be raised from the dead, while the remainder of the *remnant* will be made up of those who came through the Great Tribulation still alive. What a glorious day, to be changed in the twinkling of an eye and leave this mortal body behind! But what will befall those who chose a life of “*self*,” having been deceived by the great leader of all flesh?

1. Greek #5356
2. Greek #862
3. 1 Corinthians 15:52
4. Greek #4035
5. 1 Thessalonians 4:17
6. Greek #4531
7. Greek #417
8. Greek #3772
9. Matthew 24:29-31
10. Greek #2752
11. Greek #4536
12. Greek #726
13. Greek #3952

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### THE END OF ALL FLESH

God is a consuming fire, and Jesus is One with the Father. So, when He returns, *“the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make an end, yea, a terrible end, of all them that dwell in the land.”* (Zephaniah 1:18b) The day is fast approaching when all flesh will be consumed by the coming of Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God. No physical flesh can survive the full manifestation of Jesus. IT IS THE DAY WHEN FLESH WILL CEASE TO BE HIS OWN “god,” BECAUSE ALL THAT IS FLESH WILL BE OFFERED TO THE BIRDS OF THE AIR <sup>1</sup> IN A SACRIFICE MADE BY GOD. <sup>2</sup> For thousands of years man has been obsessed with flesh, and Israel continued to make sacrifices of flesh even though Jesus had put an end to the Law. In the end, God turns the tables and makes His own sacrifice of flesh to, of all things, the scavengers of the air. In the fire of His jealousy, Jesus exposes flesh as mere flesh. <sup>3</sup>

In Revelation, John told of seeing an angel who cried with a loud voice, *“saying to all the birds that fly in mid heaven, come and be gathered together unto the great supper of God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great.”* (Revelation 19:17b-18).

Jesus Himself prophesied of the same when He said, *“Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”* (Matthew 24:28). Vultures are related to eagles and hawks, <sup>4</sup> so the use of “eagles” would indicate the immediate appearance of vultures coming to feast on the creatures of flesh that were slain by Jesus’ presence.

Ezekiel also prophesied of the destruction of flesh with words similar to those in Revelation. The word of the Lord God will go out to the birds of prey and beasts of the field, calling them to the *“sacrificial feast”* He is preparing for them at which they *“may eat flesh and drink blood. You shall eat the flesh of the mighty and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, of goats, and of bullocks.”* He gives the reason in this next passage: *“And I will manifest My honor and glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see My judgment and justice [in the punishment] which I have executed and My hand which I have laid on them. So the house of Israel shall know, understand, and realize beyond all question that I am the Lord their God from that day forward.”* <sup>5</sup>

In His dealings with all that is flesh, God shows Israel the value of flesh. God intended for man to live as he had been created to live, but because man fell, flesh HAD to be destroyed. By destroying, once and for all, the thing that man had put between himself and his Creator, God makes a mockery of their sacrifices of flesh and their works of flesh through the Law. Jesus had come to destroy death brought on by flesh by taking

our bodies of sinful flesh in Himself, but man has been unwilling to surrender his flesh to the crucifying power of Jesus. And now, as Jesus returns to earth in His glorious, resurrected body, it will be too late for man; he will have made his choice, and he will perish.

Peter told of cataclysmic occurrences: “*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the which the heavens (which had been the demonic realm) shall pass away with a great noise [whizzing sound] <sup>6</sup>, and the elements [rudiments] <sup>7</sup> shall be dissolved [loosened] <sup>8</sup> with fervent heat, and the earth and **the works that are therein shall be burned up [consumed].**” <sup>9</sup> (2 Peter 3:10). The Greek word translated “elements” was used as “rudiments” in Galatians 4:9: “*But now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known of God, **how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again?**”**

The “elements” have been portrayed by some as being the physical elements of the earth’s structure. But as the context of the full passage and the meanings of the Greek words show, it is the anti-God “propositions” of carnal man that will be destroyed for all to see. He will not leave unregenerate man believing the apostate church was correct in her doctrines – His coming will expose the lies of Satan for all to see.

Peter’s message continues, with further confirmation: “**Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved [loosened], <sup>10</sup> what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire [refined] <sup>11</sup> shall be dissolved, and the elements [rudiments] shall melt with fervent heat? But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.**” (2 Peter 3:11-13). By this we see how the earth will be purged of all unrighteousness. The word “dissolved” was translated from the same Greek word used as “loose him” when Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead and said, “Loose him, and let him go.” <sup>12</sup>

Peter also pointed to Paul the Apostle’s words, saying, “*Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, **give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot, and blameless in his sight.** And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest [pervert] <sup>13</sup>, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*” (2 Peter 3:14-16). Paul poured out his life for the sake of the Gospel, warning repeatedly of the pitfalls of the flesh and the Law. Many who are “ignorant and unstedfast” have not come to an understanding of the Truth, but have perverted it “unto their own destruction.”

Peter ended his second epistle with the admonition to beware, lest being “**carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness.** But grow in the grace, and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen.” (2 Peter 3:17b-18a). In these last days, we must remain yielded to the working of God’s Grace and steadfast in our pursuit of relationship with Jesus. It is the only hope we have to escape the error that is so widespread in the Church.

There are dreadful consequences for those who at one time may have experienced the new birth, but have turned away. Having once had the Spirit of Christ come to dwell in them, they are without excuse – it is **“impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”** (Hebrews 6:6b). The writer of Hebrews also tells us of the “sorer” punishment due to those who have **“trodden under foot the Son of God”** and made the blood of the covenant to appear as **“an unholy thing,”** doing **“despite unto [insulting] <sup>14</sup> the Spirit of grace.” <sup>15</sup>** Any person who has known the Life of Christ and experienced God’s Grace but returns to trusting in the flesh is turning his back on Jesus. He is treading under foot the One Who died to free him from the very thing to which he has reverted – FLESH. He has insulted the Spirit of Grace Who was given to keep him faithful to Jesus.

Peter told of what will be the end for those who are deceived by the false teachers, and turn away from Christ. If we become entangled again in the **“pollutions of the world”** after coming to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we will be worse off than if we had never known Him. **“For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’”** (2 Peter 2:21-22 NKJV).

### **Death at its worst**

The Lake of Fire is referred to as **“the second death”** in Revelation 21:8: **“For the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.”**

There is no death worse than everlasting hellfire. But there are varying degrees of punishment in the Lake of Fire. The Greek word “Hades,” <sup>16</sup> translated as both “grave” (1 Corinthians 15:55) and “hell,” (Revelation 20:13, 14, et al) is easily misinterpreted. “Hades” is the place (state) of departed souls. This is where the rich man conversed with Abraham and asked him to send the beggar Lazarus with a drop of water to cool his tongue because he was tormented in the flame. (Luke 26:19-26) Hades, the abode of the dead, is where Jesus went at His death and where He **“preached”** to the **“spirits in prison.”** (1 Peter 3:19) There was a great gulf <sup>17</sup> separating the righteous from the unrighteous until Jesus ascended to the Father. Ever since His ascension, the spirits of those having died with faith in Him have ascended to where He is with the Father.

The second Greek word, translated “hell,” is derived from a Hebrew word <sup>18</sup>. It depicts the place or state of everlasting punishment. With the exception of James 3:6, all other uses of this “hell” can be found in Jesus’ words in the gospels.

The third use of the English word “hell” can be found once in 2 Peter 2:4. The meaning of this Greek word is **“deepest abyss of Hades”** or **“to incarcerate in eternal torment.”** <sup>19</sup> Peter said, **“For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to**

*hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment. . .*” Peter goes on, in the remainder of the passage, to tell how false teachers who turn souls away from the truth will receive the same punishment. This is also the place to which Jesus referred when He spoke of separating the sheep from the goats: “*Then He will say to those at His left hand, Begone from Me, you cursed, into the **eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels!***” (Matthew 25:41 Amplified).

The Greek word for “*angels*” literally means “*messengers*” as well as “(by implication) *pastors.*”<sup>20</sup> The deepest abyss of Hades was prepared especially for the devil and his “*messengers,*” which includes any and all who have not proclaimed the truth, but have spoken lies – calling it “*preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.*”

### **Scenario of the Lake of Fire**

Because of having been allowed the privilege of experiencing the Father’s heartbreak, and having learned all that has been presented in previous chapters, I believe what I am about to describe has been placed in my heart by God Himself. Remember, it is only a scenario. But, is it possible that eternity could be this way for those who have not surrendered to Jesus the One Who gives Life? The following is what I believe the Lord showed me:

“The fire in the Lake of Fire is an everlasting, unquenchable fire but not a consuming fire. It is a lake of fire AND brimstone. Brimstone is sulfur – it burns with a blue flame, and its stifling odor stings the nostrils.<sup>21</sup> Those who spend eternity in that horrible place will experience never-ending, excruciating pain unlike anything they ever suffered on earth. The stifling odor from the brimstone will cause those in hell to cry out for air, but they will never breathe fresh air again. There will be no unconsciousness to take away the sense of suffocation. There will be the stench of burning flesh that never dies and is never consumed. There will be no shutting out the screams of anguish, the shrieks of rage, and the grinding of teeth – the loud wailing of masses of people will go on for eternity. There will be aloneness such as they have never known, with no insanity in which to escape. There will be no fellowship, no shoulder to cry on, and no sympathetic ear. They lived for self while on earth, and now all they have is “*self*” – no one will care because each one will be taken up with his or her own torment.

“There is no such thing as annihilation in the Lake of Fire. The relief of death will never come, because death also has been cast into the Lake of Fire.<sup>22</sup> Just as there is no such thing as unconsciousness, there is no such thing as sleep in the Lake of Fire – tiredness will never end. Eyes will never close to give relief from the torturous sulfuric fumes. Thirst and the agonizing pain of dryness on the tongue and throat will be endless.

“Those things for which the tormented souls lived on earth will indicate the area of their torment in the Lake of Fire. Those who abused their bodies with tobacco, alcohol, or drugs will never have relief – the cravings will be eternal. If, on earth, any were

involved in some form of sexual perversion their torment will be some of the worst, because the body was intended to be the temple of the Holy Spirit and their sin was against the body. There will be never-ending memories of their partners, and they will be tormented constantly with unfulfilled desires.

“Memories of all the evil deeds committed while on earth will remain vivid forever. Never to be forgotten will be the memories of every wrong done against another. There will be memories of times when the Gospel was heard, but put off until “*later.*” They will remember every believer they knew on earth. There will be the memories of a godly mother or grandmother who spent countless hours praying for them, while they willfully rejected Jesus. Two words will ring incessantly in their minds: “*if only.*” And there will be no end to the “*ringing.*”

“Unrepentant murderers and those having shed the blood of the innocent unborn – or any person responsible for encouraging such – will pay an eternal price. Thoughts of the cries of babies will haunt them forever – there will be no escape.

“The false prophets (i.e. ministers who have not preached the truth) who caused souls to be lost will have the worst punishment of all. They will be horrified to find themselves cast into the Lake of Fire in the company of Satan, the beast, and the false prophet. The rage of these false ministers against God Whom they believed they served will cause blasphemous tirades to echo all over the Lake of Fire. Those whom they turned away from trusting Jesus will recognize the voices of these “*ministers,*” and their anger and anguish will be magnified at the sound of these religious impostors who lied to them.”

**All those who are suffering the torment of hell fire are there because they chose a life of flesh. And now their eternal reward is in the place “*where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.*” (Mark 9:48 NAS).**

1. Revelation 19:17-18
2. Ezekiel 39:17-22
3. 2 Peter 2:12
4. Webster's New World Dictionary – Simon & Schuster Inc. 1986
5. Ezekiel 39:17-22 Amplified
6. Greek #4500
7. Greek #4747
8. Greek #3089
9. Greek #2618
10. Greek #3089
11. Greek #4448
12. John 11:44
13. Greek #4761
14. Greek #1796
15. Hebrews 10:28-29
16. Greek #86
17. Luke 16:26
18. Greek #1067
19. Greek #5020
20. Greek #32
21. Webster's New World Dictionary – Simon & Schuster Inc. 1986
22. Revelation 20:14

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

### THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

Man was created a little lower than the angels, so before he fell, Lucifer (Satan) was greater than man. <sup>1</sup> Because Lucifer rebelled and wanted to be God, God cast him down to the earth, along with the angels who had rebelled with him. To have such a following as a third of the angels, this glorious creature would have had much power. He has used that same power throughout the ages to war against the God he could never supplant. He has devoted his time to making a mockery of all that is of God, becoming the accuser of every person who has ever made the choice to follow after the true and living God.

The greatest humiliation imaginable was brought upon Satan when Jesus came as a man to defeat him. What sweet revenge! What anger must have been stirred in the mind of man's greatest enemy! But nothing could keep Jesus from taking the keys of Hades and death out of Satan's hand. Nor could anything stop Jesus' Spirit from re-entering His body in the tomb, causing Him to burst forth as the "*firstborn from the dead.*" <sup>2</sup>

Satan has lost his bid to destroy the Son of God and to keep man out of His Kingdom. Just when Satan and his crowd thought they had destroyed God's Son by killing Him, Jesus plundered the principalities and powers and made them a public spectacle as He triumphed over them in His resurrection. <sup>3</sup> Because of Calvary, all attempts to abort Jesus' true Church are thwarted. The "princes" of this world had no idea of God's plan for His Church, "***for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.***" (1 Corinthians 2:8b NKJV).

The true Church is alive and well – the gates of Hades have been unable to withstand her and many souls have been snatched from Satan's clutches.

#### **The Remnant**

God has always had a remnant, and the final remnant – including Jehovah's spouse Israel – will soon be in His presence forever. "*The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the Mighty God. For though your people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea, a remnant of them will return.*" (Isaiah 10:21-22a NKJV). Paul the Apostle told the Romans, "*Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*" (Romans 11:5).

Even though the word "*remnant*" is used, millions of saints will worship Him forever. The same power God used to create man has recreated every believer in Christ Jesus. Both Father and Son will once again experience with man the intimacy for which He

created us. Those who love Jesus will experience with their Bridegroom a “honeymoon” like no other, in a timeless dimension – for time will be no more. The ecstasy of worshiping Him spirit to Spirit will be the culmination of His Bride’s deepest desire while on earth. She will partake of the Tree of Life forever, and will know Him even as she is known. But first of all, Jesus’ Coming begins with the battle to end all battles.

## **Armageddon**

“*The battle of Armageddon*” has become a topic of wide interest. Even Hollywood has been caught up in the idea, and used this Biblical term to create their concept of this end-time phenomenon. The word “*Armageddon*” is actually derived from the Hebrew word “*Megiddo*,” which means “*rendezvous*.”<sup>4</sup> The **real** battle at Armageddon is the final battle of God against all flesh – and He wins!

In Revelation, John tells of the unclean spirits of demons coming out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. These spirits perform signs, going throughout the earth “**to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. . . And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, *Armageddon*.**” The kings and people of the world are being brought to a place of “*rendezvous*” with the King of Kings, who with His presence destroys every one of them. They are coming to war against Him, but they lose! Then John tells how “**a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’ And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.**”<sup>5</sup>

The Bride of Christ, having received her incorruptible body in the twinkling of an eye, would have already been caught up to meet her approaching Bridegroom. Her mortal body cannot withstand the fullness of His presence. Jesus is coming as “**KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS!**” (Revelation 19:16b).

## **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS**

What a glorious day when we see Jesus, “*being the effulgence [Greek: off-flash]*<sup>6</sup> *of his glory, and the very image of his [God’s] substance!*” (Hebrews 1:3a). The bible tells us, “*We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*” (1 John 3:2b KJV). And as Paul the Apostle said, “*As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*” (1 Corinthians 15:49). It is only when we are changed into His image, leaving this fleshly body behind, that we will truly behold Him as He is! No longer will flesh and the knowledge of good and evil attempt to rule us. Jesus, King of Kings will reign for ever!

The Lord described those who will see the King of Kings: “*For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.’*” (Isaiah 57:15 NKJV). The humble and contrite ones will be those who make up the remnant.

Every person born anew is enrolled in Heaven, and will worship with the angels throughout eternity. “*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.*” (Hebrews 12:22-23 NAS). Can you imagine? “*The spirits of the righteous made perfect!*” There will be no male or female, no color, no nationality, no denomination – only one people born of the Spirit, Jews and Gentiles alike.

### **Israel’s restoration**

Not all Jews rejected Jesus, as we see in this passage where Peter was preaching. He told of how David said, “*The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.*” (Acts 2:34b-36 NKJV). They were “pricked in their hearts” and asked what they must do, so Peter told them they must “repent and be baptized.” At this point, three thousand souls came to Jesus.

Following Ezekiel’s description of the end of all flesh, he gives a brief summary of Israel’s plight and her final restoration. He tells that the Gentiles shall know how God hid His face from unfaithful Israel and sent them into captivity for their iniquity, giving them into their enemies’ hands to be dealt with. “*According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them.*” (Ezekiel 39:24 NKJV). Then the Lord says, “*Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name.*” (Ezekiel 39:25b NKJV). As He promised, God WILL have a remnant of His people Israel. In bringing them out of their enemies’ lands, and when He is hallowed in them in the sight of all the nations, He tells us “*then they shall know that I am the LORD their God.*” Israel will have finally been brought to the point where they WILL acknowledge God as the LORD God. “*And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,’ says the Lord GOD.*”<sup>7</sup>

The LORD had made a similar promise to them in Hosea: “*I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion, and I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD.*” (Hosea 2:19-20 NAS). How could they escape the betrothal of their loving Husband? “*For thus says the Lord: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and shout for the head of the nations [on account of the chosen people, Israel]. Proclaim, praise, and say, The Lord has saved His people, the remnant of Israel!*” (Jeremiah 31:7 Amplified).

### **The Lamb’s wife**

All the hosts of Heaven are rejoicing at the prospect of the arrival of the Bride of Christ. Angels have worshipped the Almighty since the beginning of time, but their worship can be surpassed only by the worship of the Bridegroom’s wife. The day for which He has longed will have finally arrived. There is such excitement in Heaven as a

call goes out for praise to be given to God, resulting in what sounded like “many waters” and “mighty thunderings.” And then: “**Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.**” (Revelation 19:6b-7 NKJV).

Among the visions given to John in the Revelation of Jesus Christ was a vision of the Bride, the “New Jerusalem.” He describes her as the “holy city,” “**coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**” (Revelation 21:2b NKJV). One of the seven angels with the last plagues spoke to John, saying, “**Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.**’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and **showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. . .**” (Revelation 21:9b-11 NKJV). The Lamb’s wife has been born from above and comes down “out of heaven from God.” The next several verses describe the beauty of this vast city made up of every one who remained true to Jesus.

It is ironic that the adornment of Lucifer, as described in Ezekiel 28:13, is very similar to that of the Bride of Christ – Holy Jerusalem. Lucifer’s beauty had gone to his head, causing him to exalt himself. And the one he desired for himself is now the Lamb’s wife – beautiful, radiant, and in the presence of her Husband.

It is hard to fathom the beauty of this Holy City. No longer is she in her fleshly body, but is one with both Father and Son in an immortal body. Jesus’ prayer of longing in John 17 has been fulfilled.

There is no temple in the Holy City, “. . .**for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.** The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. **The Lamb is its light.**” (Revelation 21:22b-23 NKJV).

### **Eye has not seen – Ear has not heard**

“But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’” (1 Corinthians 2:9 NKJV).

As He comforted His disciples, Jesus said, “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.” (John 14:2-3 NAS). This promise is for all who have gone the way of the Cross and become a part of the *remnant* – the TRUE Bride of Christ.

Anyone on this earth who has ever known the richness of God’s presence has only an inkling of what eternity with Jesus will be like. I believe the wonderful, exhilarating sense of euphoria experienced here is what we will know – on a much larger scale – for ever. Some have written books of their experiences at the point of death, as have others who have gone and come back from the Other Side. Having had a glimpse of Heaven, their desire was not for this life.

One day very soon, we will meet the spiritual giants who spread the true Gospel. These humble servants will lay their crowns at Jesus' feet, as will all saints – both great and small! All glory will be given to Him forever.

There will be children laughing, playing around the throne and worshiping Jesus as only a child can. Whole families will be reunited, bodies will be whole – no missing limbs, no blind eyes, and no deaf ears.

We are told that there will be no tears and no pain. *“And he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more: the first things are passed away.”* (Revelation 21:4).

Heaven will be filled with the most beautiful colors – profusely more than in all creation. There will be no drab gray or black and no darkness – only light. The Light will be the brightness of the Son of God. Jesus will be all we need!

The prayers of saints on earth must be like music to the Father's ears. Several years ago, my husband and I attended a prayer meeting while visiting friends in the Southern U.S. Several hundred people were all praying quietly and reverently, and I heard what seemed to be a giant pipe organ in the sky. The beautiful sound was unforgettable, as though a gentle breeze was blowing through the pipes making heavenly music. How blessed I am to have been given a small taste of Heaven!

The bible tells us there will be music in abundance throughout Eternity, and the swelling of millions of melodious voices in praise and worship will fill the whole universe. Wonderful music which causes our hearts to swell in praise to God cannot begin to compare to the sounds of worship in Heaven. The music of Heaven will far surpass any that has so blessed us, such as *“The Hallelujah Chorus,” “How Great Thou Art,”* and *“We Shall Behold Him”* – to name only a few.

Eternity with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will include not only the music of which we will never tire, but there will be conversations with saints of all the ages: from Abel to Enoch, Noah to Abraham, David to Paul, and every godly man and woman who has walked this earth. We will have endless eons to explore the joys that await us. I personally look forward to meeting Paul the Apostle and seeing his eyes – no longer defective, but perfect!

Best of all, WE WILL SEE JESUS the One Who cried on the Cross *“It is finished!”* Now once again we hear Him say, *“It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.”* (Revelation 21:6b-7 NKJV).

**THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY, “COME.”**

## MARANATHA!

1. Hebrews 2:7-9
2. Colossians 1:18
3. Colossians 2:15
4. Greek #717
5. Revelation 16:13-18 NKJV
6. Greek #541
7. Ezekiel 39:26-29 NKJV

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**The final word: “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” (James 5:19-20 NKJV).**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My wonderful, supportive husband Jerry and I have three incredible daughters and six precious grandchildren. We were married in 1963, and for the most part I have been a stay-at-home Mom. I have always felt it was important to be there, especially when our girls were in their teen years.

This book is a result of many years of seeking to know the Lord in a more intimate way. As the Word promises, when we draw near to Him, He truly does draw near to us. There is more about my journey in the book, as well as the things He has taught me. Even though it has never been a desire of mine to write a book, I HAVE felt compelled to put in writing those things which the Holy Spirit placed on my heart.

During my lifetime, the Lord has led me from place to place, and from church to church, wherever my husband's work has taken us. We have attended various denominational and non-denominational fellowships, and visited many others over the years. Those things of which I have written are not meant to single out any one particular church, or denomination, but the Church in general which spans all borders. There were times "between churches" when the Lord seemed to call me aside to be with Him. He used those times to instill in me ways in which He wanted me to know Him, rather than hearing only what others had to say "about Him." It was during those precious times with Him that I experienced the greatest spiritual growth. Then, when we would attend some church somewhere, it was with much sadness that I recognized the apathy of so many toward Him. Through those experiences He began to open my eyes to see and understand His heartbreak over those who name His Name but do not know Him.

The enemy of man's soul does not want the message in *CALLING FORTH THE REMNANT* to be heard. The precious pastor of the last church we attended encouraged me to begin writing. I had told him that a lot of people would probably not agree with what I had to say, and he advised me to not let that stop me. One day I wrote him an e-mail, telling him I was about to become Satan's worst nightmare and that he would stop at nothing to keep my book from being written. Not long after that I became ill when I began to write, but not so much that I was unable to work at the computer. The enemy tried to kill me when my blood had become infested with what I call "parasites from hell." But God prevailed with miracle after miracle and brought me back from the point of death.

Here is my testimony:

In early May 2003, I had my blood analyzed. The analysis revealed that my blood cells had been invaded and were being destroyed by "something," which was obviously the cause for the increasing weakness I was experiencing. There was also abdominal pain because of a narrowing in my colon that had become infected, causing inflammation.

On June 14th, after a second blood analysis, I finally gave in and went to a Doctor (not my favorite thing). I was sent to the hospital for blood tests, and they kept me there for blood transfusions and high dosages of both antibiotics and a steroid. I had avoided both these types of drugs for years after a bad experience during a previous illness. On the way to the hospital I prayed. I told God I didn't want to go to a hospital again, that I was putting myself in His hands and that I needed Him to go before me and protect me, giving wisdom to those who would be caring for me.

Before being admitted, the surgeon on call came to see me. He was such a kind, gentle man. Jerry and I looked at his name tag, looked at each other and smiled. The surgeon's name was "Noah Carpenter." It was Noah who built the ark of safety for his family, and Jesus is known as a "carpenter's son." For me, that was confirmation that God had heard my prayer, and that He was going before me. Dr. Carpenter was the one who did the colonoscopy, did two biopsies and, when the results were in, was delighted to tell us there was no cancer found in my colon. He was the surgeon who inserted the central I.V. line and said, "Bless you" before he turned to leave - more confirmation.

With the failure of the drugs to open up the passage in my colon, another surgeon was called in. He performed surgery on July 14<sup>th</sup> to remove a large portion of my colon. Within days it became evident that something was wrong, and on July 21<sup>st</sup> I had emergency surgery in the same place to try to clean out all the poison which had spilled into my abdominal cavity when the colon broke open. They had a difficult time getting rid of all that poisonous matter. Then there was an increase of those dreaded antibiotics and steroids when they were trying to rid my body of the sepsis that had set in.

Several days after the second surgery, I passed out while the nurse was attempting to get me up. I soon came to when my head and face hit the electrical plugs and the wall.

That poor nurse got quite a scare! And after all the alarms and running feet, four people managed to get me off the floor and back into bed. There were no broken bones - just a goose egg on my head, a scrape on my cheekbone and a cut where my tooth met my lip. That was the last clear recollection I have of my stay in the private room where the nurses could "keep an eye on me." The next ten days barely exist in my memory - just blurry, confusing, pictures in my mind that I struggle to make sense of. What I now know is based on secondhand reports from my family, doctors, and nursing staff.

In each of the wards where I had roommates, there was always one believer. When they would leave to go home, each one made a point of saying she would be praying for me. Some of them even hugged me. Only God can turn a stranger into a friend so quickly. Each time this happened it confirmed to me that God was going ahead of me, ordering every step of my stay in a place I really did not want to be. I will never forget those sweet ladies, but most of all I am thankful to God for the reminders that He was there. And it was not the end of the reminders - there was even more to come.

My condition worsened until the night of July 31 when they moved me to the Intensive Care Unit - I had gone into Septic shock. My lungs had filled up, so I was put on a ventilator. During that weekend of August 2 and 3 my kidneys failed, which meant constant dialysis. My body was bloated due to the kidney failure as well as the heavy use of Prednisone. I was being kept alive by machines. There were plenty of other monitors attached, and they had also paralyzed me with drugs to keep me immobilized so that I would not fight against uncomfortable things such as the ventilator down my throat. My blood pressure was too high, my heart rate was spiking dangerously, and things did not look good. The doctor told Jerry, and our daughters, that most people do not survive the things afflicting me. They said, "People don't get any sicker than that."

One of my daughters, trying to lighten the mood in the room, said, "*Hey Mom, why does your heart rate go so high when Dad comes near you?*" It was good for them to laugh a little. I wish I could have laughed with them to help them cope with what they were dealing with, but I was not conscious of anything much that went on around me. My pastor told me that, during one of his visits to me in ICU, my eyes opened when he touched my arm and he coached me to "fight, Stella, fight!" before he prayed for me. I have no recollection of that either.

After about six days in ICU, I began to improve. How could I not? Hundreds of people were praying for me, including the folks at the church we were attending at the time, as well as my sisters' churches in the cities where they lived, and many other people from so many places. I am not sure of the date, but the ventilator was removed and I was able to breathe on my own with the help of oxygen which they were able to gradually decrease. The heart and blood pressure monitors stayed with me until I left ICU. When I was more conscious of my surroundings and the people working in ICU, I opened my eyes one day to see a handsome young man standing by my bed. He said, "I have been praying for you." That really touched me! Here was a young man whom I believe God placed there to pray for me while he worked as an aide. He was yet another

reminder that God was with me and that He had never left me, even when I was oblivious to all that was going on around me.

Rather than my dying, which was what the medical people expected, my family was able to see me improve in a miraculous way. I could hear the excitement in the voices of the doctors and nurses as they discussed my progress. They were referring to me as the "amazing lady," and the "miracle lady."

After leaving ICU it was necessary to endure only three dialysis sessions. My kidneys miraculously improved to such a degree that the kidney specialist was completely in awe at how well I was doing. He had been on vacation, and when he saw me he said, "After reading your chart, you are not what I expected to see." Other doctors also had to admit that it was a miracle. One by one all of the tubes were removed, and my existence returned to a somewhat more normal one. Even though I was a mere skeleton, things could only improve from then on - which they have done, and still continue to do.

To go back to my other problem, a disease specialist had discovered the reason for the destruction of my blood cells - it was a Candida fungus. To make matters worse, the Candida fungi thrive on antibiotics and steroids. A potent anti-fungal drug was brought in, which had to fight against the effects of the other drugs and eventually the fungus in my blood was subdued. While the fungus was attacking my red blood cells, it somehow got into my eyes and severely damaged the retina in both eyes. An eye specialist was brought in to ICU to examine my eyes, but it was not until a follow-up visit to his office that he told me a most amazing thing. He said that he was "ecstatic" that my vision was so good and that when he saw me in ICU he did not expect me to have much vision at all. So when I am tempted to complain over my limited vision, I remember yet another miracle that took place in ICU and I thank God that He gave me what vision I do have.

They did an ultra-sound on my heart to see if either the Candida or the Sepsis had damaged my heart. There was no damage - my heart was perfect - another miracle! The tissue damage from the sepsis was limited to various patches of flesh, especially on my thighs and ankles. After three long months in the hospital, I finally went home on September 16 - a mere skeleton, with little flesh left and no muscle tone whatsoever.

Three months later, my eldest daughter took me to visit the various departments in the hospital where I had received care. Many had shown interest in knowing how I was doing, and had requested that I return to see them when I was well enough. The most amazing reaction came from those in ICU who had cared for me while I was there. Their faces showed pure amazement when they looked at me - a walking, living miracle! I wonder what they said to each other after we left that day.

With the ventilator's damage to my throat, I am unable to sing now. Satan tried to steal my song: he may have silenced the music from my voice, but God hears the song in my heart. With the damage the fungus did to my eyes, Satan tried to keep me from

reading my Bible, and writing the things the Lord teaches me, but God preserved enough sight for me to continue in the work He has given me to do.

### **Greater is He who is in me, than he that is in the world!**

Several years ago the Lord began preparing me for the year 2003. I have been playing trumpet for over 50 years now. I love to worship the Lord with my music. Several years ago it became necessary to purchase a new trumpet, which I did. It was a good brass instrument and I enjoyed playing it. One time, as I was preparing to play a solo on a Sunday morning, God spoke to me and said that He wanted me to worship Him with the finest instrument. I wondered what He meant - had I bought the wrong trumpet? Should I have bought the more expensive silver one I had seen? I began having trouble with the valves sticking, which can cause wrong notes, or "fuzzy" notes. At that point, the Lord spoke to me and told me that just as a flawed instrument cannot make a pure sound, so it is with a flawed vessel (me) through whom the Spirit cannot minister in purity. From then on my prayer, before playing, was a prayer of surrender of all that was of my flesh so that I could truly worship God in Spirit and Truth. Little did I know the purification that was yet to come.

As to the flawed trumpet, back to the dealer I went with the faulty valves. They were surprised - those valves were made of a special material for smooth action. They replaced the valves, saying that if it happened again they would replace the whole trumpet, thinking that it would never happen. Well, it did happen again much to their surprise. And as they promised, they were about to give me a new instrument but found that the same one was not in stock. Then God performed a miracle! They "decided" to give me a silver one instead, at no extra cost to me!

This whole trumpet story is not about me, or my trumpet, or my music, but the lesson God had for me. It was also in preparation for what was ahead. I learned from a friend that a silversmith takes silver and holds it in the refining fire to purify it. When asked how the silversmith knows when it is purified, he replied, "When I can see my reflection in it." I learned that a brass instrument has a plastic-like, lacquer finish. The word "plastic" comes from the Greek word "plastos," which means "fictitious." That means that the first trumpet had a man-made finish, while the silver for the new one had been refined in the fire to produce a pure instrument. The silver trumpet makes a much clearer sound, and has such a rich tone.

The allegory in the trumpet story is this: before I could pass on a message exposing flesh for what it is, and the damage it has done to the Body of Christ, I the messenger had to go through the refining fire of the year 2003. All during my conscious days and weeks in the hospital I knew God was doing a work in me. I was confident He would bring me through in spite of all that happened. And I now know that without the refining fire to strip away all that is of the flesh in my life, God would not be able to see enough of His reflection in me. I must submit daily to His working in my life so that more of Jesus can be seen in me. He must increase and I must decrease. No longer dare I continue to minister in music or by writing, having a shiny, deceiving, "plastic man-

made coating" on the outside, without surrendering fully to the refining fire of the Holy Spirit on the inside.

Throughout the preparation of the book, the enemy's attacks have continued, but Jesus overcame all things, and in Him we overcome! We can be sure that when we begin to expose Satan, he will send everything in his arsenal against us - this I know from experience! What the enemy intends for my destruction, Jesus the Overcomer turns around for His good. All praise belongs to Him!