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The Gospel In the New Testament

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

The Gospel in the New Testament.

INTRODUCTION: The Gospel is like a beautiful and brilliantly highly polished diamond that has many sides and in the right light reflects a multitude of glorious colours. I have no-doubt that those who read to the end of this document will uncover all the glorious colours of the Gospel that brilliantly shines throughout almost every chapter of the New Testament (especially when they arrive at the heavenly treasures in Ephesians and Hebrews). The primary focus of this document is on the brighter colours of the Gospel and not every verse that speaks of the Gospel. There is no-doubt this document is a marathon read, but I am certain whoever reads it will not only be spiritually rewarded, but when they reach the end will have a very clear understanding of the following three things:

1. What the heart of the New Testament is.
2. What the heart of Jesus and the apostles teaching is.
3. What the heart of the Gospel that leads to reconciliation with God, eternal life and everlasting glory is (and so much more).

The word Gospel: from Strong's Concordance means a good message, to announce good news, to evangelize, to preach good news (especially the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ).

The priorities of the New Testament: the focus of almost every chapter in the New Testament is upon some aspect of Jesus' life or some aspect of human behaviour (Christian or non-Christian) each chapter reveals more light on one of the following aspects of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Jesus' birth, his history, his growth and his relationship to God his heavenly Father.
- The life of Jesus, his works, his miracles, his teaching and his ministry.
- The nature of those without Christ and natural human behaviour.
- The nature of those with Christ and godly behaviour.
- The Jews rejection of Christ.
- The death and resurrection of Christ and his return in glory.

The apostles teaching is focused on proving: -

- Jesus is the light of the world and the way to eternal salvation.
- Forgiveness of sins and eternal life is through faith in Jesus.
- The church is the body of Christ and how Christians should behave.

Keys: to understanding Jesus and the apostle's messages: Jesus and the apostles brilliantly use the Old Testament to prove to the unbelieving Jews that Jesus was the fulfilment of it and the apostle Paul skilfully uses Old Testament history and prophecy to prove Jesus is the Christ the Old Testament speaks of (Acts 13:13-52).

When Jesus conversation includes Gentiles, Jesus mostly uses parables and stories the Gentiles could relate to rather than Old Testament history or prophecies, but when Jesus or the apostles are talking to the unbelieving Jews they use the Old Testament to prove that Jesus is the Messiah and the Christ; the better High Priest and the better covenant; the fulfilment of Old Testament Scripture and that he is the one the prophets said was to come like Moses.

MATHEW 3

- **Matthew 3:2:** “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

The Gospel proclaims: The Kingdom of God is here and repentance is the entry into it. In this context the Kingdom in focus is the present spiritual Kingdom that is established in the human mind and heart by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and not the literal Kingdom of God to be established on earth when Christ returns in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords.

MATHEW 14

- **Matthew 14:33** And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

The words of Jesus in Matthew chapter sixteen shine a spotlight on this truth: Jesus asked Peter, “Who does he believe Jesus is?” and Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” and Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven and I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The rock the Christian church is built on is the eternal truth that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God (Matthew 16:15-18).

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus is the Christ the Son of living and true God. These verses must make one wonder how so much of traditional Christianity believes Jesus is God and how they harmonise this mistaken theory with these verses (and the many others) that so clearly teach Jesus is the Son of God and not only speak of Jesus praying to his heavenly Father, but also tell us that at this present time Jesus is seated at the right-hand side of his heavenly Father in heaven and that for anyone to be saved to eternal life they must believe Jesus is the Son of God.

Words of comfort and encouragement: since the teaching that Jesus is God has such a strong hold on much of traditional Christianity the following will encourage and comfort faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who maybe in some doubt and unsure of what to believe concerning the Father and the Son. The Bible very clearly shows that even if Jesus was God no one has to know this to be saved to eternal life since there is not one verse in the entire Bible that states, “We must believe that Jesus is God to be saved” nor is there one verse from Genesis to Revelations that says, “Whoever believes that Jesus is God the Son will be saved.” In total contrast to this silence there are literally multitudes of Scriptures throughout the pages of the New Testament that very clearly proclaim, “We must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved,” and that say, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Son of God will be saved.”

Surely if it was important to believe that Jesus was actually God to be saved to eternal life Jesus, the apostles and Paul would have told us at least once in all their teaching concerning salvation, but all we hear from Paul, the apostles and Jesus himself is them saying that we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved to eternal life. Jesus himself said, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). For further information see the title:

Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity).

In, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

MATHEW 16

- **Matthew 16:21:** From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus was brutally and cruelly killed for our salvation and raised by the power of God on the third day. When Jesus told his disciples he must be killed and on the third day be raised they did not fully understand what he meant since no one had ever seen a human body raised from the grave to eternal glory it was only after he appeared to them after his death and resurrection that they fully understood. It should also be mentioned that the expression the third day does not mean that Jesus was in the tomb for three entire days, the three days in the tomb were three-part days not three full days. For further information concerning the three days see, the title: "The Sign of Jonah," in (Matthew 16:1-4) In NT Commentary (ON WEBSITE MENU).

MATHEW 17

- **Matthew 17:22-23:** As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men,²³ and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day."

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus would be raised on the third day, Jesus said, "Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matt. 12:40) referring to (Jonah 1:17). Within Christianity there is confusion over the three days and three nights, so the following scenario is a brief overview of that period of time. Three days and three nights is a proper Jewish Bible idiom for saying, "the third day" it does not need to mean three full days. In this context it simply means, Christ will rise on the third day. The following lists the scenario of events leading up to this third day. Jesus was in the tomb late Friday afternoon (14th), but before sunset, because the Jewish High Sabbath began on Saturday (15th) at sunset. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the other women (Salome) went to the tomb with Joseph late Friday afternoon but before sunset on Friday (14th) (Passover Day), so the woman saw where the body of Jesus was laid in the tomb (Luke 24:10) (Mark 16:6).

Then Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, the mother of James and the other women (Salome) went home to prepare spices for the body of Jesus. Then sometime early Sunday morning the woman went back to the tomb to put the spices they had prepared on Jesus body. Mary Magdalene was first to get to the tomb. Jesus was in the tomb after sunset Friday (Passover Day) (14th) all day Saturday (the Jewish High Sabbath) (15th) until sometime Sunday morning (the first day of the week) (16th) giving the three days (i.e. part of Friday all day Saturday part of Sunday morning) which fulfils the Jewish idiom three days and three nights, meaning on the third day Christ will rise.

Ponder for a moment: these verses shine a spotlight on the truth that all the while Jesus was showing compassion to all who came to him he was not only fully aware that he was going to be killed, but since he knew the Scriptures fully would have also aware that his death would be brutal and cruel (Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22). For further detail see the title: "Three Days and Three Nights" in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

MATHEW 20

- **Matthew 20:17-19:** And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them,¹⁸ "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death¹⁹ and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."

The Gospel proclaims: the death and resurrection of Christ, how amazing is this and how horrific! Jesus knew that before being resurrected and glorified he is going to be mocked, flogged and cruelly crucified as a common criminal. Sometimes when life is not going smoothly for a Christian or they are facing a crisis situation there is a danger of thinking God does not love them, this idea comes from distorted teaching that presents God as a kind of Santa Claus who has a bag of good gifts to constantly give out, but this is not real life or the way the Bible presents God. If a Christian is ever in doubt about God's love for them, they should take a moment and ponder what it cost God the heavenly Father to redeem them and the price Christ paid at Calvary to save them.

MATHEW 23

- **Matthew 23:39:** For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

The Gospel proclaims: that the Lord Jesus Christ will return in glory.

A brief overview of Christ return: Jesus will return in glory as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to establish God's Kingdom on earth during his millennial reign. In the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) the dead in Christ and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth. Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce. All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God.

The book of Revelation states, "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7). And in Revelation chapter five we are told that, "Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10). At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory. For further information see titles: "Kingdom of God" (ON WEBSITE MENU) and "The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment," in Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

MATHEW 24

- **Matthew 24:14:** And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

The Gospel proclaims: will be proclaimed to all nations (Jews and Gentiles) before the end comes. The words, "As a testimony" means the Gospel will testify in favour of those who accept it and testify against those who reject its message.

The Gospel proclaims: those who know the Lord Jesus Christ need have no fear of missing his return since it will be the most breathtaking and awesome event this world has ever witnessed. The return of Christ will be so spectacular (as lightning lights up the night sky) that no brother or sister in Christ will need someone to tell them that it is the Lord returning. Christ knows those who are his and will send out his angels to gather them from every nation and language under the sun while those who do not know Christ will be taken by sudden surprise when the Lord returns in glory. Here is the glory and wisdom of God, though the Bible is written in a manner that every generation has been able to live with the hope that Christ may return in their lifetime, no one can be certain since only God the Father knows the appointed time for this age to end and the new age to begin. Nevertheless, we are told that being children of light and of the day we should not be taken by surprise, but eagerly watching and by faith ready for the angels' trumpet call.

Two men will be Taken and One Left.

- **Matthew 24:40-44:** Jesus said, "Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left.⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

Taken and left: taken in this context means to receive and take with, to associate with oneself in any familiar or intimate act or relationship, while left carries the idea of separation and departure, the complete cessation or reversal of something.

The Gospel proclaims: that people will be working and continuing on in the mundane things of everyday life when Christ returns, but those that belong to the Lord will be taken, meaning gathered up to be with him while others who were with them will be left. No-one knows when a burglar is going to enter their house and steal their goods if they did they would stay awake and not leave their home unguarded, thus in regards to the Lord Jesus Christ he words, "Stay awake" carries the idea of remaining faithful and enduring in faith to the end of our mortal life or until the Lord returns (should we be blessed enough to still be alive). The principal is to always be prepared for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel proclaims: those who have "Stayed awake" (remained in faith) will be gathered together to eternal life and everlasting glory. They will be changed from mortality to immortality and dwell in the Fathers Kingdom with the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTE: The New Testament does not give specific detail of the Fathers Kingdom or where those in Christ will be taken except to say, "They will be taken to eternal life and everlasting glory." The New Testament puts the focus and importance on being caught up to be with Christ rather than on the final destination or place that they will be caught up to. The focus of the New Testament writers is not so much were those who belong to Christ family are taken, but that they are taken to be with Christ.

MATHEW 25

- **Matthew 25:31-36:** When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the

kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

At the end of this chapter Jesus says:

- **Matthew 25:45-46:** Then he will say to those on his left, "Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me. ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment (and eternal fire) (v41) but the righteous into eternal life"

The Gospel proclaims: that those who treat others with respect, kindness, compassion and help the poor and the less fortunate when they are able will be welcomed into the Lords Kingdom. While those who are driven by self, ego, pride, lust and greed and oppress others and use them for their own selfish gain will be rejected and cast into eternal fire. Eternal fire is a symbol of eternal death (i.e., total and utter extinction). Fire is the perfect symbol for eternal death because the flames of a fire continue to burn until they have totally consumed and utterly destroyed everything in their path. It is called eternal punishment because this judgment to death is eternal, thus it is an eternal punishment. Since this topic is far too big to discuss in this study further information can be seen in the title: "The Lake of Fire" in, Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

MATHEW 26

- **Matthew 26:2:** "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."
- **Matthew 26:28:** for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.
- **Matthew 26:29:** I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."
- **Matthew 26:63:** But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

The Gospel proclaims:

- Jesus is the Son of God and Saviour of the world and was delivered up by the powerful religious leaders of his generation to be crucified by the Romans.
- Jesus willing laid down his life so that whoever comes to him in faith and trusts in God's grace can receive forgiveness of sins.
- Jesus shed blood on the cross of Calvary not only sealed the new covenant of grace, but was also the beginning of the new covenant and the end of the Old covenant of law.
- Jesus death and resurrection sealed the New Testament Covenant and abolished the need for the Old Testament Temple and the Levitical priesthood.
- The present spiritual Kingdom of God that is established by 'faith' in the hearts of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is also called the Fathers eternal Kingdom.
- Jesus will return in glory to his Kingdom and all those who belong to his family will eat, drink and fellowship with him in his heavenly Fathers eternal Kingdom.
- Jesus is the Christ prophesied to come and the most glorified exalted Son of his heavenly Father the living eternal God.

- **Matthew 28:6-7:** He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead.

The Gospel proclaims that Jesus would be killed and raised from the dead.

- **Matthew 28:19-20:** Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Jesus tells his eleven apostles to go and make disciples in every nation. Making disciples begins by teaching the love God has toward those who are perishing. When a sinner sees their SIN before God’s Holiness and the love and grace God has toward them it brings those with a right heart attitude to repentance and sorrow and opens their eyes to the need to accept Christ as their eternal Saviour and to being baptized to enter into Christ’s Kingdom.

After baptism the primary focus in making them a disciple is not so much about doctrine (since they are saved to eternal life), but behaviour. Once a person is connected to Christ and trusting in him for their eternal salvation the dominant focus switches from doctrine to behaviour. To be good disciple of Christ and a wise and faithful servant is primarily about right behaviour (i.e. how to be a good testimony to God’s name, and how to fulfil the Ten Commandments). Jesus sums up the Ten Commandments regarding mankind in the words, “Love your neighbour as yourself,” James calls it the royal law. This law simply means, do not deliberately do any harm to another human physically, financially, verbally, sexually, emotionally or spiritually, but it even goes beyond this as Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount calls us to do-good to those who do not even like us.

NOTE: though Jesus words, “Go into all nations and make disciples” can by extension be, applied to all who belong to Christ, it must always be remembered that Jesus was talking to the eleven apostles when he spoke these words. The reason this is important is because some faithful brothers and sisters who sit in certain congregations can be robbed of the joy of their faith because they are told that they are not fulfilling the Great Commission and therefore they come under guilt, but not everyone who followed Christ became an apostle of the Lord. Unless one is specifically called to a particular ministry, Jesus only expects us to apply the principle of evangelism to those we meet in our everyday lives. For most being an evangelist will simply be manifested in their testimony, their lifestyle and their kindness and acceptance toward those they come in contact with as they cope with the stress and mundane things of everyday life.

Summery Matthews Gospel: proclaims Jesus died and rose again on the third day and that God through love and grace invites sinners to eternal life in everlasting glory through repentance and God’s forgiveness through faith and through water baptism into His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Mathew teaches that those who belong to the family of the Lord Jesus Christ should live their life in a manner that honours God and shows respect to others.

The Gospel embraces the present spiritual Kingdom of God established by faith in the heart and mind of everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and the future literal Kingdom of God to be established when Christ returns and those sleeping in Christ and the faithful who are alive are gathered together and changed from mortality to immortality to be with the Lord and set over his possessions in the Fathers Kingdom. Matthew does not give specific details of the Fathers Kingdom or where those in Christ will be taken, but instead puts the focus on being caught up with Christ rather than the final destination or place that they will be caught

up to. It appears that Matthew is not so much concerned with were Christ's brothers and sisters will be taken, but that they are taken to be forever with the Lord Jesus Christ. This would make perfect sense since if a person deeply loves another their greatest concern is not where they will be with that person, but that they will be with them. Added to this it is a no-brainer that wherever Christ will take those who have faithfully followed him will by far surpass in beauty and majestic glory anything they can comprehend with their finite and mortal minds.

MARK AND LUKE

Since the Gospel in the books of Mark and Luke are the same as taught in Matthew we will skip to the book of John. But before we do move on it is interesting to notice that Matthew refers to the Kingdom as the Kingdom of heaven while Mark and Luke in the same Scriptures refer to it as the Kingdom of God. These are not two different Kingdoms; God only has one Kingdom and that kingdom is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly, the future literal Kingdom to come will look far different to the present spiritual Kingdom being established in the hearts and minds of those who have faith in Christ, but it is still the same Kingdom with the same King. Often the Jews for fear of using the name of God in vain would use the word heaven as a title for God as Matthew does in his writings when calling God's Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven.

JOHN 1

- **John 1:1-8:** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The word in this context is from the Greek word logos, which always refers to the written word and never to a person. In these verses it is personified in the same way as wisdom is personified as a woman with many children, but this does not mean that wisdom is actually a woman. Unlike the English language it is very common for the Greek language to personify an object especially if it relates to human personality. Thus, in these verses the logos of God is personified as a person. John is not teaching that Jesus the Son of God actually dwelt with God from the beginning as some eternal conscious spirit being who at the right time left heaven to become a foetus in the womb of Mary as many have been taught.

Rather the word or God's Logos refers to God's eternal plans, purposes and promises concerning mankind and salvation this is the logos of God that is personified as being with God in the beginning. Everything was made by God through His eternal word (i.e., His eternal plans and purposes).

The Gospel proclaims: that John the Baptist came to testify about the Lord Jesus Christ who is the true light of the world. It proclaims that all who believe in Christ become the children of God. Jesus while ministering in this corrupted and sinful world perfectly manifested in his life God's eternal word and it is in this sense that the word became flesh. God's word is no longer just the written word printed on scrolls, but has now been made alive in the body of the Lord since he perfectly manifested its power, its goodness, and its teachings and became the way to eternal life himself, he is the Messiah, the King, the Christ, the Son of God, the Son of man and the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

For further information concerning the word made flesh, see the following two titles:

1. Trinity (the Doctrine of the Trinity)" in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).
2. John chapter One in, NT Commentary (ON WEBSITE MENU).

JOHN 2

- **John 2:7-11:** Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. ⁹ When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." ¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.
- **John 2:23:** Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.
- **John 2:19-22:** Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

The Gospel proclaims: a far better covenant than that of the Old covenant (i.e., the new wine tasted better than the water did). It proclaims Jesus was approved of and sent by God, he would be killed, but after three days God would raise him up and that his miracles were not only to testify to this, but also to manifest his glory.

JOHN 3:3-36

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- **John 3:3-21:** Jesus answered Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." ⁹ Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."
- **John 3:34-36:** For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. ³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Unless a person is born again of water (referring to water baptism) and born of the Spirit (referring to salvation) they cannot enter the Kingdom of God. It proclaims that whatever is born of the flesh remains flesh (referring to a natural birth), but that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (referring to a spiritual birth).
- God so loved the world he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life and that God did not send his Son into the world to be cruelly and brutally crucified so that He could condemn the world, but in order that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ would have eternal life.
- Those who believe in Christ are not saved by their own righteousness, but by Christ's righteousness whoever believes in the Lord is free from condemnation, but whoever rejects Christ is already condemned by the law since salvation only comes through the name of Jesus.
- Jesus is the light of the world (meaning the righteous standard) and that sinful people love darkness rather than the light (referring to the good and godly lifestyle Jesus calls us to) because their deeds are sinful and they hate the light for fear it will expose their sinful deeds.
- Whoever belongs to the Lord should live to honour God so that it brings a good testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith and therefore by their good deeds they would draw people to God rather than turn them away from Him.
- God the Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand, Christ has the Spirit of God in its fullness and only speaks the words of God and whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on them. The wrath of God in this context refers to death which without Christ everyone is under.

JOHN 4

- **John 4:10:** Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."
- **John 4:13-14:** Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
- **John 4:23-24:** But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

The Gospel proclaims: that Jesus is the gift of God and gives living water referring to God's love, forgiveness and grace which will not only satisfy the human heart forever, but also become a spring of water welling up to eternal life. The words, "True worshipers will worship the father in spirit and truth," mean those who worship the Father worship Him from a truthful, honest and sincere heart full of love and gratefulness as opposed to those who worship God from a heart full of pride and ego and hypocrisy and pretense. In contrast to the prideful and hypocritical chief priest, the Pharisees and scribes who were in the ministry for their own selfish reasons and ambition God the Father is seeking people who will worship him from an honest and genuine heart full of gratitude and love.

JOHN 5

- **John 5:18:** This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

- **John 5:19-22:** So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. ²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. ²² The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,
- **John 5:24:** Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.
- **John 5:27-29:** God has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.
- **John 5:39:** You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,

The words “Jesus was making himself equal with God” do not mean that Jesus is God as some believe, in fact it’s not even Jesus saying, “He was making himself equal to God,” but the Jews who were seeking to kill him because Jesus was saying that he was the Son of God, clearly sowing that he was not the Almighty God of all creation and the source of all life, but rather that he is His most beloved Son.

The Gospel proclaims:

- The Father loves Jesus the Son and shows him all that He himself has planned and purposed from before the world began so that Jesus while on earth only spoke and did the work of his Father. God has not only given the power to raise the dead to eternal life to Jesus and gives Jesus total freedom to give this eternal life to those who by faith come to him, but has also given him all judgment.
- Whoever hears Jesus word, does them and believes God who sent him has eternal life and will not come into judgment, but has passed from eternal death to life eternal. There will be a resurrection of those who have done-good to eternal life and those who have done evil to judgment everyone who has done-good and died in Christ will hear the voice of Jesus and be raised to eternal life. Jesus manifested the perfect Spirit of a minister in that he did not seek his own will, but the will of God the Father who sent him (John 5:30).

JOHN 6

- **John 6:14:** When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”
- **John 6:26-29:** Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷ Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” ²⁸ Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” ²⁹ Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”
- **John 6:37:** All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.
- **John 6:40:** For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”
- **John 6:47-48:** Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life.
- **John 6:54:** Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

- **John 6:56:** Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.
- **John 6:68-69:** Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,⁶⁹ and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

The Gospel proclaims:

- That Jesus is the prophet the Old Testament prophets prophesied was to come into the world and that labouring for eternal life is about believing on the Lord Jesus Christ who God has sent. Labouring for eternal life means making Christ the passion and King of our hearts, minds thoughts and actions so that we live a life that brings honour to God, a good testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the Christian faith it means suffering persecution, mockery and enduring in faith until the Lord Jesus Christ returns.
- That only Jesus the Holy one of God has the words of eternal life and proclaims that whoever comes to Jesus he will never cast out and everyone who looks on the Son, believes in him and makes him the king of their mind, heart and actions abides in Christ and the Lord will raise them up on the last day to eternal life.

JOHN 7

- **John 7:37-39:** On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

The Gospel invites: whoever is spiritually hungry and feels that their heart is empty or the mind is full of condemnation and guilt to come by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ and he will give them life, meaning Christ will fill their hearts with love, contentment, purpose and eternal life. The words, “This he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive” refers to God’s forgiveness, grace, mercy and love a sinner receives when they humble themselves and repent before God and accept Christ as their Saviour, Lord and King. The Spirit is also called the Holy Spirit, because it is the Spirit of God. At the time of these Scriptures the Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out because Christ had not yet laid down his life and been raised from the dead to God’s right-hand side. Christ’s shed blood on the cross of Calvary sealed the eternal New Testament covenant of grace and love and at the same time annulled the Old Testament covenant of law which brings spiritual death since not one of us attain to its perfect standard.

12

JOHN 8

- **John 8:24:** I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he (the Christ and Saviour of the world) you will die in your sins.”
- **John 8:29:** And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.”
- **John 8:34-36:** Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ will not die in their sin. This should be enormously encouraging to every brother and sister in Christ because the corrupted body we live in that we inherited from our

earthly father Adam is full of sinful aberrations and dysfunction yet despite this Jesus says whoever believe in him will not die in their sin. This is because we are saved by faith, God's grace and Christ's righteousness not our own righteousness.

- God sent Jesus and that God's Spirit is always with him and Jesus always does the things that please his heavenly Father. It declares that everyone that sins is the slave to sin which refers to all mankind since there has only ever been one man who has ever lived a sinless life and he is the Son of God the Lord Jesus Christ.
- If anyone of us could attain to a sinless life Christ died for no reason. This is why Jesus says, "Whoever the Son sets free will be free indeed," because those who belong to the family of Christ are saved by grace and not because they are able to attain to a sin free life if anyone was able to attain to this glorious state Christ died for no purpose.
- To have God's presence always dwelling within follow the way of Christ and endeavour to do those things that are pleasing to God and live in God's grace when you fail.

JOHN 10

- **John 10:7-8:** So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.
- **John 10:9-11:** I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.
- **John 10:14-18:** I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."
- **John 10:25:** Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works (miracles) that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me,
- **John 10:27-30:** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus cares for those who accept him, he knows those who belong to him and those who belong to him know him. He is the good Shepherd who laid his life down for those who come to him and the door to the eternal Kingdom of God; whoever accepts him will not only be saved to eternal life, but also have life abundant now in this world. This does not mean that they will be abundantly blessed with the riches, wealth and luxuries of this world or even that their life will be free of trouble and hardship, but rather that they will be spiritually filled with the Spirit of God's love and grace. The other sheep in the following verse, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold" refers to the Gentiles. Jesus came first to the lost sheep of Israel the Jews, but also ministered to the Gentiles. The other sheep not of this fold refers to all those who do not descend from Abraham, are not Hebrews or Jews. The Jews considered themselves as the holy race with God and the Gentiles as an unclean race without God.

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus came into this world so that whoever believes in him will not only be saved to eternal life, but also be abundantly filled in their heart and mind with spiritual life now in this world. Some Christian brothers and sisters when facing troubles and

hardships feel that God has withdrawn His love, but this is judging God's love by circumstance of life, (i.e., when life is good, God loves us, but when life is bad, He doesn't). This is superstition and certainly not what the Gospel proclaims. If this was a true theory it would mean God had absolutely no love for Job, Paul and even His own Son since they suffered enormously, but clearly this is a grossly false idea since all Scriptures teach that they were greatly loved by God. If any brother or sister doubts God's love all they have to do is look at what it cost the Father to save us and the brutal, bloody and cruel death Jesus suffered to redeem us and consider the words of Jesus, "I am the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep." Certain Christians feel they must know every detail of the Lord's return to recognize Christ when he returns, but no-one who loves the Lord has to have a clear understanding since Jesus says, "He knows those who are his and they know his voice."

Every devoted brother and sister in Christ will clearly recognize Jesus their faithful Shepherd and King when he returns as they would recognize a deeply loved family member who they have not seen for a long while.

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus was fully confident God his heavenly Father would raise him up from the dead, everyone who belongs to Jesus Kingdom should have this same assurance. The words, "The works that I do in my father's name bear witness about me" show that though Jesus was moved by compassion to heal those he saw suffering the primary purpose of his miraculous signs and wonders were to prove that he was the one the prophets prophesied was to come into the world, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world.

The Gospel proclaims: no-one can rob a Christian from their faith the apostle Paul's wrote, "I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:38-39). The only way any brother or sister of the Lord can be separated from Christ is by that brother or sister making a conscious decision to blatantly reject Christ and turn against him as an enemy or use the glorious Gospel for their own selfish gain and oppress God's people for their own advantage (i.e. use them as merchandise to achieve their own religious empire). The words, "I and the Father are one" (v30) do not mean Jesus is God as many have been taught, but that Jesus and God are one in perfect unity, love, plans, purposes goals, promises and that they are of one mind (i.e., the same mind). For further information concerning Jesus being God see the notes following Matthew 16:16 (above).

JOHN 11

- **John 11:25-26:** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"
- The Gospel proclaims Jesus is the resurrection and the life meaning that salvation to eternal life is not in intellectual knowledge, but in having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and being in a devoted spiritual relationship with him. Jesus words, "Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" clearly do not mean they will never mortally die the Lord is referring to eternal death which is the fate of those who are cast into the Lake of Fire.
- For further information on eternal death see the title:
- "The Lake of Fire" in, Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

JOHN 12

- **John 12:48-50:** The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. ⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”
- The Gospel proclaims to be saved to eternal life a person must obey God’s commandment which in this context refers to believing in God’s Son the Lord Jesus Christ since no-one can be saved to eternal life without faith in Christ. The judge in the following verse, “The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge” refers to the law it is the law that judges. Whoever rejects Christ is under the law and since every man and woman on planet earth sin the law legally judges us all guilty and without mercy condemns us to eternal death. The only thing that sets us free from this judgment is God’s grace which God predestined before the world began would be granted to whoever from their-own free will chose by faith to trust in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. It is God’s grace in Christ that sets every brother and sister in Christ free from the harsh condemnation of the law.

JOHN 14

- **John 14:1-11:** “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” ⁸ Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

15

The words, “Let not your hearts be troubled” mean do not doubt or stress over whether we are saved or not saved because whoever believes in God and in Christ can be confident they have eternal life because salvation and righteousness is not dependent on us attaining to the perfect standard of the law, but on our faith and God’s grace. Added to this the words, “In my father’s house are many rooms” means there is a place in God’s eternal Kingdom for the noble and the lowly, the rich and the poor, the educated and the simple, it means no matter what station a person hold in life Christ is preparing a place in his eternal Kingdom for them.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Jesus will return to take all those who believe in him to himself so that wherever he is they will be with him. This should be enormously comforting to every brother and sister in Christ, since it shows that it is not the destination that Jesus considers important, but the love relationship of being with him in eternity. Some teach we will go to heaven others that we will dwell with Christ on earth both of these teachings contain a truth and both can be harmonised to complement each other, but the important thing to the Lord and New Testament writers is not the destination, but that we will be with Christ throughout all eternity in whatever shape or form eternity may look like.
- Jesus is the way the truth and the life and that no-one can come to the Father except through faith in Christ. It proclaims that “Whoever has seen Jesus has seen the Father” this is because Jesus perfectly manifested God’s character, love, compassion, mercy, grace, forgiveness and power. This is why Jesus is spoken of in Scripture as being the perfect image of God he is a perfect mirror reflection of God’s mind, God’s love and God’s character.

The words, "I am in the father and the father is in me" means that God the Father is in Christ by love and Christ is in God by love they are of one mind, one heart and in perfect unity concerning God's plans purposes and promises and Jesus words, "If you have doubts believe on me because of the works I do" Show that the primary purpose of Jesus signs and wonders were to prove that he was the Messiah, the King, the prophet, the Christ and the Saviour the Old Testament prophets prophesied was to come into the world.

- **John 14:23-26:** Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. ²⁵ "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

NOTICE: the key word in these verses is love.

- The Gospel proclaims if anyone loves Jesus, they will keep his word and Jesus and the Father will love them and make their home with them. Here we discover that the Gospel is not about rule keeping, but responding from love this is how the Christian faith works.
- Though the faithful who belong to the family of Christ are saved by grace and set free from the condemnation to the law they do not deliberately abuse the law. They like any couple in love desire to please from their heart the one they love. True Christians are driven, controlled and obsessed by the same spirit as a man and woman in love are which is not a spirit of rule keeping, but of love that fills their heart and their mind and naturally flows out in joy and a deep desire to honour the one they love. Likewise, Christians who know the love of God endeavour to bring a good testimony to Christ (howbeit not perfectly) who laid down his life to a brutal, bloody and cruel death not for himself, but so that they may be reconciled to God in a relationship of love and grace and saved to eternal life.

16

The Holy Spirit in the context of these verses refers to the Spirit of truth, Jesus said:

- I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you (John 14:16-17) and in the following chapter Jesus told his disciples, "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me (John 15:26).

Today we have the Spirit of truth recorded in the Bible. The Bible can be rightly referred to as the Spirit word of God concerning His Son the Lord Jesus Christ since it has within its pages all the inspired words that the prophets, Jesus and the apostles spoke. No-one today needs new revelation since everything we need to know concerning salvation and Christ is recorded in the Canon of the Bible.

NOTE: Jesus and the apostles focus when referring to the Old Testament Scriptures was rarely upon teaching it, rather they used it to prove to the unbelieving Jews that Jesus was the fulfilment of it therefore the truth that Jesus and the apostles talk of, primarily relates to the New Testament Gospel which has wrapped within it the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and the path to eternal salvation.

JOHN 20

- **John 20:30-31:** Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life (eternal) in his name.

- The Gospel proclaims eternal life comes by believing that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that the signs and wonders Jesus did are recorded so that people would believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and in believing they would have eternal life.

NOTE: some Christians faith is shaken when they discover that there are many other scrolls that were written during the time of Christ and the apostles concerning Christ and his ministry on earth that have not been entered into the Bible, but not everything Jesus did that was recorded needs to be entered into the Bible since there is more than enough in the New Testament for anyone to find the way to God, the way to eternal life and the life they should endeavour to live to honour God and bring a good testimony to Christ and the Christian Faith.

Believe in or believe that: the following highlights how the understanding of believe has changed over the years in some circles of Christianity. In the last four hundred years the word, believe has undergone a radical change of meaning, so that in modern meaning in some circles of Christianity it is very different from its pre-modern meanings.

This is because for many modern Christians believing means:

- Believing a set of claims and a set of statements.
- Believing that God exists.
- Believing that the Bible is the word of God.
- Believing that Jesus is the Son of God born of the Virgin Mary.
- Believing that he died for our sins and that he rose from the dead.
- Believing that he is the only way to salvation.
- Believing that he will come again and so on and so forth.

This is what many modern Christians think believing means today. Many are taught that providing they believe and affirming a fixed set of beliefs (i.e., doctrines) to be true they are saved (these doctrines will vary depending on what church a person is in). But, prior to about the year 1600s the word, believe had a very different meaning in Christianity as well as popular usage. It did not mean believing statements to be true, but rather the object of belief was always a person, not a statement. This is the difference between believing that and believing in. To believe in a person is quite different to believing a series of statements about that person. In pre-modern English believing meant believing in and thus a relationship of trust, loyalty, and love (i.e. to most, to believe meant to believe). Until about four centuries ago, believing in God and Jesus did not mean I believe that the following statements about God and Jesus are true rather to believe in God and Jesus had the following two primary meanings:

1. To trust in God and Jesus in contrast to trusting in statements about God and Jesus for this would be believing that (true biblical faith is to trust in God as known in Jesus).
2. To commit one's allegiance, loyalty and love to God and Jesus.

This believing faith, fidelity, loyalty, allegiance and commitment to God as known in Jesus in contrast to believing statements about God and Jesus are very different, the first leads to an emphasis on believing right statements, the second leads to a transformed life.

NOTE: this does not mean that it is wrong to believe in statements about God, Jesus and the Bible, but believing in statements will not save a person rather the statements are to lead a person to Christ who is the

only one who can save anyone to eternal life, it is trusting in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ that saves a person not trusting in statements about him.

ACTS 1

- **Acts 1:3:** He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus appeared to the apostles in his eternal, immortal resurrected body after his death and resurrection and spoke to them the things concerning the Kingdom of God.

There is amongst Christianity some who believe the Kingdom of God refers to the present spiritual Kingdom being established in the hearts of those who by faith believe in the Lord Jesus Christ while others believe it refers to the literal future Kingdom of God to come. To divide and argue over which Kingdom Paul had in mind is foolishness since both apply and both can be beautifully harmonized.

The Kingdom of God can refer to the following two Kingdoms: -

1. The present spiritual Kingdom established by faith in the hearts and minds of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. The future literal Kingdom to come on earth when Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth, before God Himself descends on a Great White Throne and eternity begins in all its royal majestic fullness.

NOTE: these are not really two different Kingdoms since they are both the Kingdom of God, they are simply the same Kingdom, but in a different form and shape. God only has one Kingdom, but throughout history it has taken on different shapes and forms, under David it had one form, under Solomon another, while it appeared different again under the Kings of Israel, but though it appears in different shapes and forms it is the one Kingdom because regardless of what shape or form it takes God is always its King.

The present spiritual Kingdom established by faith in the hearts and minds of those who believe will take on a different form when Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords, but even this is not the final shape of God's Kingdom since at the end of Christ's glorious millennial age God Himself descends to earth on a Great White Throne and is ALL IN ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its royal majestic fullness.

ACTS 2

- **Acts 2:21:** And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'
- **Acts 2:38:** And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- **Acts 2:41-42:** So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. ⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

The Gospel proclaims: that the sins of everyone who honestly humbles themselves and repent before God and are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will not only be forgiven, but they will also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit in this context does not

refer to speaking in tongues as many think, but to the gift of righteousness that leads to eternal life that God grants as a pure and free gift to everyone who faithfully calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and trusts in him for eternal salvation. This gift also includes forgiveness of sins, God's love and His Grace. There is no greater gift under all heaven that God could abundantly bless any mortal and sinful man or woman with because it is impossible for anyone to be saved to eternal life by their own righteousness, since even in our best moments we still fall far short of the perfect demands of the law and the pure Holiness of God.

The Gospel proclaims: once a person is water baptised into the eternal family of Christ, they should continue in the apostles teaching, pray together and share meals with each other in the name of the Lord (i.e., breaking bread together).

ACTS 3

- **Acts 3:18:** But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.

The Gospel proclaims long before Jesus appeared God through the faithful prophets of the Old Testament proclaimed that Christ would suffer (see Isaiah 53) (Psalm 22) for just a couple of examples.

- **Acts 3:20-22:** that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,²¹ whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.²² Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.

The prophet like Moses that God would raise up obviously refers to Jesus and the time of refreshing in the context of these verses can apply to the following three events:

1. This present New Testament era in which God's favour, God's grace and God's mercy is upon both Jews and Gentiles in contrast to the Old Testament era when God's focus was on Israel only.
2. To that moment when godly repentance brings that reality of God and the knowledge that all sins are forgiven and the ongoing experience of continual life in Christ knowing righteousness that leads to eternal life is imputed as a free gift because of ones faith in Christ contrasted to striving to attain to righteousness by works and self-effort.
3. To the Lords return as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

The Gospel proclaims heaven must receive Christ until the time for restoring all things about which the Old Testament prophets spoke. This refers to Christ's return as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:11-16). For further information see the notes following Matthew 23:39 (above).

- **Acts 3:19-20:** Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,

Though these verses are primarily directed to the Jews the principle applies to all who desire eternal life.

- **Acts 3:23:** And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.'

The Gospel proclaims everyone who desires to inherit eternal life must repent for their sins to be blotted out and that those who reject Christ will be destroyed, because being in Jesus is the only way to everlasting life because there is salvation in no-one else whereby anyone can be saved to eternal life.

- **Acts 4:2:** (the priests and Sadducees were) greatly annoyed because they (the apostles) were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.
- **Acts 4:10:** let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well.
- **Acts 4:12:** And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”
- **Acts 4:33:** And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

The Gospel proclaims: that the powerful religious leaders of Jesus era plotted to have Jesus murdered and enticed the Romans to crucify him and that God his heavenly Father by His power raised him from the dead to His right hand side and eternal glory, that the only name under heaven whereby anyone can be saved is the Lord Jesus Christ and that God lavishes His grace on all who are saved to eternal life.

NOTICE: the words, “Given among men” clearly shows that though Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit he was nevertheless a human man born of a woman. Some may wonder what it means that Jesus was born of God. Consider for a moment how easy it is for God the creator of all life and all creation to alter a gene by his creative miraculous power so that a barren woman is able to conceive. Some doubt the virgin birth of Jesus, but consider the following, list, it shows seven beings that all have the appearance of man yet they all come from a totally different origin.

1. Adam was made from the dust of the earth and enlivened by the breath of God.
2. Eve was made from part of Adam while he was in a deep sleep.
3. Cain was born by natural sexual reproduction.
4. Isaac was born to a woman past menopause and an aged man.
5. John the Baptist was born to a woman that was barren and very old.
6. Angels appear like men, but are immortal and with much greater powers.
7. Jesus was born of a virgin without the intervention of a man.

If it was possible to gather the previous seven people in one room, look, talk and examine them all as we might, they would nevertheless all have the appearance of a man, but each has a very different origin. Therefore, it should not be difficult to conceive that God through His creative power by the Holy Spirit created the seed within Mary or altered some genetic information as modern scientist in theory can do today to begin the birth process.

It should not be difficult to accept the virgin birth when we consider that today man is able to manipulate the genes and clone a creature from the DNA of another creature, scientists can artificially impregnate a virgin so that she gives birth and technically it is within the grasp of science that a dead person may also be cloned, more than this we know God is so creative He is able to produce beings that look, eat, talk, sleep and walk like man in at least seven different ways and we cannot tell the difference between them. Added to all of these is the fact that while the earth was void and in darkness God spoke and creation came into existence how simple for God to speak the word to Mary and bring that word also into existence.

ACTS 5

- **Acts 5:29-31:** But Peter and the apostles answered (the chief priests), “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
- **Acts 5:42:** And every day (the apostles), in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

The Gospel proclaims: the powerful religious leaders of Jesus era enticed the Romans to kill Jesus and that the God of Israel raised him from the dead and exalted him to His right-hand side so that the sins of whoever comes to him through repentance and faith would be forgiven.

NOTICE: the apostles never ceased to proclaiming Jesus from house to house. This is because the church during the era of the apostles was in the homes of faithful brothers and sisters.

The primary focus of the apostles teaching was to prove that Jesus is the Christ and the Saviour of the world. For further information concerning the early church see the notes following Ephesians 1:23 (below).

ACTS 8

- **Acts 8:12:** But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

The Gospel proclaims the Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. The Good News concerning the Kingdom of God refers to the following three glorious truths:

1. The sins of those who humble themselves before God, honestly repent and accept Christ as their Saviour are not only forgiven but also blotted out.
 2. Everyone who belongs to Christ's Kingdom is saved by faith and God's grace in contrast to striving to earn righteousness by self-effort and adhering to ceremonial rites or keeping religious customs.
 3. The Lord Jesus Christ will return as King of kings and Lord of lords and gather those who have died in faith and those who alive to himself in eternal glory.
- **Acts 8:38:** Phillip commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized the Ethiopian eunuch.

The Gospel proclaims that those who desire to faithfully follow the Lord Jesus Christ should follow his example and be water baptized as were the new converts of the early church.

For further information concerning water baptism see:

- The title: Water Baptism (ON WEBSITE MENU).

ACTS 9

- **Acts 9:20:** Paul proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”

Verse twenty-two says, “Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ” (Acts 9:22).

The Gospel proclaims very clearly that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ (meaning the anointed one of God). Paul did not preach or proclaim that Jesus is God but that he is the Son of God there is not one apostle who proclaimed Jesus is God and there is not one Bible verse that states Jesus is God yet many in traditional Christianity believe Jesus is God, and this in the face of multitudes of Scriptures that clearly proclaim him to be the most beloved and exalted Son of God and all the Scriptures teaching salvation proclaim that a sinner must believe Jesus is the Son of God to be saved to eternal life.

There is not one verse in the entire Bible that says we must believe Jesus is God to be saved, whereas there are multitudes that say, "Whoever believes on the Son of God will be saved." For further information see the notes following Matthew 16:16 (above). It is interesting to notice that Paul and the apostles used whatever means they could to prove Jesus is the Christ that the Old Testament prophets spoke of and prophesied was to come. In the New Testament neither Jesus nor the apostles focused on teaching the Old Testament Scriptures, but they did with great skill and mindful brilliance use them to prove (especially to doubtful Jews) that Jesus was who he claimed to be. The author of Hebrews with gifted knowledge and majestic skilfulness uses the temple of God, the Holy Place, the Most Holy Place and the sacrifices to skilfully and with love prove to dis-believing Jews that Jesus is who he claimed to be and the only High Priest any New Testament believer needs to reconcile them to his heavenly Father.

For an example of this brilliance see Hebrews in, NT Commentary (ON WEBSITE MENU).

ACTS 10

Peter proclaimed the Good News of the Gospel.

22

- **Acts 10:34-36:** So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.³⁶ As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all),

The Gospel proclaims:

- Every faithful brother and sister in Christ receive forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus name this is why the Gospel is called the Good News of peace. In this context the peace refers to mental peace because those in Christ do not need to strive to attain perfect righteousness before God because God imputes righteousness to those who are in Christ as a pure and free gift and therefore they need have no fear that they will be condemned and can rest in peace that they will be saved to eternal life and everlasting glory.
- We are saved to eternal life not by our own righteousness, but by Christ's this glorious truth will produces mental peace and mental calm in the mind of all who are not only devoted to Christ but also believe that they are saved by faith and God's grace apart from self-effort works of the law and adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days or keeping religious customs and traditions etc.
- God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him (Acts 10:38).
- Jesus commanded the apostles to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.⁴³ To Jesus all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins through Jesus name (Acts 10:42-43).

- Paul commanded all the Gentiles in Cornelius house who heard the word of the Lord to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:48).
- God gave Jesus authority and all the power of the Holy Spirit without measure (meaning without limitation) and with God's full power made available to him he went about doing-good. Those who belong to the Kingdom of God today may not have the miraculous power that Jesus and the apostles had and may not be called into full time ministry or missionary work, but we are all called to follow Jesus in doing-good to others especially our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Jesus has been appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead this refers to the first resurrection of which the second death has no power (Rev. 20:4-6). Those who do not attain to this first resurrection will stand before God's Great White Throne when He descends from heaven (Rev 11-15). This majestic, breathtaking and awesome event will take place at the end of Christ's glorious millennial reign as King of kings and Lord of lords on earth.

For further information see the title: "The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment" in, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

- That all Scriptures and faithful prophets of the Old Testament and New Testament proclaim whoever believes (i.e., Jews or Gentiles) in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins through Jesus name.
- We are not forgiven and saved to eternal life by our own righteousness, but by Christ's, this is the glory of the Gospel. Jesus didn't suffer a brutal bloody and cruel death so that we could attain to a perfect state of righteousness but because we can't. If anyone of us could attain to the glorious state of sinlessness Christ died for no purpose.
- Whoever confesses to believe in Christ from a humble and honest heart should be water baptised in the name of Jesus.

ACTS 11

- **Acts 11:17-18:** If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us (the Jews) when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"
¹⁸ When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

When Barnabas had found Paul, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:26).

The Gospel proclaims:

- Jews and Gentiles are saved in the same manner (i.e., through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace). It matters not if a person is a descendant of Abraham, born a Hebrew or a Jew under the New Covenant of grace all are saved in the same manner regardless of their birth, race, country, rich or poor, male or female, noble or lowly all enter the Kingdom of God through the same door which is the Lord Jesus Christ.
- It was at Antioch those who accepted Christ as their Saviour became to be called Christians. The word, Christian comes from the Greek word Christos which means anointed and the Messiah it refers to the name of Jesus Christ and by extension to his followers.

ACTS 13

- **Acts 13:38:** Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,
- **Acts 13:47:** For so the Lord has commanded us (Paul and the apostles) saying, “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”

The Gospel proclaims:

- Through Jesus forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to everyone (Jews and Gentiles) who believes and whoever believes is freed from everything. In the context of this verse this means the Jews through faith in Christ are totally freed from keeping the Law of Moses, ceremonial rites, holy days and Jewish customs and traditions. But by extension it applies to all who believe since Jesus death and resurrection introduced the New Covenant of grace which proclaims no-one can be saved by adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days or keeping religious customs and traditions. Everyone who believes in Christ is freed from all types of religious works to attain to righteousness that leads to eternal life. This is why the Gospel is called the Good News whoever belongs to the family of Christ is saved by faith and God’s grace and not by striving to attain to righteousness by self-effort and religious works.
- Whoever testifies to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is a light of salvation to whomever they are speaking it to no-matter what race, language, country or nation they are from.

ACTS 14

- **Acts 14:22:** Paul and Barnabas strengthened the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

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The Gospel proclaims: every brother and sister in Christ will suffer troubles in this world, but if they endure in faith and God’s grace through the hardships that come into their lives, they will inherit the Kingdom of God. This verse shows us two things:

1. Just because a person belongs to the family of Christ it does not guarantee they will live a life free of troubles.
2. Hardships and troubles do not mean God loves a brother or sister in Christ any less.

Following is the most perfect example of love and the most splendid and humbling of all Scriptures since it clearly shows how much Christ loves us. The apostle Paul wrote, “While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom 5:6). This means though we were full of sinful dysfunctions and aberrations dwelling within our bodies (i.e., self, ego, pride, greed and lustful thoughts etc.,) Christ died for us, he laid down his life that we could be made righteous by faith apart from the law, self-effort and works. In spite of our corrupted fallen nature God counts our faith in Christ as our righteousness it is imputed to us as a pure and free gift. Though some of us might die for a friend or loved one, Christ died for us while we were ungodly, meaning indifferent to God and His ways and for many of us blasphemers, consider; if God was willing to Sacrifice His Son for us while we were indifferent to Him by sending his Son how much more will He love us now that we love His most beloved Son.

Some in the Christian faith determine whether God loves them by their good or bad circumstances, (i.e., if life is calm and running smoothly God loves them, but if it suddenly takes a turn for the worse and trouble comes they feel God has withdrawn his love), but this is superstition and judging God according to this world, when anyone who believes in Christ doubts God’s love all we have to do is look back to the bloodstained cross and

see what it cost the Father to save us and how much his Son suffered so that we could have put upon us a royal crown and majestic robe of righteousness apart from the law and works and not only be justified but granted eternal life in everlasting glory.

ACTS 15

- **Acts 15:8-9:** And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us (the Jews), ⁹ and he made no distinction between us (the Jews), and them (the Gentiles),, having cleansed their hearts by faith.
- We (the apostles) believe that we (Jews) will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus just as the Gentiles will (Acts 15:11).
- Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. ¹⁵And with this the words of the prophets agree (Acts 15:14-15).

The Gospel proclaims:

- God knows the heart. This means no-one can fool God (especially concerning repentance and salvation). Certain religious people may deceive us by their confession of faith and outward religious works and speech, but it matters little since not one of us can deceive God since His eyes pierce past all our outward display and pretence and penetrates into the inner most motives of the heart and the mind. Those who do have a right heart attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ are counted righteous (cleansed) because of their faith and not by self-effort or religious works no matter how perfectly they may keep.
- Whether Jew or Gentile whoever is saved is saved because of grace. The following verses not only show the majestic splendour of grace and the humbling and awe-inspiring truth that Jesus is, God's Gift of grace to all who believe, but also the enormous importance of trusting in God's grace in Christ. Paul in his letters wrote, "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law (or any form of religious self-effort), then Christ died for no purpose" (Gal. 2:21). This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begin to justify themselves through the law and self-effort, they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ's death was of no value.

Equally as horrific as this Paul states, "When we forsake grace, we separate ourselves from Christ because it was only by grace that God made us alive in Christ" (Gal. 5:4) (Eph. 2:5). Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that, "It is only by grace that any brother or sister has been saved" (Eph. 2:8). Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by grace and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God. This means that without grace no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life. Thus; in regards to eternal salvation, Christ, God, grace and faith, are all on an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to eternal life without any one of them.

- The Gospel proclaims God is at this present time taking a people out of this world for His name. An awe-inspiring, breathtaking and majestic day is coming when Christ will return and take out of this world a Kingdom of people who have by faith believed the Gospel and trusted in God's grace in Christ for their righteousness and eternal inheritance. The book of Revelation states, "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7). And in Revelation chapter five we are told

that, "Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15).

Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory. For further information see titles: "Kingdom of God" (ON WEBSITE MENU) and "The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment" in, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

ACTS 16

- **Acts 16:29-33:** And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas.³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"³¹ And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.

The Gospel proclaims for anyone to be saved to eternal life and everlasting glory they must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and then follow the example of Jesus and all other faithful brothers and sisters in the New Testament who believed and be water baptized as Jesus and those who followed him were.

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ACTS 16

- **Acts 17:2-3:** And Paul went in (to a synagogue of the Jews), as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them (the Jews) from the Scriptures,³ explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."
- **Acts 17:18:** Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babblor wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.
- **Acts 17:30-32:** The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man (Jesus) whom he (God) has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this."

The Gospel proclaims

- For our salvation it was necessary for the Lord Jesus Christ to suffer, be killed and raised from the dead to eternal glory.
- Jesus, his death and his resurrection.
- All of us will be judged against the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- To escape the day of God's judgment a person must not only repent, but also believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (this is because whoever has faith in God's Son God imputes to them as a pure and free gift

righteousness). This is the Good News of the Gospel whoever is in Christ is saved not by their own righteousness, but by Christ. This is because not one of us can attain by our own self-effort to the perfect standard the LAW demands nor to the pure Holiness of God, thus the reason those who belong to the family of Christ are saved by faith and grace and not by their own self-effort or religious works.

NOTE: Jesus, the apostles and Paul do not focus on teaching the Old Testament, but they do brilliantly and skilfully use its history, Scriptures and prophecies to prove to unbelieving Jews that Jesus was the fulfilment of the Old Testament Scriptures and the Messiah the Christ the Saviour and Son of God that the Scriptures and prophets spoke of (Acts 13:13-52). When Jesus' conversation includes Gentiles he used parables and stories the Gentiles could relate to rather than Old Testament history or prophecies, but when Jesus or the apostles are talking to the unbelieving Jews they use the Old Testament to prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the better covenant, the fulfilment of Old Testament Scripture and the one the prophets said was to come.

ACTS 18

- **Acts 18:5:** When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.
- **Acts 18:8:** Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.
- **Acts 18:28:** for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures (Old Testament) that the Christ was Jesus.

The Gospel proclaims: the entire word of God testifies that the Christ the prophet's spoke of is the Lord Jesus Christ and that all who received the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was water baptized.

27

NOTICE: though the New Testament often reflects back to the prophets of Old and uses Old Testament Scriptures it is not focused on teaching them, but using them to prove to the unbelieving Jews that Jesus is the Christ and the one the prophets and Scriptures speak of.

ACTS 20

- **Acts 20:21:** testifying (in public and from house to house) (Acts 20:20) both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Acts 20:24-25:** But I (Paul) do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again.

The Gospel proclaims:

- For Jews and Gentiles to be saved to eternal life both must humble themselves and honestly repent before God and have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Kingdom of God, this refers to the following two Kingdoms, firstly to the present spiritual Kingdom established by faith in the hearts and minds of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and secondly to the future literal Kingdom to come on earth when Christ returns in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth, before God Himself descends on a Great White Throne and eternity begins in all its royal majestic fullness. These two kingdoms are not really two different Kingdoms since they are both the Kingdom of God, they are simply the same Kingdom, but in a different form and shape.

God only has one Kingdom, but throughout history it has taken on different shapes and forms, under David it had one form, under Solomon another, while it appeared different again under the Kings of Israel, but though it appears in different shape and form it is the one Kingdom because regardless of what shape or form it takes God is always its King. The present spiritual Kingdom established by faith in the hearts and minds of those who believe will take on a different form when Christ returns in glory, but even this is not the final shape of God's Kingdom since at the end of Christ's glorious millennial age God Himself descends to earth on a Great White Throne and is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its majestic royal glory.

NOTICE; the message that Paul counted his life as nothing unless he could proclaim was not every biblical teaching from Genesis to Revelation, but concerned only the glorious Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which proclaims everyone who comes by faith to Christ through humble and honest repentance will not only be saved by grace and counted righteous by God but will also inherit eternal life and everlasting glory.

It was the Gospel Jesus himself commissioned Paul to go into all the world and proclaim and it was the Gospel that Paul devoted himself to preaching even in the face of the most extreme persecution. Paul never focused on teaching the Old Testament Scriptures but he did often brilliantly use them to prove to unbelieving Jews that Jesus is the Christ who the Scriptures speak of and who the prophets said was to come.

NOTE: this does not mean that studying and learning the Old Testament has no benefit, quite the contrary since they contain many great, prophecies, treasures and pearls of wisdom, but when it comes to saving a sinner to eternal life the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is all they need to hear since it contains the power to deliver a sinner from the domain of darkness and transfer them into the Kingdom of God's beloved Son (Colossians 1:13).

ACTS 22

- **Acts 22:14-15:** And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you (Paul) to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; ¹⁵ for you will be a witness for him to everyone (Jew and Gentile) of what you have seen and heard.

The Gospel proclaims: the apostle Paul was appointed by God to know God's eternal will and His eternal plan for mankind's eternal salvation that He purposed and planned before the foundations of the world began. God revealed His eternal will and His eternal plan of salvation to Paul when Christ appeared to him in a vision on the road to Damascus. In this vision Jesus not only gave to Paul by revelation the Gospel of grace, but told him he was chosen to take this Gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike.

NOTE: how sad it is when so much of Christianity believe the glorious message of the Gospel of grace and yet not only divide over many Scriptural teachings outside of the Gospel that have no bearing on a person's salvation, but even worse treat them as enemies rather than accepting that in the global and world wide body of Christ there will always be differences in intellectual knowledge which God's grace love and mercy covers since He perceives the true motives of the heart and which we should be able to sit down in a spirit of brotherly love and humbleness and reason together in an atmosphere of peace and spiritual adventure.

ACTS 26

- **Acts 26:18:** to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

- **Acts 26:20:** but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

The Gospel proclaims: the spiritual eyes of those (Jews or Gentiles) who put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will be opened to the spiritual darkness they are in and to the light of God and their sins will be forgiven through their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Spiritual darkness in this context refers to believing that righteousness can be attained by adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days or by strictly keeping religious customs and traditions etc., (as the Jews believed). The power of Satan not only refers to governments, organizations, rulers, leaders and to whoever withstands and opposes God and His will, but also to being controlled and driven by self, ego, pride and greed.

For further information concerning Satan see the title:

- Satan in, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The Gospel proclaims: Jews and Gentiles should repent of their sin and unbelief in God and not only turn to God and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, but also live a lifestyle that outwardly evidences their repentance. No-one can be saved by good works, but good works outwardly evidences the indwelling faith of those who confess to believe in the Lord since it is impossible to know the grace of God and the love of Christ in the heart and at the same time knowingly and deliberately live a life that dishonours God and brings a bad testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and shame to the Christian faith. Obviously spiritual immaturity, loneliness, a lack of knowledge, wisdom, understanding God's will and troublesome events, hurts and hardships that happen in a Christians life and certain weakness of the flesh cause us all to fall far short of the standard we might wish we could attain to, but being indifferent and not caring about how we live our lives before God is a far different thing to having a heart that longs to honour him and feeling that deep regret when we fall short of his glory and holiness and wishing and desiring that we could do better.

A word of encouragement: those who do perceive how much they fall short of God's glory and feel this heartfelt sorrow should not condemn themselves, but rest in God's grace. Christ did not surrender his life to such a brutal bloody and cruel death so that we could attain to God's perfect standard of Holiness but because we couldn't.

NOTICE: the responsibility and the stunning and awe-inspiring splendour and wonder of Paul's calling, God through the Lord Jesus Christ called him to open the eyes of both the Jews and the Gentiles to the spiritual glory of the Gospel of grace so that they would turn from spiritual darkness to spiritual light and from the power of Satan and receive God's forgiveness and be saved to eternal life by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Is it any wonder Paul said, "Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."

There was nothing in Paul's life that gave him more joy than seeing those he had converted to Christ continuing to follow the Lord in steadfast devotion, love and faithfulness.

ROMANS 1

- **Romans 1:1-4:** Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,
- **Romans 1:16:** For I (Paul) am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Paul was called to preach the Gospel and that before the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ came God through the Old Testament prophets spoke of it. The Old Testament prophets long before Christ appeared prophesied that the Messiah, the Christ and Saviour would come from the flesh of King David meaning that Jesus would descend from the David's offspring.
- God declared (proved to the world) that Jesus was His Son by resurrecting him from the dead because of his Spirit of Holiness (meaning he was without sin) and therefore the law had no legal right or power to hold the Lord in the prison of death.

The key and power of the Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone (Jew and Gentile) who believes (Rom 1:16) and the heart of the Gospel is eternal salvation; the Gospel does not refer to every Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, but only to the things concerning salvation in Christ. No-one has to be a walking encyclopedia to be saved to eternal life, but they do need to understand the Gospel because it is the message of God's kindness that leads to repentance and thereby to eternal life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

ROMANS 2

- **Romans 2:16:** on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

The Gospel proclaims: though some who confess to believe in Christ maybe able to fool people concerning their faith or those who claim to be religious may deceive others in regards to their righteousness no-one can fool or deceive God since His eyes penetrates into the inner most depths of our being and He judges the motives and intents of the heart accordingly. This is why no one should concern themselves with judging another person's eternal salvation since not one of can know the true condition of another person's heart or the hurts and battles they may be struggling with.

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ROMANS 3

- **Romans 3:9:** What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,
- **Romans 3:19-20:** Now we (the apostles) know that whatever the law (the Jews) says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world (the Jews and the Gentiles) may be held accountable to God.²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his (God's) sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.
- **Romans 3:21-26:** But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.
- **Romans 3:28:** For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

The Gospel proclaims:

- No-one has any advantage over others to be saved. It matters not if a person is born a direct descendant of Abraham, a Hebrew a Jew or born from any other nation or country of the world all are saved to eternal life in the same manner. This is because everyone that is born has

inherited the corrupted fallen nature of our earthly father Adam and therefore, we are all polluted with sinful dysfunctions and aberrations dwelling within which hinder us from living a sin free life and are therefore all judged by the law as sinners. This means that no-one born into this world can claim righteousness by their own works (including adhering to ceremonial rights, religious customs and traditions) before the Holiness of God, since as soon as we stood before God's Holiness of pure light the darkness within us all would instantly be revealed. Added to this the Gospel proclaims that whoever stands before the perfect standard of the law will be judged guilty by the law guilty since no-one is perfectly free of sin. This is why we are all held accountable to God since we all fall short of His standard of Holiness and why not one of us can be justified, redeemed or saved by our own self-effort.

- The law was introduced to make all mankind aware of their sin so that through the knowledge of the law and seeing God's kindness manifested through Christ toward us we would all come to repentance and be saved to eternal life. Here is the glory, the wonder and splendour of the Gospel the righteousness of God that leads to eternal salvation has nothing to do with our own self-righteousness, but is granted as a pure and free gift to all who have faith in His Son. Everyone who belongs to God's family is saved not by their own righteousness, but by Christ's. Christ didn't die a brutal, bloody and cruel death so that we could attain to the perfect standard of the law, but because we couldn't.
- Whoever belongs to the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ is justified, redeemed and saved not by their-own works, but by their faith in Christ and by God's grace.
- Before the foundations of the world God planned and purposed in His eternal mind that mankind's salvation would be through the blood of His Son (referring to Jesus death) and that those who receive Christ by faith would be justified and saved to eternal life. This is the wonder, splendour and glory of the Christian faith (Rom. 3:6, 19-26).

ROMANS 4

- **Romans 4:1-12:** What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: ⁷ "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; ⁸ blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." ⁹ Is this blessing then only for the circumcised (the Jews), or also for the uncircumcised? For we (the apostles) say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰ How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness (by faith) that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them (Gentiles) as well, ¹² and to make him (Abraham) the father of the circumcised (the Jews) who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

The focus of these verses is not on those who are already saved, but upon saving the ungodly (v5) (i.e., those who are outside of the Kingdom of God). This means that God does not wait until a sinner reaches some state of acceptance and worthiness before He will accept them into His Kingdom. Rather the instant a sinner from their heart honestly humbles themselves in repentance before God and accepts Jesus as their Lord, King and Saviour is the instant "God delivers them from the domain of darkness and transfers them to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col 1:13). From this point they are baptized into Christ and begin their spiritual journey of growing in the Lord.

Circumcision: in the Jewish mind was without doubt deemed to be one of the highest standards of righteousness since they believed that an uncircumcised person was separated from God and therefore unclean. Because of this mindset no religious Jew (especially those in high position of leadership) would willingly put themselves in the company of an uncircumcised person since they considered them to be unclean. The reason the Jewish nation held circumcision in such high regard was because God made the following covenant with Abraham and his offspring saying, "Every male among you shall be circumcised and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised it shall be an everlasting covenant and any male who is not circumcised shall be cut off from Israel because he has broken my covenant" (Gen 17:10-14) (Gen 17:23-27).

Even though circumcision was only to be a sign of God's covenant with Israel many in the Jewish faith had turned it into the means of salvation (i.e., as long as they were circumcised, they were right with God). This is one of the reasons for the lack of the fruits of the Spirit amongst many of the religious rulers of Jesus and Paul's generations. The Jews held Abraham in enormously high esteem this is why Paul is brilliantly highlighting the truth that God counted Abraham righteous long before he was circumcised. Abraham always believed God, he believed God concerning leaving Ur, leaving Haran and did not consider his body or that of Sarah's, but believed God's promise that Sarah his wife would bare him a child even though she was barren and eighty-nine years old and he was ninety-nine years old when God confirmed this promise to him.

When Sarah was ninety and Abraham was one hundred Sarah gave birth to Isaac and Abraham became the father of faith. Abraham was so devoted to God that he had total faith that God would bring to pass whatever He promised to do no matter how impossible it seemed and because of this faith God counted Abraham righteous. Likewise, Christians believe God's promise that He will raise from the dead to eternal life and everlasting glory whoever has faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ no-matter how much their body has decayed or what condition it is in.

The Gospel proclaims:

- That Abraham the father of faith was not justified by his own works, but because he believed God and God counted his unwavering faith as righteousness. Paul in these verses is skilfully shining a spotlight on the truth that God forgives and covers a, sinners lawless deeds and does not count their sins when they come to him in humble and honest repentance and have faith that it is the Lord Jesus Christ's righteousness that reconciles them to God and not their own.
- If righteousness and salvation could be earned by works, self-effort, or adhering to ceremonial rites and keeping religious customs and traditions everyone who is saved could boast that they earned their own righteousness, but if this was possible Christ died for no reason and no-one could claim that they were saved by grace nor that their righteousness and salvation is a gift of God.

NOTE: one of the greatest problems Paul faced in his ministry was that even though many Jewish brothers and sisters he ministered to believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Christ and Son of God, they had great difficulty in accepting grace to be saved since they had been adhering to ceremonial rites, religious customs and traditions for over four-thousand years. Many Jews who Paul converted to Christ believed the promises of Abraham, believed that Jesus was the Son of God and believed in his death and resurrection, but lacked insight into God's saving grace and that it is our faith that God counts as righteousness and not our self-effort in keeping religious holy days, ceremonial practices or religious habits and traditions and therefore too much to Paul's horror a certain few slowly fell back to keeping Jewish religious customs to earn their own righteousness to be counted worthy to God and worthy of eternal life (see Galatians chapter 3 in NT commentary on website menu).

- **Romans 4:13-25:** For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his (Abraham's) offspring—not only to the adherent of the law (the Jews) but also to the one (Gentile) who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (Jews and Gentiles), ¹⁷ as it is written, "I have made you (Abraham) the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸ In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." ¹⁹ He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰ No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹ fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²² That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." ²³ But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴ but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵ who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

The Gospel proclaims:

- The promise God made to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world will not be fulfilled by those who trust in ceremonial rites, religious customs and traditions, but by those who by faith trust in Christ to be counted righteous and saved to eternal life. Even more than this the Gospel states, whoever does trust in their-own works and adhering to religious laws makes having faith meaningless and God's promise pointless. The reason, "The law bring wrath" (v15) is because no-one is free of sin and therefore the law has legal right to condemn us all too eternal death. There has only ever been one man who was able to live without sin and he was the Son of God if anyone of us could attain to the same glorious standard of sinlessness Christ died for no reason.

This is why God planned and purposed mankind's salvation to be by faith and God's grace because if it was dependent on our own self-effort to attain to the perfect standard of the law and God's pure Holiness which no-one can stand in the light of, God could never have guaranteed or promised salvation to any of us. Clearly if a nation existed on earth that had absolutely no laws not one of its citizens could be judged guilty no-matter what they had done. This is what the words, "Where there is no law there is no transgression" (v15) mean in regards to eternal salvation. Whoever is in Christ is not saved by rule keeping but by grace because overrides law.

- Jews have no advantage over Gentiles concerning salvation to eternal life, but that both Jews and Gentiles can only be saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and both will share in the eternal inheritance God promised Abraham the father of faith. This is why God said, "He has made Abraham the father of many nations. When the title, Abraham is the father of faith is used concerning salvation it does not refer to the natural born descendants of Abraham (i.e., Hebrews and Jews) but to whoever by faith accepts Christ regardless of what nation they come from.
- The God Abraham believed in is not only the source of all life, but also gives life to the dead and calls into existence things that do not exist (referring to creation and raising the dead to eternal life and everlasting glory).

Here is the glory, the wonder and splendour of the Christian faith: the words, "Righteousness was counted to Abraham" were not written for his sake alone, but also for those who believe Jesus laid down his life for their sin and that God raised him from the dead for their justification so that they, by their faith in God's Son would be counted righteous. Abraham is the perfect example of faith God promised he would be the father of many nations, yet when Abraham was almost one-hundred years

old years old and his loved wife Sarah was almost ninety and still barren he did not weaken or waver in faith despite the fact Sarah was barren nor did he consider the frailty of his aging body, but in spite of these seemingly impossible odds he not only grew stronger in faith, but also gave glory to God being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. It was because of this great faith that God counted him as righteousness. This should be of tremendous encouragement to all who trust in Christ for eternal life and everlasting glory. If Abraham had considered Sarah's barrenness, her age and the frailty of his aging body rather than God's promise it is very likely his heart would have been flooded with overwhelming doubt, his mind with crushing despair and from this deeply troubled state he might have been tempted to give up his faith.

Today: Christians are not called to have such overcoming faith in believing for a promised child as Abraham had, but they are called to have the same strength of faith in God's promise that He will raise to eternal life whoever trusts in His Son for their righteousness and trust in God's grace to be counted worthy of God for eternal life. Every Christian who honestly takes a deep look into their own mind and hearts will see that they are full of sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that hinder them from attaining to the perfect standard of the law and the perfection of God's pure Holiness this is because we are all descendants of our earthly father Adam and have inherited in our fallen corrupted bodies of flesh that nature of self, ego, pride, lust, envy, jealousy, greed and such like things.

Should anyone of us make these things the central and dominant focus of our minds, doubt the enemy of faith would flood our minds and give the law the power to take hold of these crushing doubts and of the indwelling sinful dysfunctions and aberrations and thereby take the thoughts of our mind on a destructive downward spiral of darkness in which the voices in our heads tell us that we are not worthy of God nor can we be saved. The only way we can conquer these condemning voices of the mind is to have the unwavering faith of our father Abraham who considered not the limitations of his own body, but rather chose to believe in the promise of God despite what seemed impossible.

NOTE: though the Gospel proclaims; Christians are saved by grace and set free from the condemnation of the law they do not deliberately abuse the law. They like any couple in love desire to please from their heart the one they love. True and faithful Christians are driven, controlled and obsessed by the same spirit a man and woman in love have toward each other, which is not a spirit of rule keeping, but of love that fills their heart and their mind and naturally flows out in joy and a deep desire to honour the one they love.

Likewise, Christians who know the love of God endeavour to bring a good testimony to Christ (howbeit not perfectly) who laid down his life to a brutal, bloody and cruel death not for himself, but so that they may be reconciled to God in a relationship of love and grace and saved to eternal life.

ROMANS 5

- **Romans 5:1-2:** Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
- **Romans 5:6-11:** For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

- **Romans 5:17-18:** For if, because of one man's (Adams) trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass (Adams) led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life (eternal) for all men.
- **Romans 5:20-21:** Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Gospel proclaims:

- All who belong to the family of Christ are justified by faith and therefore should have peace of mind before God because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is because it is through faith and not our own works or self-effort that we obtained access into God's grace and it is in this grace that we should live and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God (referring to the glorious hope of our eternal salvation).
- No-one is saved by works or their own self-effort, everyone who belongs to the family of Christ has been justified by Christ blood, (referring to his brutal, bloody and cruel death) and will be saved by Christ from the wrath of God (referring to being cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal death (i.e., total extinction). This is also called the second death (Rev 20:14-15).

For, further information concerning the Lake of Fire and the Second Death see the title:

- Lake of Fire" in, Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- If we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son while we were enemies of God how much more will we be saved by Christ's immortal life now that he is resurrected to eternal life and we are reconciled to God through our faith in him. Death (mortal and eternal) reigns as king throughout all mankind because we are all descended from our earthly father Adam and have inherited that nature of sin (self, ego, pride, lust, greed, jealousies and such like things) which all hinder us from attaining to the perfect standard the law demands and to the pure Holiness of God. But the Good News of the Gospel is that we are saved not by our own righteousness, but by Christ's righteousness and the abundance of God's grace which God gives as a pure and free gift to all who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The words, "The law came in to increase the trespass" (v20) do not mean that the law came so that more people would sin, but that it would make more people aware of their sin and the words, "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (v20) means that grace supersedes the sin of those who come to Christ in faith so that in the love of Christ they would desire and endeavour (howbeit not perfectly) to live a life that honours God and through Christ's righteousness (not their own) be saved to eternal life.

NOTE: when salvation to eternal life is spoken of as the hope of the faithful in Christ, it is not called hope because it might or might not happen, but because it is unseen and yet future. The hope itself is guaranteed because it is based on God's promise and he cannot lie. The apostle Paul wrote; "In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began" (Titus 1:2). Here is the beauty of God's love manifested toward us through His Son. While we were still sinners Christ died for us (Rom 5:8).

Most parents would lay down their life for their children, and close friends may lay their life down for each other, but who is going to lay down their life for someone who is indifferent to them and lives totally contrary to their character and nature. This is exactly what the Lord did he laid his life down to a brutal, bloody and cruel death for the ungodly.

Consider for a moment: if God through Christ showed His love toward us while we were indifferent toward Him and still sinners how much more, will He love us now that we are reconciled to Him through faith in His Son and love Him from the heart and His Son with faithful and heartfelt passion.

ROMANS 6

- **Romans 6:17-19:** But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

The Gospel proclaims: prior to salvation we were slaves to sin meaning self, ego, pride, greed, lust, jealousies and such like things were the master and motivating power of our minds and hearts, but now being set free from sin and the condemnation of the law through faith in Christ we are motivated by love for God and love for Christ to live a life that honours God, brings a good testimony to Christ and the Christian faith.

NOTICE: the words, "I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations" (v19) Paul clearly understood that no brother or sister in Christ is totally free from sin thus the reason he added the words "I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations." We all have certain things within us that limit us from attaining to a sin-free life. The idea of what Paul is saying in these verses is that those in Christ are not driven by sin, but rather the passion of their heart is to live righteously before God and when they don't there is a heartfelt sorrow. John in agreement with what Paul is saying, wrote:

- **1 John 1:8-10:** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

ROMANS 7

- **Romans 7:6:** But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

The Gospel proclaims: though this verse primarily applies to the Jews (since the law was given to them and they were ruled by it for over four-thousand years) by extension it can be applied to all who have faith in Christ since the two principals Paul is teaching applies to both Jews and Gentiles. These two principals are:

1. Whoever is in Christ has been released from the condemnation of the law and therefore should not trust in keeping ceremonial rites or to adhering to religious customs and traditions to be saved, but rather trust in their new life in the Spirit meaning; trust in their faith in Christ and in God's grace.
2. Whoever is in Christ should not be motivated by legalistic rule keeping or adhering to ceremonial rites and the keeping of religious customs and traditions nor should they judge the spiritual life of other brothers and sisters by such things, but rather be motivated by their new life in the Spirit, meaning by love, compassion, mercy, grace kindness etc.

ROMANS 8

- **Romans 8:1-6:** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

The Gospel proclaims: the law of sin and death which states; "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) and the law of the Spirit of life which states; "The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). The condemnation Paul is referring to is condemnation to death. The Scripture states "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23), since all mankind comes from Adam, we are all infected with a cancerous virus called sin from the day we are born, no-one is exempt from this insidious disorder. Imbedded in our fallen corrupted human nature are sinful dysfunctions and aberrations (i.e., selfishness, ego, pride, greed, jealousy, lustful thoughts and envy to name just a few) which limit all of us from attaining to the perfection of God's Holy standard.

This means we all transgress God's law and therefore are legally and rightfully condemned by it since the Scripture states "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23) and this law is carved into our mortal body. Sadly, not even the knife of the most skilled surgeon can remove this menacing virus called sin which dooms us all before the Holiness of God's Law. Since Adam is the earthly father of all humanity our body is infected with this sinister defect the Bible calls sin this aberration or entity (sometimes personified as the devil) infects our thoughts and attitudes toward those things that are against the law of love and against God's Holiness and therefore we all fall short of the perfection of the law and the glory of God, and because of this treacherous incurable virus we are all separated from God and doomed to death with all its miseries.

But there is Good News the law of the Spirit of life sets those in Christ free from the law of sin and death (v2) which states those who sin must die whereas the law of the Spirit states "The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). This means that those in Christ are set free from the condemnation of the law which has legal right to sentence us all to death. It is by their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that they are set free because it is their faith in Christ that God counts as their righteousness totally apart from law and thus by their faith they are majestically and eternally set free from the law of sin and death.

God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: (v3) means that the law is righteous perfect and holy, but because of the sinful dysfunctions and aberrations imbedded in our corrupted fallen human nature no-one standing on planet earth is able to attain to its holy and perfect standard and in this sense it is weakened from achieving its righteousness within the human race, but God knowing our hopelessness to attain to the perfection of the law has overcome the dysfunctions and aberrations that limit us from attaining to the high demands of the law by sending his own Son the Lord Jesus Christ in our likeness and by offering him up as a sinless sacrifice for all mankind and by his death condemned that entity called sin that is imbedded in our fallen corrupted human nature.

This means that whoever trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ is set free from the law of sin and death (which legally condemns us all to death) since God counts the faith of those in Christ as their righteousness totally apart from the law. This is the majestic glory of the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which is gloriously summed up in the following words of Jesus himself, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit: Paul's words, "That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (v4) means righteousness does not come by self-effort (i.e., striving to keep the law and the customs of Moses and the traditions of the Jewish nation), but rather by faith in Christ. Walking according to the flesh in this context refers to anything we may do in an attempt to earn our own righteousness which is totally futile since we only have to fail in one part of the law and we are guilty of breaking it and therefore legally condemned by it. The following is a simple example of the futility of trying to earn our own righteousness, it is pointless for a man who is standing in a courtroom before a judge condemned of murder to attempt to use all the good things he has done throughout his life as his defence since the one act of murder overrides the fact he may have saved many people throughout his life.

Likewise, it is with the law of God it demands we keep it in every detail before it will declare us innocent, and the devastating fact is that it is impossible for any human to attain to that holy standard of perfection because of the sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that our fallen human nature has been infected with therefore walking according to the Spirit in this context refers to trusting in Christ for our righteousness contrasted in trusting in our own self-efforts. Here is the glory, the power and overwhelming beauty of the Gospel God freely and majestically crowns and robes us with righteousness because of our faith in His Son (Romans 8:1-4).

The law of the Spirit of life: the law of the Spirit of life is the Good News of the Gospel for all who trust in Christ. It states, "The law of the Spirit of life has set those in Christ free from the law and death" (Rom. 8:2). This law of the Spirit supersedes the law of sin and death and because of this higher law God grants as a free and pure gift righteousness that leads to eternal life to all who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and faithfully follow him (Rom. 6:23). This means that the law of sin and death has no power over those who believe in Christ and faithfully follow him. It is because of the law of the Spirit that God is able to guarantee his promise of saving those who have faith in His Son, because our salvation and righteousness is not dependent on our self-effort, but on our faith as the following Scriptures state, "Faith is counted to whoever believe in God who raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead who was delivered up to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification (Rom. 4:22-25) and why Paul wrote, "The promise to Abraham depends on faith in order that it may rest on grace and in this way be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring (Jews and Gentiles) (Rom. 4:16).

God in his foreknowledge and knowing human nature knew if He had made eternal salvation dependent on our self-effort there is no-way He could guarantee or promise it to any of us. This is one of the reasons God in His great wisdom made eternal salvation dependent on faith. This is another reason the Gospel of Christ is called the Good News.

To set the mind on the flesh: means to set the mind on earning righteousness that leads to eternal life by self-effort rather than setting the mind on the Spirit, meaning on faith since it is our faith in Christ that God counts as our righteousness and not any self-effort we might in vain attempt to do. Whoever thinks they can become righteous in themselves through self-effort, keeping laws, traditions, practicing good works, attending church meeting and Bible classes etc., will be horribly disappointed since God counts none of these things as making us righteous.

To set the mind on the flesh refers to those who trust in their own righteousness to save them rather than submitting to God's law of righteousness that comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those in the flesh refer to those who though they may confess to believe in Jesus they deny God's grace and trust in their own self-efforts. This is a great sadness since no-matter whatever they may do they cannot please God since His entire plan of salvation for mankind is through grace.

Setting the mind on the Spirit: is about trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for our righteousness, because it is faith that God counts as our righteousness not self-effort and setting our mind on those things that honour God and bring a good testimony to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You are not in the Flesh but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in You.

- **Romans 8:9-11:** You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

The Gospel proclaims: whoever is trusting in Christ for their righteousness are not in the flesh (meaning walking according to their own natural thinking), but are in the Spirit because of their faith and it is by this faith that the Spirit of God and of Christ (righteousness) dwells in them therefore the words, "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" refers to those who instead of trusting in Christ for their righteousness are trusting in their own self-efforts. The moment a person begins to trust in their own good works to earn righteousness that leads to eternal life is the moment they nullify everything Christ achieved for them on the cross. The words, "If Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness" means that those who are trusting in Christ for their righteousness even though their body is decaying and doomed to mortal death, they will be raised to eternal life because of the righteousness God freely imputes to them because of their faith in His Son. The words, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you" (v11) mean whoever is trusting in Christ for their righteousness has God's Spirit dwelling in them and therefore just as God raised Christ from the dead to everlasting life and eternal glory God will also raise those who are by faith in Christ. This is the glory, the splendour and royal majesty of the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. God's simple and magnificent plan of salvation puts every man and woman on a level playing field, since eternal life is not dependent on our birthright, whether we are rich or poor, successful in this life or a failure whether we live in beautiful homes or are a beggar on the street, we all have to come to God in the same way, (i.e., humble repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ) there is no other path to attain to righteousness that leads to everlasting life and eternal glory.

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NOTICE: Paul often uses the word "if" in this letter; this no-doubt is because he is writing to Jewish brothers and obviously would not know who amongst them is trusting in Moses law and circumcision etc., for their righteousness and who is fully submitted in faith to the law of righteousness that comes by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ thus the reason Paul uses the word "if" so often.

If God is for us, who can be Against Us?

- **Romans 8:31-34:** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

The Gospel proclaims: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (v31) these words should overwhelm everyone who trusts in Christ and comfort and excite them almost beyond what human emotions can cope with since it means if you are in Christ God's eternal favour is toward you. Ponder for a moment; if the Most Holy and awe-inspiring God of all creation did not spare His only beloved Son to save you while you were a sinner will

He not give you all things concerning salvation to eternal life now that you are devoted to His Son and love him. All things in this context refer to all things regarding eternal life (i.e., grace, mercy, justification and forgiveness etc.). Paul is saying God will give those in Christ all that they need to enter into eternal life and everlasting glory. Another writer put it this way, "God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing Himself to the worst by sending his Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly do to save us." Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies" these are enormously powerful and comforting words since it means no human has the power to condemn anyone who is trusting in Christ. There are two obvious reasons for this, firstly, not one of us can stand before God free of sin ourselves since we are all infected with sinful dysfunctions and aberrations in our human nature that prevent us from attaining to the perfect standard of the law and therefore, we all fall short of God's glory.

Secondly: not one of us know the heart of another (i.e. their past indoctrinations, their family condition, their health or financial struggles, the lack of love they may have experienced, the rejection of family or friends, verbal, sexual, or physical abuses or the hurt that they keep hidden in the heart etc.), only God knows all these things and therefore only He is able to judge the sincerity and honesty of those who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. A typical example of this maybe a young mother who loves Christ and has two children, but happens to be living in a third world country, she has no hope of a job, no social security and no-one with money to help her, so to provide food for her children she against everything that is in her sells her body, this woman is suffering beyond what most of us can imagine, but most would look to her outward behaviour and condemn her as a gross sinner, but God sees the brokenness of the heart, the motivation to lay her own dignity aside to save the life of her children. This is one of the reasons we cannot condemn anyone who is faithfully trusting in Christ, and even more so if we are not prepared to step in and do whatever is necessary to rescue them from what we might be condemning them for.

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God has not called brothers and sisters in Christ to judge the salvation of those who are struggling to overcome behaviours or habits that they are trapped in for reasons we may not understand rather those in Christ are called to encourage and show grace and mercy and when able help those in troubling circumstances and leave the judging to the Lord Jesus Christ only he can know what the motivation of the heart is (i.e., a pastor of a major church may have tremendous success, the congregation may exceed ten thousand followers and many maybe saved), but only God knows if he is in the ministry for fame, money, power, self-importance the esteem he gets or if his motivation is for God. In contrast to this is the cleaning lady (who most do not even notice) who faithfully cleans the church after every meeting because she sees this as some small thing, she can do to help build God's Kingdom. If the leader of the church is ministering for selfish-ambition and his own gain it will be the woman who Christ at the resurrection will highly exalt with a royal crown and not the minister no matter how many people came to the Lord under his preaching.

NOTE: the power and beauty of the Good News of the Gospel is that it is the Spirit of God saves in spite of us, meaning, it does not matter the motivation of the preacher if he is proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel and there happens to be hearts in the assemble seeking God, God will respond to that heart and save that person since His eternal word is not bound or limited by our wrong heart attitudes or our selfish motivations.

Who will Separate us from the Love of Christ?

- **Romans 8:35-39:** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who

loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Gospel proclaims: the only thing that has any power to cause God the Father and His Son to withdraw their favour and eternal saving grace from us is our own conscious and deliberate rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Providing we do not throw away our faith in Christ we are more than conquerors in spite of the sinful dysfunctions and aberrations and regardless of whatever may come against us thus the only thing that can separate those in Christ from the love of God is their own unbelief.

Paul in these verses is saying that no matter what the apostles (by extension all who belong to Christ), suffer whether it be troubles of life, rejection of friendships, a failing business, living on the breadline, not being able to afford designer clothing, the best mobile phone or the latest computer, living in danger or facing a terminal disease none of it will separate them from the love of God that they experience through their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

ROMANS 9

- **Romans 9:30-32:** What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. ³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone.

The Gospel proclaims: that the law has the potential to lead to righteousness, but the sinful dysfunctions and aberrations which we have all inherited in our human nature from our earthly father Adam limits us all from being able to attain to the perfect standard the law demands since the command, "Thou shalt not covet" embraces all our sinful thoughts and attitudes. This means it is futile to attempt to attain to the standard of righteousness God's Holiness demands and therefore the only righteousness that God recognizes is that righteousness that comes by faith. Though Paul is primarily telling those of Israel who rejected Jesus that their denial of their Messiah the Christ and their futile attempt to attain to righteousness by strictly and legalistically adhering to Moses Law and all its customs failed miserably the same principle applies to all who trust in any form of religious works customs and traditions to be saved.

NOTE: Moses law was only given to the Hebrew and Jewish people and not the nations outside of Israel, thus the reason the Gentiles did not pursue the law.

ROMANS 10

- **Romans 10:1-4:** Brothers, my (Paul's) heart's desire and prayer to God for them (the Jews) is that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

There are passionate and fervent religious people who seek to establish righteousness:

- By self-effort and good works.
- By dogmatically and meticulously following a set of doctrines.
- By strictly adhering to religious laws, rules and traditions.
- By legalistically attending religious services and keeping holy days etc.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Those who are trusting in these things for righteousness are seeking to establish their own righteous and are ignorant of God's righteousness that comes by faith in Christ and God's grace.
- Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (v4) this statement puts a floodlight on the following two truths, firstly, endeavouring to keep ceremonial rites, holy days and religious customs and traditions etc., will not save a person. Secondly, no-one can do anything to earn their own righteousness that leads to eternal life, except believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in God's grace.
- Those who believe in Christ are set free from vain attempts to attain to the holy and perfect standard of the law by self-effort since they know that their righteousness is not based on their own efforts, but on their faith they are fully assured that it is faith that God counts as righteousness and not self-effort. God has designed salvation this way because we are all descendants of Adam and have been infected with sinful aberrations and dysfunction in our fallen and corrupted human nature that limits us from attaining to the perfect standard the law demands and therefore, we all fall short of God's glory and His Holy and perfect standard. This is one of the reasons God in His eternal foreknowledge purpose a plan whereby we could attain to righteousness that would be independent of our fallen and corrupted nature.

Self-righteousness: the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus generation were a perfect example of self-righteous religious people since they believed by strictly adhering to Moses Law and its customs they were right before God, but this kind of righteousness produces pride, self-exaltation and a sense of superiority over others who do not practice the laws, traditions and religious rites as they do. This is not to say that adhering to religious practices, customs and tradition are bad in themselves they only become erroneous when by doing them a person believes they are righteous before God because of their own self-efforts. God imputes righteousness that leads to salvation and eternal life as a pure and free gift to those who trust in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, it is faith that God counts as righteousness not our own self-efforts to attain to it.

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Salvation and rewards: salvation should never be confused with rewards being stored in heaven, since salvation is a matter of FAITH, but rewards are a totally different matter. Paul tells the Corinthian church that, "Each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, they will receive a reward, but if anyone's work is burned up, they will suffer loss, though they themselves will be saved, but only as through fire (1 Cor. 3:13-15).

These verses show that those who have faithfully followed the Lord will be rewarded accordingly whereas those who have remained in faith but lived indifferently to the things of God and of Christ though they are saved by their faith will suffer loss. Paul desired with all his heart that his Jewish brothers would be saved he recognized they loved God and were zealous to serve him, but sadly they were mistaken in their knowledge of what God desired and could not perceive that God counts faith as righteousness not self-effort. There is a good lesson we can all learn from Paul's attitude, he did not condemn these Jews, but rather felt enormous sorrow and desired that they would be saved.

Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be Saved.

- **Romans 10:9-13:** because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is

no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Paul says:

- **Romans 10:17:** So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Confession in this context means declaring what is secret in the heart it carries the idea of saying something so that it won't be a secret anymore which means that salvation comes through belief in the heart and an outward confession that declares that inward belief.

The Gospel proclaims:

- With the heart one believes this refers to the vital principal or the sum total of what a person believes. Confession is important because it witnesses what is in the heart. In Jesus era and the age of the apostles' no-one came to Christ in an atmosphere of music, but simply by hearing the Good News of the Gospel.

This does not mean that it is wrong to invite people to Christ in a church service, but it should always be remembered that confessing in this context is about sharing what is already in the heart with family, friends and those we come in contact with when it is safe to do so (Christ does not expect or demand his children to deliberately put their life in danger or harm's way physically or verbally) thus biblical confession that leads to salvation is not a one-time confession, but speaking openly about our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and sharing it with others.

- No-one who believes in Christ will be put to shame (v11) this means that those who are trusting in Christ for their eternal salvation will not be humiliated or let down, they will be vindicated, because their faith guarantees their salvation since it is based on the promise of God and He cannot lie. All the faithful in the Old Testament who throughout history believed in the coming promised Messiah of Israel the King and Christ the Saviour prophesied to come, and those who throughout the generations of the New Testament until Christ returns who have had faith in the Lord will be vindicated when the Christ returns in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish Gods Kingdom of righteousness, justice joy and peace on earth during his millennial reign. The book of Revelation tells us, “When Christ returns everyone will see him and those who pierced him, and tells us, Jesus the faithful witness and the ruler of kings on earth loves us, freed us from our sins by his blood and ransomed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation to be a kingdom and priests to God and they will reign on the earth (Rev. 1:5-10). For further information see title, Kingdom of God in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- Biblical faith comes by hearing the words of Christ, repenting and believing Christ's words, this faith will be experienced inwardly by a heartfelt desire to honour God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and manifested outwardly by confessing our indwelling faith in Christ to those around us.

ROMANS 11

- **Romans 11:33-36:** Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” ³⁵ “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Though God throughout the Bible gives us enormous insights into His will, His character and His eternal plans and purposes we should never be so absolute in our thinking that there is no room for a certain amount of mystery concerning God. Moses told the people of Israel, “The secret

things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” (Deut. 29:29). No-one should be so dogmatically absolute in their concept of God that they have Him neatly wrapped up in their own finite mortal minds limited power of thinking there should always remain a certain amount of mystery. The moment anyone thinks they know God, in the sense that they have a clear picture of God’s mind and His form is the moment they have made God very small indeed. When people think they understand and know God without any shades of grey they are fitting the awesome and Almighty God into the space of their sinful, limited mortal mind and making Him very small indeed. When it comes to understanding God there will always be a certain amount of mystery and questions that will never be answered until Christ returns, thus the reason we all believe in God by faith and not by science.

The Gospel proclaims: no-one has given the LORD a gift that he might be repaid?” This means two things, firstly, no-one can give to God or do anything for Him in any way that will add anything to the LORD since everything that exists comes from God and secondly, no-one can give God a gift so that God is indebted to repay them with a reward. Nothing we do good or bad affects God. Job states this truth with the following words, “If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against the LORD? And if your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to God? If you are righteous, what do you give to the LORD? Or what does he receive from your hand? Your wickedness concerns a man like yourself, and your righteousness a son of man” (Job 35:6-8). This means that whatever we do, good or bad it only affects mankind, even the LORD Himself states, “Who has first given to me that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine (Job 41:11).

ROMANS 12

- **Romans 12:5:** so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

The Gospel proclaims:

- The glorious truth that though we are many individual believers all with different personalities we are nevertheless one body in Christ, this statement is not limited to any single local church but encompasses the worldwide global body of Christ. Remember at this time there were no denominations, just home churches mushrooming up throughout Israel and in every nation and country. It also means that not all gifts are necessarily available in one local church (if they are they are greatly blessed), but, within the global body of Christ these gifts will be found and should be recognized by all who are trusting in Christ for their salvation and faithfully devoted to the Lord since we are a global family.
- We should in love and grace listen to all but be discerning of each and take what is good and acceptable to God and reject what is not. This does not mean we cast out those who are faithfully following Christ simply because we disagree with certain teachings, since whoever is trusting in Christ and faithfully following him (howbeit flawed) are still considered by Christ to be a brother or sister of his family. This is because Christ died for us all fully aware that not one of us would ever be able to stand before him and his heavenly Father completely free of sinful dysfunctions and aberrations and totally aware that not one of would ever be able to live a sin-free life.

Here is the glory of the Gospel Jesus even knowing we can never attain to his heavenly Father’s standard of pure Holiness calls us his friend and his brothers and his sisters. Jesus didn’t die so that we could attain to God’s Pure Holiness, but because we couldn’t. In this same Spirit of love and grace that Christ pours out to us, we likewise should pour out to those who belong to his family despite our differences.

- All those who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ make up one body in Christ. He is the head of the body, and the common center of our unity. In the Lord's spiritual body some are fitted and called to one sort of work and others for another sort of work. We are all called to do-good where we can, one to another and for the common benefit of all. We should never be backward in laying out ourselves for the good of others neither should we think we are nothing and therefore feel it is OK to sit still and do nothing, rather we should think, "Though I am nothing in myself nevertheless I will lay myself out to the utmost in the love and the grace of Christ whenever I am able." Whatever our gifts or situations maybe, we should always try to employ ourselves humbly, diligently, cheerfully, and in simplicity; not seeking our own credit or profit, but the good of many (i.e., our spiritual family and for those of the world).

A personal note: in my forty-five years of Christianity it seems (to me at least) that amongst those who are zealous for the Lord Jesus Christ there appears to be six different personalities within the family of Christ (naturally there are always exceptions and a mixture of each in all churches). Three of these I have listed on the positive side, though not in any order of importance since ideally all three would be flowing in every Christian's life and every Christian church, but since we are not living in a perfect world nor do we have perfect minds, perfect understanding or perfect love there will always be a mixture of them. The other three I have listed on the negative side (please remember this is only my personal experience and certainly should not be treated as a dogmatic view or list).

On the positive side of our family the three personalities seem to be:

1. Those who have a great grasp on intellectual Bible knowledge,
2. Those who flourish in helping the poor
3. Those who have an amazing understanding of God's abundant grace.

On the negative side of our family the three personalities seem to be:

1. Those who are legalistic and dogmatic.
2. Those who are separatist.
3. Those who believe they are the only ones who have the truth and preach against all others.

It should always be kept in mind that within Christianity no single religious organization is perfect there is within each religious institution or denomination a mixture (to a lesser or greater degree) of the positive and the negative.

ROMANS 13

- **Romans 13:10:** Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

The Gospel proclaims: there is only one thing in the entire universe that Christians should owe to others. This one thing is love. To please and honour God and the Lord Jesus Christ no-one needs to memorize a list of do's and don'ts or even know the law all they have to do is give away love. The Gospel calls those in Christ to do everything in love this means, "Do what is best for the well-being of others." Have you ever wondered how to put a definition on love? Paul beautifully sums it up in four simple words, "Love does no wrong." Sadly, much of the secular world thinks the central focus of Christianity is about keeping a set of rules and religious customs and traditions, but God's concept of true Christianity is about acting and responding from love it is about doing no harm to another human.

- **Romans 14:10-12:** Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; ¹¹ for it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” ¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

In the following verses Paul says:

- **Romans 14:17-18:** For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

Judgment: in this context carries the idea of condemning a person to punishment.

Despise: in this context carries the idea of considering a person inferior.

Paul's focus in this chapter has been on brothers and sisters in Christ judging each other which means the phrase, “Every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God” applies to those in Christ and not the unsaved (see the previous verse). Notice the context of these verses is not about salvation, but serving Christ and being approved of by God.

The Gospel proclaims:

- That everyone in the family of Christ will give their own account to God and since this is the case why concern ourselves with judging another brother or sisters standing and eternal salvation. Paul is telling us that this kind of judgment should be left to each brother and sisters own master and High Priest the Lord Jesus Christ and that instead of concerning ourselves with the standing of another before the Lord a better focus for us to have and one that is far more pleasing to the Lord is to concern ourselves with making sure we don't cause others to stumble.
- The Kingdom of God is about living a good lifestyle before God and before others it is about keeping peace as much as it is in our power to do so and having joy in good and wholesome things. Many think they cannot serve Christ unless they enter into full time ministry, but the Gospel states that we can all serve the Lord by living a good lifestyle, maintaining peace as much as it is in our power to do so and by having joy in good and wholesome things. When a brother or sister in Christ lives in this manner the Gospel states that they are not only serving Christ and are acceptable to God, but are also a good testimony in the name of Christ to the secular world and acceptable to those who do not yet know the love of God.

ROMANS 15

- **Romans 15:18-21:** For I (Paul) will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, ¹⁹ by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; ²⁰ and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, ²¹ but as it is written, “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.”

The Gospel proclaims: the ministry of the Gospel of Christ, it may surprise some that in these verses we discover that the thing Paul esteemed as the greatest gift God had blessed him with was not the power to heal or God's miraculous wonders as spectacular as they were, but his ability to proclaim the Gospel. Paul's highest goal in life was not fame, not

riches, not popularity, but to proclaim the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is because there is nothing under the heavens more valuable than the Gospel since it contains the only message under the sun that leads to eternal life and everlasting glory in eternity.

NOTE: when we are sharing the Good News of the Gospel, we should always be conscious that whether we feel it or not "The power of the Spirit of God" (v19) is working on the heart of those we are speaking too. If they do not respond it does not mean the Holy Spirit was not working, but that the soil of their heart was not right to hear. Consider how many times God by His Spirit spoke to the people of Israel yet they did not receive what was spoken even though it was God's word and God's Spirit speaking through faithful prophets. The problem was not with the prophet or the words they spoke, but the heart of the people they were speaking to. Understanding this principle should encourage us all not to be harsh on ourselves because people do not respond to the Gospel because it is not us who saves them but the "The power of the Spirit of God" working on their heart.

It is the rocky soil of their heart and the cares of this world that hinders the Good News of the Gospel from taking root in their hearts and minds. A wise man once said, "When witnessing the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, you cannot say the wrong thing to a person with a right heart, and you cannot say the right thing to a person with the wrong heart." It is interesting to notice that Paul's ambition was to take the Good News of the Gospel of Christ to those who have not heard it. In these verses Paul is using the words of Isaiah to clearly show the Jews that many people from Gentile nations who have never been told or even heard of the wonders of God as the Jewish people had over thousands of years will nevertheless understand the Good News of the Gospel of Christ and his death and resurrection when they see the goodness of his life and look upon his bloody and brutally beaten bleeding body hanging on the cross and hear his non-judgmental words of forgiveness being spoken toward those who cruelly nailed him as a common criminal to it.

ROMANS 16

- **Romans 16:25-27:** Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— ²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

The Gospel proclaims:

- A mystery was kept secret for long ages, but is now revealed. This mystery refers to the Good News of the Gospel of Christ which states, "Israel's Messiah, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ died and rose to eternal life, and that by faith in Jesus Gentiles would not only become adopted children of God, but also be grafted into the Commonwealth of Israel and share with the Jews in the Old Testament promises God made to Abraham. This mystery that is now revealed in Christ is that Gentiles are now united with the Jews and together they become a new creation in Christ (also called the body of Christ; a new race; a new nation; the church and the invisible and spiritual Kingdom of God to be manifested to the world when Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.
- The dead in Christ and the faithful, who are alive (Jews and Gentiles), will be gathered together to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people (Jews and Gentiles) will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom throughout the world.

1 CORINTHIANS 1

- **1 Corinthians 1:4-8:** I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— ⁶ even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel proclaims:

- The glorious truth that God grants His abundant grace to whoever accepts by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, the words whoever is in Christ is enriched in speech and knowledge means that those who know Christ now have the knowledge that salvation comes by faith and God's grace and not by self-effort and religious works and can therefore speak the words of eternal life and by them enrich the lives of many others. The testimony of Jesus refers to the following four truths:
 1. Jesus is the Son of God and that he died and rose again to eternal glory.
 2. Through faith in him sinners are set free from the law of sin and death which states, "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 6:23). This means that the law of sin and death has no power over those who believe in Christ and faithfully follow him they like Christ will be raised from the dead to forever be with the Lord in eternal glory.
 3. Whoever comes to God through repentance and faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ is not only approved of and accepted by God the Father, but all their sins are forgiven, not because they are deserving of it by any self-effort or religious good works, but because through faith in Christ righteousness is imputed from God to them as a pure and free gift.
 4. The faithful in Christ will be resurrected to eternal glory and everlasting life.

Can there be any better testimony than this? Clearly this is one of the reasons Jesus testimony is called the Good News of the Gospel. No-one who belongs to the family of Christ lacks any spiritual gift needed to be saved to eternal life (these gifts refer to God's forgiveness and abundant grace) whoever is in Christ has all they need to be saved to eternal life while they wait patiently for the Lords return.

NOTICE: not only is Jesus sustaining us until he returns, but he will hold us guiltless when he does return, this is the majestic beauty of grace, it is because God's abundant grace works through Christ to all who are trusting in him for their eternal salvation and faithfully following him, since it is our faith that God counts as our righteousness and not our self-effort and good works.

Christ the Power and Wisdom of God.

- **1 Corinthians 1:23-24:** but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

The Gospel proclaims: the death and resurrection is both the power of God and the wisdom of God. This is of course because the message of Christ's death and his resurrection is the only message under the heavens that has the power to save a sinner to eternal life and everlasting glory. The Gospel is the wisdom of God because its message of salvation is

simple in fact so much so that it makes it difficult for those who are prideful, conceited and consider themselves wise by their own knowledge to accept since their heart condition is not right, yet a humble person with very limited education can with great ease understand the message of the cross. This is the wisdom of God no-one needs a brilliant mind or a university education to know God and attain to eternal life neither do they need to attend a Bible college since the message of the cross states, that the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God and a man without sin gave his life as a ransom for sinners, whoever believes that Christ died and rose to eternal glory and trust in him for their right standing before God will be saved to eternal life” and that sinners are saved by grace and not by self-effort, good works or adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions. This is another reason that the Gospel is difficult for a self-righteous person who considers themselves wise to accept because they count themselves righteous because of their good conduct, whereas the message of the cross states, it is our faith God counts as our righteousness and not our own self-effort or good works. God's great wisdom and power is manifested in Christ crucified in the following three ways:

1. By the majestic wonder and beauty that the way to salvation and eternal life is by faith and not dependent on having a brilliant I.Q., or great education.
2. By the truth salvation is not dependent on us overcoming every sinful aberration and dysfunction that dwells in our fallen corrupted body that we have all inherited from our earthly father Adam.
3. By the awesome power God displayed in raising a human man from the dead to eternal glory and everlasting life never to see death again.

God made Christ our Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption.

- **1 Corinthians 1:29-30:** so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.
³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

The Gospel proclaims: God made the Lord Jesus Christ every believers, wisdom, because they embrace and believe the words of Christ, righteousness, because of their faith, sanctification, because God counts them holy because of their faith and not because of works or self-effort and redeemer, because Christ paid the price to deliver them from the law of sin and death which states, “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23) which means the law of sin and death has no power to condemn to eternal death those who believe in Christ and faithfully follow him.

This is the reason neither the rich nor the poor can boast that they attained their own salvation, because God is the eternal source of every believer's life through their faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 CORINTHIANS 3

- **1 Corinthians 3:11:** For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The Gospel proclaims: God is building a spiritual royal house of kings and priests amongst the secular world of which Jesus Christ is the foundation.

A personal note: in most religious institutions, denominations and churches I have attended over the past forty-five years almost all teachings of the Bible are counted as being linked to salvation, meaning if you have all the particular set of doctrines neatly wrapped in a golden

ribbon (according to the domination one is in at the time) and your lifestyle is in accordance with their standard you are saved. This is not how Paul viewed salvation, rather he saw Christ as the foundation and considered whoever is faithfully building their life on this foundation and trusting in Christ was saved to eternal life, and will be rewarded according to how they have built on that foundation (i.e., with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or straw) (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). This clearly shows that within the global body of Christ not all behaviour nor all teachings are going to be as we might think they should, but this does not mean that a person is not saved to eternal life, but it might mean they will suffer loss since Paul tells us what is good and what is bad in a brother or sisters life will be rewarded accordingly (i.e., some will suffer loss while others will be rewarded). Nevertheless all who are building their life on the foundation should be counted as brothers and sisters in Christ since they will be saved to eternal life despite the fact they might still be feeding on milk, acting in a human manner and living their life in a worldly fashion as were those in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 3:1-4). Paul never cast doubt on their faith since he always refers to them as brothers and sisters in Christ, but he did view them as infants in the family who had never grown up.

1 CORINTHIANS 4

- **1 Corinthians 4:5:** Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

The Gospel proclaims: when the Lord returns, he will judge those who belong to his present spiritual Kingdom. The focus of judgment in the context of these verses is on two things, firstly, judging the purposes, intent and motivation of the heart and secondly, exalting brothers and sisters above others because of their gifts, spiritual knowledge or their abilities etc. Those in the body of Christ are to leave exalting others and judging the hidden things of the heart to God and treat everyone in Christ's family with equal value and equal worth.

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1 CORINTHIANS 6

- **1 Corinthians 6:11:** And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

The Gospel proclaims: every brother and sister in Christ has been washed, sanctified and justified in the Lord Jesus Christ this is the Good News of the Gospel and means the following three things, firstly, to be spiritually washed means to be completely cleared and cleansed from all sin, secondly, to be sanctified in this context carries the idea of being welcomed, approved of and set apart for God's glory and thirdly, to be justified here means to be vindicated from all wrong doing, it carries the idea of being supported, defended and exonerated, pardoned and acquitted from any fault and therefore counted blameless.

Here is the wonder and splendour of the Good News of the Gospel and the enormity of God's abundant grace. No-matter what horrific background a person may come from, if they humble themselves and come to God in honest repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not only are they fully forgiven, accepted and all the terror of whatever maybe in their past is washed away before the eyes of God, but they are also delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col. 1:13). This is one of the reasons the Gospel message is called the Good News.

Your body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit.

- **1 Corinthians 6:19-20:** Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

The Gospel proclaims: The body of every brother and sister in Christ is the temple of the Holy Spirit this statement carries the following three ideas, firstly, those in Christ are joined with him in the spirit of love and have the same desire and motivation and live for the same purpose which is honour the name of our heavenly Father, secondly, those in Christ are one spirit with him, in love, kindness, gentleness, compassion, forgiveness and grace etc., since these things express the character of Christ and thirdly those in Christ have the presence of God's love dwelling in their heart which comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and our union with him. Every brother and sister in Christ were bought with a price. The price Paul refers to is the life of God's only beloved Son. The Lord Jesus Christ laid down his life so that we could be made righteous by faith apart from the law, self-effort and works. In spite of our indwelling sinful aberrations and dysfunctions God counts our faith in Christ as our righteousness it is imputed to us as a pure and free gift.

1 CORINTHIANS 8

- **1 Corinthians 8:6:** yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

The Gospel proclaims: the following two major truths concerning God and the Lord Jesus Christ firstly, there is only one God the Father who is the source of all life and all creation and secondly, there is one Lord Jesus Christ through who we exist by faith in God's eternal Kingdom. The *all things* concerning Christ do not refer to creation, but to *all things* needed for eternal salvation (i.e., forgiveness of sins, God's favour, mercy and grace, the promises to Abraham and eternal life) *all things* we need to be saved to everlasting life and eternal glory are in Christ. It is in this sense that Paul penned the words, there is, one Lord, Jesus Christ, through who are all things and through whom we exist. Paul was not referring to the original creation, but to the church, the body of Christ. Without Christ there would be no Kingdom of God, no-global body of Christ and no church they simply would not exist. God in His eternal mind foreordained in His eternal plans and purposes that Christ would be the foundation, the King and Saviour of mankind's eternal salvation and that through faith in Christ all things eternal would exist. The words, "Jesus Christ, through who are all things and through whom we exist" have been mistakenly used to support the theory that Jesus is God the creator, but if this was true how would it harmonize with the previous verse Paul wrote, stating that "There is only one God the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist." Contrary to the traditional teaching of Christianity that Jesus is God this verse clearly shows that there is one God who is the Father of us all and the source of all life and creation and one Lord Jesus Christ who is the source of our eternal salvation and God's eternal Kingdom.

The Gospel does not proclaim: that Jesus is God nor does it proclaim that Jesus pre-existed with God from the foundations of the world as a Spirit Son and then become a fetus in the womb of Mary as many believe today. Certainly, Jesus was in the eternal mind of God from the beginning in that he was the central focus of God's eternal plan of salvation for mankind. Christ was with God from the beginning in the same way as a woman who begins to plan having a baby sees the child in her mind long before it is even conceived. The child is not only very real in the mothers' mind long before the baby is born, but she will prepare a room and make plans for its arrival, its well-being and its future. It is in this same sense that Jesus was with God from the beginning; he was the central focus of God's eternal mind and of His eternal plans, purposes and promises for mankind's eternal salvation. Much like an architect who designs a majestic building fit for a royal family, the entire structure and all its beauty and glory is fully completed in his mind long before the builders are even on

the site upon which the structure is to be built. The reason why the prophets of the Old Testament were able to speak of the coming of Israel's Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God long before he appeared, was because God by his Spirit imparted to their minds the eternal plan he had purposed in his eternal mind and inspired them to impart this eternal plan to the people of Israel.

It is interesting to notice: that there is not one verse in the entire Bible that states we must believe that Jesus is God to be saved whereas in contrast to this silence there are literally multitudes of Scriptures that clearly state, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Son of God will be saved," whereas there is not one verse that says, "whoever believes that Jesus is God the Son will be saved." Surely if it was important to believe that Jesus was actually God, Christ would have told the apostles at least once in his discourses with them and in his messages of salvation, but all we find in the Scriptures is Jesus and the apostles proclaiming that people must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved. Even Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:3). For further information see the notes following (Matt. 16:16 above).

1 CORINTHIANS 15

- **1 Corinthians 15:1-2:** Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

The Gospel does not proclaim: that those in Christ are being saved as some might tend to think. The words, "by which you are being saved" (are saved in KJV)" (v2) does not mean that those who have faith in Christ are in the process of being saved. We know this because Paul throughout all his teachings clearly states that we are counted righteous because of our faith not because of our works and that it is our faith in Christ that saves us to eternal life and not self-effort or keeping religious ceremonial rites and traditions. The following are just a few of the verses that show that the King James Bible always presents salvation in Christ as absolute:

Acts: (Acts 2:47) the English Standard Bible says, "The Lord added to their number day by day those who were *being saved*" --- The King James Bible agrees it says --- "The Lord added to the church daily *such as should be saved*" clearly showing that it is the unsaved who are in the process of being saved.

Corinthians: (1 Cor. 1:18) the English Standard Bible says, "The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to *us who are being saved* it is the power of God" --- The King James Bible says --- "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto *us which are saved* it is the power of God."

Corinthians: (1 Cor. 15:2) the English Standard Bible says, "By which *you are being saved*, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you unless you believed in vain" --- The King James Bible says --- "By which also *ye are saved*, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain."

These are only a few of the verses that show when referring to eternal salvation in Christ the King James Bible does not give any room to think that salvation in Christ is a process (i.e., not complete) since it is always stated in the absolute and never uses the term "being saved" when referring to those in Christ but rather always states, "ye are saved" or "which are saved" etc.

Strong's concordance: tells us that the word, (*are*) is only used when something is absolute, assured and definitely decided. The idea of being saved is only applied to those who are being witnessed to and are listening with an open heart it is to this person or group of people that the King

James Bible would say, "They are being saved," meaning they are in the process of being saved, but haven't yet responded to the Gospel message. Faith that saves to eternal life is absolute meaning it is 100% assured to those who are fully trusting in Christ and faithfully following him.

The Gospel does not proclaim: that whoever believes and trusts in Jesus will be 95% saved, but they will have to earn the other 5% to be fully saved since Christ's horrific death wasn't quite enough to fully save those who come to him in humble repentance and faithfully follow him. This idea is a gross misunderstanding of the message of the cross and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is a gift of God granted to those who put their trust and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for their righteousness and eternal salvation there is no room for doubt in believing and trusting in the cleansing power of the blood of Christ it is absolute.

This is one of the reasons the Gospel of Christ is called the Good News. In the context of eternal salvation, the Bible speaks of three groups of people, firstly, those who are saved, secondly, those who are being saved (i.e., those who are being witnessed to by those already saved) and thirdly those who are perishing (referring to the wicked and those who deny God).

The Gospel proclaims: if those confessing Christ do not believe they are saved in Christ by grace to eternal life then their belief is in vain (i.e., its wasted) since it will be of no benefit to them in this present spiritual Kingdom of God nor will it save them to eternal life in the future literal and eternal Kingdom since the instant we believe we have to earn our way to eternal life is the instant we nullify what Christ achieved for us on the cross. It is through faith in Christ that we enter into the promised rest meaning rest from trying though self-effort to be good enough to be counted worthy and acceptable to God.

- **1 Corinthians 15:3-4:** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

The Gospel proclaims: Christ died for our sins, was buried and was raised on the third day and appeared to many and shines a spotlight on the truth that Christ and the resurrection, is the center of the Gospel and the hope of all who believe. The faithful of the Old Testament looked in faith and in hope toward the coming of the promised Messiah the Christ while New Testament brothers and sisters are not only able to look back to Israel's Messiah and Christ's death and resurrection, but also as did the faithful of the Old Testament look toward his return as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

If Christ has Not been Raised your Faith is Futile.

- **1 Corinthians 15:14-17:** And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

The Gospel proclaims: without faith in the resurrection the Christian faith is not worth the paper it is written on. The majestic and awesome day of the resurrection of both the faithful of the Old and New Testament who are sleeping in Christ will manifest the breath-taking and overwhelming awe-inspiring wondrous power of Almighty God as nothing else has since the days of creation.

SLEEPING IN CHRIST

- **1 Corinthians 15:18-19:** Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

The Gospel proclaims: when a person who belongs to Christ dies, the Bible says, that they have no knowledge and know nothing, they are totally unaware of it and are therefore in a perfect state of peace, this state is called sleeping in Christ and because they have no consciousness there, is no time. It is very similar to someone in a deep sleep there is no awareness of time, when the person wakes, they have no idea of whether four, seven or twelve hours have passed. Likewise, because there is no time in death the moment a Christian, dies, is the moment they are in the Kingdom of God and with the LORD, for them it is instant, even though many years may have passed by in our world's time. David died thousands of years ago, but the moment he is resurrected will be like the moment he breathed his last breath, because for him there is no awareness of time, so it is for every Christian from death to Christ is instant. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are to be most pitied. This means if our primary focus is on what we can get from God in this mortal life and not on the resurrection to eternal glory and everlasting life then we are trading the glory of the Christian faith for the temporal things of this world.

Death to the Christian is similar to a person in a coma: a person in a coma has no consciousness of time, time does not exist to them, when they wake, they often think only a day or so has gone by, when in actual fact several years may have passed yet they think they are waking up, the same day, or next day after they went to sleep. The person in the coma or in death is totally unaware of any time that they have spent in the coma or being dead. Death to those who belong to Christ is much the same as the person in the coma, the dead or those who are sleeping in Christ have absolutely no consciousness of time so for them, the moment they die, is the moment they are instantly with the Lord, even though many years may have passed during the time they have been dead (i.e., sleeping in Christ).

It is the same principal as a person who goes into hospital for an operation: the patient is given an anaesthetic and put to sleep, surgeons cut them up and take bits out, over the next few hours, yet the patient is totally unaware of it they wake up and have absolutely no idea of the time that has passed, therefore when Paul says, "We are of good courage, and we would rather be away (absent in the KJV) from the body and at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8) it is a true statement, even though he may have spent years sleeping in Christ. A second reason a Christians death is called sleeping in Christ is because their death is only temporary, being asleep in Christ means everyone who dies in Christ is kept in the eternal mind and memory of God. Jesus said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them falls to the ground without the father knowing it and even the hairs of our head are all numbered therefore we should not fear death because we are of more value than many sparrows (Matthew 10:29-31). The entire person, (i.e., body, spirit, mind and consciousness) remains sleeping in Christ, until the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5) when all who are asleep in the Lord are woken up at the blast of the angels trumpet and raised from the dead to everlasting glory and clothed with an eternal and immortal body.

NOTE: some people find it difficult to comprehend God raising the dead, but think of it this way: we have super computers today that have in their memories literally trillions of bits of information and at the touch of a key any one of those bits is resurrected to us on a brightly coloured screen (soon it is most likely they will simply appear in the air), then with another touch of the key it all vanishes into the super memory and is gone, until we resurrect it again. Knowing that God has given his creation a mortal mind and finite memory to be able to build such amazing computers should make it very easy to understand how God keeps us all in His immortal mind and eternal memory waiting for the right time to touch the supernatural keyboard of heaven and raise us once again to life. Added to this very few Christians have any trouble believing God created the universe that we live in so raising the dead in comparison is not such a difficult task for such an awesome, powerful and majestic God (Hebrews 11:3).

Christ rose from the Dead, the Firstfruits of those who have Fallen Asleep.

- **1 Corinthians 15:20-23:** But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

The Gospel proclaims: those who are naturally born of our earthly father Adam die while those who are spiritually born through faith in Christ by the Spirit of God will live eternally. The phrase, "As in Adam" carries the following three ideas, firstly, being separated from God, secondly, being mortal and destined to death and thirdly belonging to this world. Being in Adam carries the idea that those who are in Adam are led and influenced by self, ego and pride and their only focus is on the things this world has to offer (i.e., riches, wealth, material possessions and such like things) in contrast to the expression, "Being in Christ" which refers to those who belong to the family of Christ who are not only destined for eternal life but also endeavour to live in a manner that honours God and brings a good testimony to the name of Christ.

Jesus was the first to be raised to eternal glory and that in the next resurrection when the Lord Jesus Christ returns God in a twinkling of an eye will raise from the dead to eternal glory and everlasting life all who are sleeping in Christ (Old and New Testament) in the same manner as He raised the Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly, there were some in the New Testament who were raised from the dead, but they were raised to mortal life not eternal life.

- **1 Corinthians 15:24-26:** Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

The Gospel proclaims: the Lord will return in glory to rule and reign as, King of kings and Lord of Lords (Rev 19:11-16) to establish God's Kingdom on earth during his glorious millennial reign and at the end of this new age he will deliver the Kingdom to his heavenly Father and God will be All in All and ETERNITY will begin in all its royal majestic fullness and glory. For further information see the notes following Matthew 23:39 (above).

- **1 Corinthians 15:50-54:** I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

The Gospel proclaims: what is corrupt and decaying cannot inherit what is holy, immortal and eternal which means that the mortal human fallen and corrupted body that we have inherited from our earthly father Adam with all its indwelling sinful dysfunctions and aberrations cannot inherit the future literal eternal Kingdom of God to be established on earth when Christ returns in glory. When this world changing event happens those who are asleep in Christ and those who are alive will not only be raised and changed from corruption to incorruption and from mortality to immortality, but they will also be gathered together to eternal life to be with the Lord in everlasting glory and all of this will happen in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet. When this glorious event takes place, death is swallowed up in victory for those who are raised in this first resurrection and over them and those who were alive and gathered together with them the second death will have no power (Revelation 20:5-6). This means two glorious things for those who attain to this first awe-inspiring resurrection firstly, all the sinful dysfunctions and aberrations (i.e., pride, ego, selfishness, greed, lustful thoughts, jealousies, envy and such like things

that dwell in our present mortal body will not exist in our new immortal eternal bodies and secondly, we will never again lack energy or feel pain, sickness, depression, despair or sadness and sorrow. This is another glorious reason why the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is called the Good News.

NOTICE: Paul says, "I tell you a mystery" (v51) referring to the resurrection and our mortal body being transformed to an immortal body, even Paul with all his revelations and visions still viewed the resurrected body as a mystery which implies that not even Paul himself fully understood every detail regarding the form our new resurrected body will take other than that it will be glorious, immortal and eternal.

2 CORINTHIANS 2

- **2 Corinthians 2:15-16:** For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, ¹⁶ to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?

The Gospel proclaims: the words of life and death, when we share the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to others, we have the power to bring life or death to those we share it with. This does not mean that it is our responsibility to save a person that glory is totally out of our control. No-one is called to force or impose a person to accept Christ or manipulate them into the Christian faith. Our calling is only to share our faith, how the other person responds is totally up to them. No brother or sister should ever be harsh on themselves because whoever they witnessed to did not respond since a person's response is totally dependent on the soil of their heart. If it is good soil, they will accept the message the Gospel proclaims, but if the soil is rocky the message will not take root.

2 CORINTHIANS 3

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- **2 Corinthians 3:3-6:** And you (the Corinthians) show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us (the apostles), written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. ⁴ Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The Gospel proclaims:

- A message that brings about a radical change of heart, the ceremonial Law of Moses written in stone by the finger of God involved strictly adhering to ceremonial rites, holy Sabbaths and feast days, making regular sacrifices and offerings to God and keeping certain religious rules and laws whereas the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in contrast brings about a deep change in the heart of every repentant sinner who perceives what it cost God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ to save them to eternal life. This radical change of heart changes the inward desires, motivations and ambitions so that those in Christ are in this sense born again with a new passion that desires to honour God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what the words, "Written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (v3) means, the verse is contrasting the Law of Moses which demanded the strict adherence to religious practices with the Good News of the Gospel of grace; whereby those who are saved desire from the heart to live a life that honours God and brings a good testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Whoever belongs to the Lords family is a letter from Christ to others, but not an intellectual letter of dogmatic doctrines and legalistic law but of the Spirit of God's grace and love dwelling in them and following out to those they come in contact with. Wherever, a faithful brother or

sister of the Lord Jesus Christ go they are a living letter of those whose ministry they sit under. This means that they are a reflection to whoever they come in contact with of the character and ministry they sit under.

- No-one needs a religious certificate or document from any established religious organization or their leaders to prove they are approved of by God or the Lord Jesus Christ, rather their evidence of approval are those they are ministering to. This is because the fruit of their ministry will be evidenced by those they minister to, (i.e., are they producing legalistic and dogmatic disciples who minister from the letter of the law) or disciples full of the spirit of love and grace. A minister certificate of approval is the fruit they produce in those they shepherd.
- Those who minister and testify of the Lord Jesus Christ from a spirit of dogma and legalism destroy those who they are ministering to whereas those who minister from a spirit of love, grace and mercy bring life to those they shepherd.
- The Spirit of God has not imprinted the law on the hearts of those who belong to Christ, but rather love and grace by the power of the cross, meaning every sinner who humbles themselves before God in honest repentance and accept Christ as their Saviour is filled with Christ's great love and God's abundant grace. This is because their eyes are spiritually opened and they perceive that Christ laid down his life to a brutal, bloody and cruel death so that they could be saved to eternal life and in this manner the Spirit of God (i.e., love, grace and mercy etc.,) changes their heart, but not to living by the legalistic letter of the law and rule keeping, but to the same love and grace God and the Lord Jesus Christ displayed to them and to all mankind through the cross of Calvary.

NOTE: the focus of every chapter in the New Testament is either on some aspect of Jesus' life or some aspect of human behaviour.

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- **2 Corinthians 3:14-16:** But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

The Gospel proclaims: the mind of a religious and self-righteous person is blinded from the grace of God until they accept Jesus. Without Christ those who are religious go about establishing their own righteousness by the constant practice of adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days, and keeping religious customs and traditions. Only through Christ is this veil of blindness to God's grace taken away from the mind and the eyes are opened to perceiving the futility of attempting to earn righteousness by self-effort and religious works and the truth that it is those who trust in Christ for their righteousness that God counts worthy of eternal life.

- **2 Corinthians 3:17-18:** Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom this means the following three things, firstly, freedom from the Old Testament covenant with all its ceremonial rites and religious laws rules and practises, secondly, freedom from trying to attain to the perfect standard the law demands to be counted righteous and thirdly, freedom from trying to earn righteousness by self-effort, good works and religious customs and traditions.
- That faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who make Christ the King and Lord of their heart and mind are being transformed from one degree of glory to another into the image of Christ. This means that they are not only growing mentally and spiritually but also in their

outward behaviour in the fruits of the Spirit (i.e., love, grace, mercy, righteousness, joy, contentment, peace and patience). This transformation to spiritual maturity is developing through both the good times of life, and also through the troubles and hardships providing we endure in faith until the Lord returns.

NOTE: the words, "The Lord who is the Spirit" refers to the spirit of love, grace, mercy and forgiveness this is not only the Spirit of the Lord, but also the Spirit of God his heavenly Father. John in his letter wrote, "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love" (1 John 4:8) and said, "God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 John 4:16).

2 CORINTHIANS 4

- **2 Corinthians 4:3-6:** And even if our (the apostles) gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we (the apostles) proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel proclaims:

- The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ. The god of this world is an expression that refers to money, riches, wealth and the luxuries, pleasures and indulgences of this world. These are what drive the world's governments, trade and economy and influence human nature (i.e., self, ego, pride and greed etc.). Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (Matt 6:24).

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Unbelievers do not want to bow down to God or be accountable to Him because God's Kingdom is not about chasing after the riches, pleasures and luxuries of this world. It is pride, ego and the hearts craving for the things of this world that blinds unbelievers to the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ. The god of this world primarily refers to money and profit which is not only what this entire world is controlled by, but what the world craves after. It is the desire in the human heart for these things that blinds unbelievers to the glorious Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The glorious message of salvation is veiled to those who are perishing. This is because Jesus brutal, bloody and cruel death, his glorious resurrection and the Gospel message of God's forgiveness and eternal plan of salvation cannot be fully perceived until a person humbles themselves before God in honest repentance and accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour.
- Jesus is the image of God, this statement does not mean that Jesus is God as many believe, but rather that he is the mirror image of God. It presents the idea of a person standing in front of a mirror and the mirror reflecting back the perfect image of that person. The image is not the person, but it is a perfect reflection of that person.

It is in this manner that the Lord Jesus Christ, the glorified and perfect Son of God perfectly reflects the image of his heavenly Fathers. The words, "Jesus is the image of God," means that God and Jesus are not only perfectly one in mind, plans and purposes, but are also one in perfect love and perfect unity.

For further information see the notes following Matthew 16:16 (above).

- **2 Corinthians 5:1-8:** For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³ if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. ⁶ So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

The Gospel proclaims:

- God has prepared a new eternal body (our heavenly home) for those who belong to the family of Christ so that when our mortal body (our earthly home) is destroyed by death we will not be found naked (meaning without a body), but clothed upon with a heavenly immortal body.
- While we dwell in our earthly mortal body, we inwardly agonise with longing to be clothed upon with our eternal and immortal body.
- God has prepared those who belong to Christ's family for eternal life by giving them the Spirit as a guarantee. The Spirit in this context refers to the spirit of righteousness (also called the Holy Spirit) which God gives as a pure and free gift to all who has faith in His Son.
- Those in Christ walk by faith, not by sight, this means that we don't trust in our own works and self-effort or in keeping ceremonial rites or adhering to religious customs and traditions to be counted righteous and worthy of God for eternal life, but instead trust by faith in Christ and in God's grace.
- When those who belong to Christ die, they are present with the Lord. For further information concerning this statement see the title sleeping in Christ following (1 Cor. 15:18-19) (above).
- **2 Corinthians 5:14-15:** For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

The Gospel proclaims: it is not legalistic laws and rules that control the behaviour of faithful brothers and sisters in Christ, but the love of God that controls their behaviour, actions and speech, it is from love that they desire to live for Christ and not from the demands of the letter of the law. The words, "We have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died" refers to Jesus words, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

The apostles' reason that if Christ died for all the world so that those in the world who chose to believe can have eternal life then all who are in the world must be without eternal life and doomed to perish otherwise there would be no need for Christ to die for the entire world.

- **2 Corinthians 5:17-21:** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Reconcile: means to mutually change and join together it carries the idea of two people mutually changing and agreeing to be different to the way things have been.

The Gospel proclaims:

- If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. This means that in Christ no-one is counted as a Jew or Gentile, noble or lowly, no-one is counted as being superior to others simply because of their station in life or because of their birthright. Prior to this Jews saw themselves as the holy race with God and Gentiles as the unholy race without God, but now in Christ there is neither Jew or Gentiles, male or female all are equal citizens in regards to salvation and eternal life.
- The entire human race is separated from God, without hope and spiritually dead and that through Christ God is reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. God by His Spirit came to humanity through Christ and in Christ not only manifested His love, compassion, kindness mercy and grace to all humanity, but also His power, purposes, promises and eternal plan of salvation. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ reconciles whoever believes (regardless of their corrupt or crooked past) to God.
- God's ways in the New Testament are different to His dealings with Israel in the Old Testament in the following sense; God is not counting trespasses against those in Christ this is why the New Testament covenant of grace is far better than the old covenant. The new covenant is a covenant (meaning agreement) of grace and not condemnation as was the law. Our covenant with God is to love and faithfully abide in Christ while God's covenant to us is twofold, firstly He covenants not count our sins against us and secondly, He covenants to love and accept all who faithfully follow His Son. This is the message of reconciliation.
- Every brother and sister in Christ should not live for themselves, but live to honour the Lord because he laid his life down for them. Christ death was not only to reconcile us to God, but also to cure us of self-love and excite us to act under the influence of his love. It is when a Christian's life is devoted to Christ who died for them that they are able to live in a manner that honours God and the Lord.
- Brothers and sisters in Christ are ambassadors for Christ on earth and the God makes his invitation to all mankind through all who belong to the global family of Christ as they share their faith with those who are perishing. Notice God does not force Himself upon mankind, rather the Gospel is presented much like a wedding invitation that can be accepted or rejected. God always leaves man with free choice to choose either instant temporary gratification or eternal life with the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTE: the words, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Christ we might become the righteousness of God" (v21), do not mean that Jesus became a sinner. The words 'to' and 'be' are not in the original text. The verses most likely means, "For our sake he made him to bear sin (or bear the punishment of sin) who knew no sin, so that in Christ we might become the righteousness of God."

2 CORINTHIANS 6

- **2 Corinthians 6:1-2:** Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

The Gospel proclaims: that now in this present age salvation will come to whoever believes it is the favourable time because whoever comes to Christ enters into a covenant of God's grace and God's love and not a

covenant of laws and ceremonial rites and religious rules. The words, "Do not to receive the grace of god in vain" means do not go back to trusting in self-effort, and adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days or keeping religious customs and traditions to be counted righteous and saved to eternal life.

2 CORINTHIANS 7

- **2 Corinthians 7:10:** For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

The Gospel proclaims: two types of grief, one leads to life the other to death. Godly grief is having sorrow for the hurt and pain caused to another person and the desire to correct it. It refers to repentance that stems firstly from offending God and secondly from hurting another person, this kind of grief leads to a change of attitude in the heart. This is the reason it is called godly grief, the sorrow is not about self, but stems from offending God and from hurting others this kind of sorrow leads to salvation, because it is honest repentance from the heart and truly sorry before God. Following are three primary reasons that this kind of repentance is without regret:

1. It allows God and those who have been hurt to forgive.
2. It unites the repentant person to God.
3. It saves to eternal life.

In contrast to godly grief is worldly grief, it is about being sorry because of the punishment one is going to suffer, there is no thought for the other person's pain, hurt and suffering, the sorrow is for self, it is about what self is going suffer. This kind of grief is in absolute contrast to, godly grief. This is because even though worldly grief may bring a person to tears of sorrow, their sorrow is only motivated by the fact they have been caught and are going to suffer some form of punishment. This kind of repentance does not bring about a change of attitude in the heart since its only focus is caring about self. This is the reason it is called worldly grief and worldly sorrow and the reason it leads to death (separation from God and death eternal) since this kind of repentance and grief has nothing to do with God neither does it care about the hurt it may have caused others.

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2 CORINTHIANS 10

- **2 Corinthians 10:17-18:** "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." ¹⁸ For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

The Gospel proclaims: if any brother or sister in Christ is going to boast they should not boast in their own religious works, knowledge or ministry no-matter how successful they maybe nor should they ever think they are saved by them, but rather boast that they are saved by faith in Christ and God's grace because it is these people who the Lord commends to his heavenly Father.

2 CORINTHIANS 13

- **2 Corinthians 13:4:** For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God meaning he was put to death in the nature of mortal humanity and raised by the power of God to eternal glory and eternal life.

This verse shows that it is the immortal invisible Almighty God the creator of all things who is the source of all life (i.e., mortal and eternal).

- **2 Corinthians 13:5-8:** Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! ⁶ I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test. ⁷ But we pray to God that you may not do wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. ⁸ For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.

The Gospel proclaims: we should examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith for two reasons, firstly, to make sure we have not been deceived by false ministers or traditions and secondly, to check that our behaviour does not dishonour God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The primary context of examining ourselves is in the framework of right and wrong behaviour, and examining our behaviour against what the Gospel teaches to see if we are in Christ. Paul in these verses is speaking to the Corinthian church which was full of divisions, self-exaltation, jealousies and such like things. Their behaviour was so bad that it would give cause for any faithful Christian to think they were totally ignorant of the nature of Christ and of the Christian faith so much so that Paul considered it important for them to examine themselves against what he had written to ascertain whether the false teachers disguised as servants righteousness (2 Cor. 11:15) had completely deceived and led them away from the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus Christ is in you this can be understood in the following two ways, firstly, in the book of John Jesus said, "In that day you will know that *I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.* Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him (John 14:20). Jesus is saying, "He is in his Father and those who belong to Christ are in him and Jesus is in them," and then says, "Whoever loves him is loved by the Father and whoever is loved by the Father Jesus will love and manifest himself to them." Christ is in the Father by love, the Father is in Christ by love and those who belong to Christ are in Christ by love and Christ is in them by love. It is the spirit of love that unites the Father, Christ and those in Christ together.

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Jesus said, "Greater love has no-man than this, that he lays down his life for his friends," (John 15:13). When a person's eyes are opened to their fallen condition before God and perceive what it cost the Lord Jesus Christ to save them their heart is filled with love for him, it is in this sense that Christ dwells in the human heart. The following is a true story and a good example of a person being in the heart of another. An eight-year old disabled girl, whose best friend was her mother was doing her first live stage show at her school. The mother loved her daughter but could not be at the opening show as she was in hospital with terminal cancer. A television reporter asked the mother's daughter if she would be sad and miss her mother at the opening of the show. The young girl with tears in her eyes said, "Yes I will miss her, but she will be in my heart where she belongs." Love for a person creates the reality and presence of that person in the human heart.

The Father, Jesus and Believers are all in God and are all One.

Jesus prayed, "I do not ask for these (apostles) only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, *just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us*, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, *I in them and you in me* that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me." (John 17:20-23). Jesus in prayer prays that everyone who belongs to him will all be perfectly one, just as the Father is in Jesus and Jesus is in the Father. He asks God that everyone who is trusting in him would also be in him as he is in the Father. Jesus desire is that those who belong to him would be one in the Father and in Jesus so that the world

may believe that God sent Jesus and loves those who belong to him with the same love that he loves Jesus with. Once again this is all about love. The Father, Jesus and those who belong to him are in each other by love. Jesus is praying that those who belong to him will be in the Father and in Christ by love because it is this love that manifests Christ and the glory of the Father to the world. In this context to become perfectly one means to be united perfectly in love with the Father, with Jesus and with each other.

GALATIANS 1

- **Galatians 1:4:** who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus laid down his life not for himself, but for us. The words, "To deliver us from this present evil age" means two things, firstly, it is from the love Christ displayed toward us in laying down his life that we from that love should live in a manner that reflects his good character and not follow the ways of this world that dishonour God and bring shame to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Secondly, when Christ returns, we will be delivered from this present evil age with all its corruptions to eternal glory.

NOTE: this verses shows that no brother or sister in Christ should be surprised or shocked at the corruption we see in this world, not only at the level of the common people, but also in top levels of government, because the entire purpose of Christ's death and resurrection is to deliver us not from a righteous and holy world, but a corrupt and wicked one.

GALATIANS 2

- **Galatians 2:15-16:** We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

The Gospel proclaims: no-one is justified and saved by self-effort and works of the law or adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and by keeping religious customs and traditions. The only way anyone (Jew or Gentile), can be justified and saved to eternal life is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTE: the words, "We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners" shows the attitude of the religious Jews at that time they considered themselves as the holy race with God and the Gentiles as the unholy race without God.

GALATIANS 4

- **Galatians 4:6:** And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

The Gospel proclaims: that those who belong to the global family of Christ are sons and daughters of God and that the Spirit of Christ God has sent into their hearts is love it is from this love for God as their personal Heavenly Father that the spirit of the heart cries "Abba Father."

GALATIANS 5

- **Galatians 5:5-6:** For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

The Gospel proclaims:

- It is through the Spirit and by faith that brothers and sisters in Christ eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness, this means that at this present time we are counted righteous by our faith in Christ which is not yet manifested, but will be when, "What is sown in dishonour and weakness is raised in glory and in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. Just as we have borne the image of Adam the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of Christ the man of heaven because we will all be changed in that mysterious moment in the twinkling of an eye when the last trumpet sounds and the dead in Christ are raised imperishable, and this perishable body puts on the imperishable, and this mortal body puts on immortality (1 Cor. 15:42-53). When this awe inspiring and world changing event occurs the glory of God's perfect righteousness abiding within all those in Christ will be outwardly manifest in all its holy splendour for the world to clearly see.
- Only faith working through love counts for anything this statement carries the following two ideas, firstly, every brother and sister in Christ is delivered from the struggle and futile effort of attaining to God's perfect standard of righteous that leads to eternal life by their faith in Christ and by God's grace. This is the wonder and glory of the Good News of the Gospel of Christ; God counts our faith in his Son as our righteousness and not our own self-effort. Secondly, it is not adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions etc., that will bring any reward from God, but only those things we do from love, (i.e., whenever we show kindness, mercy, grace, compassion, forgiveness and justice to another person especially a brother or sister in Christ) God notices and stores rewards in the vaults of heaven for those who show love in this manner to others in contrast to simply keeping and performing religious acts and rites.

NOTE: when salvation to eternal life is spoken of as the hope of the faithful in Christ, it is not called hope because it might or might not happen, but because it is unseen and yet future. The hope itself is guaranteed because it is based on God's promise and he cannot lie. The apostle Paul wrote; "In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began" (Titus 1:2).

EPHESIANS 1

- **Ephesians 1:3:** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

Heavenly: means elevated or lifted up, in this context it carries the idea of something being far beyond any good thing the world can give. There are two aspects to the heavenly and spiritual blessings those in Christ are blessed with.

The Gospel proclaims: God grants the following glorious spiritual heavenly blessings to every faithful brother and sister because of their faith in His Son, forgiveness of sins and favour with God; God's grace and mercy and fellowship with God and with Christ; God's free gift of righteousness imputed to them apart from works and self-effort; freedom from the bondage of the law and self-effort to earn righteousness and the promise of eternal life and everlasting glory with Christ and God the Father.

These are God's heavenly gifts to every faithful brother and sister in Christ. This is the wonder, glory and splendour of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and why it is called the Good News. Whoever is in Christ has these blessings, not because of their ability to perform religious duties, customs or traditions or because of any form of self-effort or grand Bible Knowledge, but because of their faithful relationship to Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace.

NOTE: heavenly and spiritual blessings can also refer to the state of the mind and the well-being of every faithful brother and sister in Christ since the word heavenly means elevated or lifted up. The expression "In heavenly places," carries the idea that the mind is lifted up into high places of joy, happiness, contentment, mental calm, inner peace and love by the Gospel of Christ. It is similar to when the world has an amazing day or great win and shout to their friends in exuberant excitement, "Wow! I'm in heavenly places" it is a spiritual way of saying that the mind is in an elevated place of excitement, joy and well-being.

It is called heavenly blessings because they are the exact opposite to being fearful and being constantly filled with worry, stress, anxiety and never being content or satisfied, but instead always left wanting more. This type of mindset is referred to as being earthly since it is in direct contrast to a heavenly mindset. The reason the faithful in Christ are blessed with such a peaceful and contented mind is because the central focus in their life and supreme desire of their heart is the Lord Jesus Christ, in contrast to craving after the things of this world to find happiness.

- **Ephesians 1:4-6:** even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Chose: (chosen in KJV) means to select and choose out or to make a choice.

The Gospel proclaims: God invites sinners through the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to come to him through faith in his Son and that God the Father predestined before the foundation of the world that those who are saved should be holy and blameless in love. To achieve this goal God predestined that whoever responds to the Gospel would be adopted into God's family by their faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Before the foundations of the world God the Father predestined in His eternal foreknowledge that Christ would be the central figure of salvation, then predestined that those who chose from their own free will to accept and believe in Christ as their Saviour God Himself would not only choose and accept them, but also shower them with spiritual and heavenly blessings (as listed above).

The Gospel proclaims: that It was the purpose and will of God the Father before the foundation of the world that He would adopt those who belong to Christ into His eternal family and therefore predestined and promised that He would put His love and grace on those who freely from their own will choose to believe in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ and faithfully follow him. For further information on predestination see the title:

- Predestination (ON WEBSITE MENU).

NOTE: these verses are not saying that God has predestined some to be saved and some to be damned since that would violate man's free will and any need to proclaim the Gospel. Though God desires that all would be saved He will never violate another person's will. The entire concept of man's free-will would be pointless if God before the foundation of the world predestined some to be blessed with eternal life and everlasting glory and others to be condemned to eternal death and therefore left totally powerless to change their fate if God had pre-determined their end, but the Good News is that this is not how God saves sinners to eternal life.

- **Ephesians 1:7-10:** In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

The Gospel proclaims: in the fullness of time all will be brought together in and by Christ. The things that are in heaven refer to God, the Lord Jesus Christ and the angels, while the things that are on earth refer to the faithful in Christ and those who are sleeping in Christ, those whose name are written in the Lambs Book of Life at the Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:1-15). At the fullness of time the things in heaven are going to descend to earth and dwell with those on earth who belong to the family of the Lord Jesus Christ. John in the Book of Revelation had a vision in which he saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God and heard a loud voice from the throne of God saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelations 21:2-4).

Once again we see that what God predestined is not referring to some fortunate people being predestined to be saved to eternal life while others are predestined to be condemned to eternal death if this theory was true it would totally violate God's laws of justice (i.e., giving everyone a fair go and an equal opportunity). What God predestined in these verses before the foundation of the world is that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ would be redeemed through his blood (referring to his death and resurrection) and have their sins forgiven according to God's abundant grace.

This means that we all have the opportunity to accept or reject Christ, if we chose to accept Christ God has predestined that we will be redeemed, our sins will be forgiven and we will receive eternal life and everlasting glory not because of any self-effort in keeping religious laws, customs and traditions, but because of our faith in Christ and God's abundant grace.

The Gospel proclaims: God lavished (hath abounded in KJV) His grace upon us, in all wisdom and insight (v8) the word lavish and abound carry the idea of something superabounding in excess and excelling in quantity, quality and abundance it carries the thought of overflowing and being far more than enough needed to achieve the task and the words, "God in wisdom and insight" (v8) refers to God's insight into the heart of mankind and the obvious fact that God is fully aware that it is impossible for any human to fulfil the perfect standard and demands of, His Holy Law.

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Therefore, God in His wisdom from the foundations of the world predestined a plan to save mankind to eternal life that would not be dependent on self-effort, but on faith and His abundant grace. This is the reason God could guarantee His promise to Abraham because it is not subject to us attaining to the, Holy Standard of God but on our faith in Christ and God's lavished and abundant grace.

The Gospel proclaims: God has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ (v9). The mystery in this context refers to the following two things, firstly to God uniting Jews and Gentiles together in Christ and secondly to God exalting the Lord Jesus Christ above all governments, authorities and powers so that he is the head not only of all nations on earth, but also over all the powers of heaven. Before the foundations of the world it was God's predestined purpose and eternal plan that His only begotten Son would die for the world and that salvation to eternal life would be by faith in Christ and by God's lavished and abundant grace, and not by the works of the law, self-effort or the keeping of religious rites, customs and traditions.

The Gospel proclaims: God predestined and purposed that He would generously and bountifully lavish His love on Jews and Gentiles alike who from their own free will accept by faith His beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ. It was Jesus who made known to us this mystery of God's predestined plan of salvation which was veiled to the Jewish fathers of the Old Testament.

The Gospel proclaims: that it is God's plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in heaven and things on earth together in Christ (v10). This refers to the end of this age (as we know it) when, "The Lord himself descends from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-18). For further information see the title, Future Kingdom of God in the New Testament in, Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).

NOTE: though the Jewish faithful of the Old Testament lived by faith in that they looked toward the arrival of Israel's promised Messiah the Christ they did not have the light or clarity of God's predestined and purposed plan of eternal salvation since they did not understand that people from all nations would be united and accepted into God's Kingdom in Christ (their promised Messiah) and not just the people of Israel.

- **Ephesians 1:11-12:** In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

The Gospel proclaims: God according to his will has, predestined an inheritance for those who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In these verses it is not people that are predestined according to the purpose of God, but the inheritance. The inheritance refers to the following oath God made to Abraham thousands of years ago when He said, "By myself have I sworn to Abraham as an everlasting covenant that his seed will come from his own bowels and be his heir and multiply as the stars of heaven and the sand on the sea-shore until they possess the gate of their enemies and inherit all the land of Israel for an everlasting possession so that in Abraham's seed all nations of the earth will be blessed and I will be their God. This is the promise inheritance and everlasting covenant God made to Abraham. Paul in the following glorious and majestic words, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16) reveals that the everlasting seed that God promised Abraham thousands of year ago who would come from his own bowels refer to the Lord Jesus Christ who came from the bloodline of Abraham and the promise that Abrahams seed would multiply as the stars of heaven and the sand on the sea-shore and all other promises refer to all those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Gen 12:1-7) (Gen 13:14-16) (Gen 15:1-6, 18) (Gen 15:18)
(Gen 17:1-8) (Gen 17: 15-19) (Gen 17:21) (Gen 17:21)
(Gen 21:12) (Gen 22:11-18).

The Gospel proclaims: the promises God made to Abraham are not limited to the Jews only, but to all who are baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ the promised seed of Abraham. God's promise embraces whoever will come to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:13) (Rom. 4:16-18) (Gal. 3:16) (Gal. 3:27). (Paul magnificently explains this truth in Ephes. 2:11-22). The fulfilment and absolute awesome wonder, splendour and breath-taking magnificence of God's promise to Abraham will reach its climax when the Lord returns in glory as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:11-16) to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth during his glorious millennial reign. For further information see the title, Future Kingdom of God in the New Testament in, Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU)

NOTE: the words, "We who were the first to hope in Christ" (v12) refers to the Jews while the Gentiles were the last to believe. For further information concerning the Promised Seed of Abraham see: Galatians chapter three in, Commentary New Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

- **Ephesians 1:13-14:** In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Every brother and sister in Christ is sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. The word sealed literally means to stamp something genuine with a signet or private mark to keep it secret, private and secure for the purpose of preserving and protecting it from misappropriation. This means the expression, "Sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" (v13) does not refer to speaking in tongues as some teach, but to God's gift of righteousness that comes by grace and by faith which God imputes to the faithful who believe the Gospel and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for their eternal salvation. It is this gift of righteousness (also called the Holy Spirit) that guarantees that those in Christ will inherit and acquire possession of God's glorious and majestic predestined eternal promises.
- The word of truth, this does not refer to every doctrine and teaching of the Bible (though it is all truth), but to the Gospel of salvation that unites a sinner to Christ. No-one has to be a walking Bible encyclopaedia to be saved to eternal life since being saved is not about acquiring an abundance of intellectual knowledge, but about being in a devoted faithful and loving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures: have three primary purposes, firstly, to bring us into union and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, secondly, to teach us how to, love our neighbour as ourselves' and live to honour God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and thirdly to teach us the eternal plans and purposes of God and thereby strengthen our faith in the Lord. Certainly it is a tremendous excitement and glorious adventure travelling through the Bible discovering new pearls of knowledge that we have not known before, but it should always be remembered that not every Scripture or teaching is important or necessary to know for us to be in a devoted faithful union with the Lord Jesus Christ and saved to eternal life and everlasting glory.

NOTE: if God had predestined some to be saved to eternal life and everlasting glory and others to be damned to eternal death there would be no need to be sealed with the promised Holy Spirit since if God had predestined for a certain few to be saved nothing could alter it, not even the person whose God had programmed for eternal life or condemnation would be able to change their predestined fate.

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- **Ephesians 1:18:** having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

The Gospel proclaims: the riches of Christ's glorious inheritance in those who belong to his family, the riches in this verse do not refer to the money of this world, but to the valuable abundant eternal and spiritual blessings those in Christ have (i.e., forgiveness of sins, God's grace and mercy, righteousness, fellowship with God and with Christ the promise of an immortal body and eternal life and everlasting glory etc.). These are the riches that flood like springs of living water in the inner most being of the human spirit and well up to give joy, inner peace, contentment and hope to the mind of those who are faithful and make Christ the supreme desire of their heart and the highest thought of their mind.

- **Ephesians 1:19-21:** and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

The Gospel proclaims:

- The immeasurable greatness of God's power toward those who believe, this refers to the most breathtaking and awe-inspiring event that will have ever taken place in the history of mankind. This spectacular event will totally change the world as we know it and manifest God's power in such an awesome manner that every other miracle will be dwarfed,

this extraordinary, dramatic and thrilling event of course refers to the resurrection. God by his creative power raised one man the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead to eternal glory, but at the resurrection God will raise literally millions who are sleeping in Christ to eternal life and everlasting wonder.

- God has exalted Christ not only above every government, every king and every world leader but also above every name that is named meaning above all of mankind not only in this world, but the eternal world to come, he is the perfect King that everyone can trust to lead and be confident that they are safe and protected for eternal life in submitting to his headship.

NOTE: some people find it difficult to comprehend God raising the dead, but think of it this way: we have super computers today that have in their memories literally trillions of bits of information and at the touch of a key any one of those bits is resurrected to us on a brightly coloured screen (soon it is most likely they will simply appear in the air), then with another touch of the key it all vanishes into the super memory and is gone, until we resurrect it again. Knowing that God has given his creation a mortal mind and finite memory to be able to build such amazing computers should make it very easy to understand how God keeps us all in His immortal mind and eternal memory waiting for the right time to touch the supernatural keyboard of heaven and raise us once again to life. Added to this very few Christians have any trouble believing God created the universe that we live in so raising the dead in comparison is not such a difficult task for such an awesome, powerful and majestic God (Hebrews 11:3).

- **Ephesians 1:22-23:** And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

The Gospel proclaims: Christ is the head of the church and has dominion, rule and authority over all things in the church. The words, "Which is his body, the fullness of him who fills ALL in ALL shows us two things, firstly, all those who trust in Christ form the body of Christ and secondly, it is God's Spirit (also called the Holy Spirit) that fills Christ's body (the church). God's Spirit and Christ's Spirit are in perfect unity, perfect love and in perfect harmony in mind in will and in purpose therefore the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ can be viewed as being identical since those in Christ have fellowship with both the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3). To attempt to dissect down to microscopic detail the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ as a spiritual surgeon with a scalpel (I think) is to do God and the Lord an injustice since there is nothing in prayer we can say to Christ that God does not hear neither is there anything we say to the Father that the Son is not also listening to and there is nothing we can hide in deed or action from either God or the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the reason God's Spirit and Christ's Spirit can be seen as being identical especially in prayer since they are united together in perfect love, mind and purpose and both God and Christ dwell in the heart of every brother and sister in Christ by faith and God's grace. If we were to attempt to explain the Spirit of God and of Christ in simple material terms (howbeit very limited) the Spirit of God and of Christ could be likened to a golden torch, its light and its batteries.

The torch gives brilliant light that dispels darkness and allows all who walk in its light to clearly see, but without batteries the torch has no power since they are the source of its light. Christ could be likened to the torch and God to the batteries since God is the source of all life, but the batteries without the torch or the torch without the batteries cannot give light. This is another reason we should not try to dissect in microscopic detail God's Spirit from Christ's Spirit or Christ Spirit from God's Spirit, but always allow a certain amount of mystery since they are together united in perfect unity, perfect love and perfect mind will and purpose. Added to this there is nothing the Father wouldn't do for us that Christ wouldn't also gladly do, nor is there anything that Christ would do for us that the Father would not also be pleased to do.

But there is another great insight we gain from the words, ALL in ALL. Paul wrote a similar statement in his letter to the Corinthians "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is accepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him that God may be ALL in ALL (1 Cor. 15:27-29). These verses also clearly show that God has exalted Christ as the head above all things, but they also tell us something more and that is; "When all things are subjected to Christ then he will also be subjected to God so that God will be ALL in ALL. The expression, 'God will be ALL in ALL in this context lifts the mind of the ardent Bible student at lightning speed and transcends it forward in time to the glorious and majestic vision of a godly man on the isle of Patmos who wrote:

- I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more and I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new (Rev. 21:1-5).

This is the splendour, the glory the wonder and the climax of God's promise to Abraham made many thousands of years ago and the inheritance of all who are children of Abraham by faith and brothers and sisters of Christ. Is there any other religion on earth that proclaims such a glorious eternal hope? (This author has not found one). The Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in sharp clearness proclaims that the stunning splendour of this glory is not dependent on our abilities and talents or our lack of them since God in His wisdom has made salvation to eternal life and everlasting glory available to all, not by our own self-effort, but through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace can there be any better news than this, I think not. This is the reason the Gospel of Christ is called the Good News.

- **Ephesians 1:23:** which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

The Gospel proclaims: that the church is the global body of Christ, many in the secular world today think that the church is a Sunday meeting in a religious building, but the church should never be limited to the established religious institutions, denominations or church buildings though they may form a part of the body of Christ they are not the only part. There are many individual Christians in all countries of the world who meet in coffee bars, social outings and mostly their own homes (as the early church did) to give thanks to Christ and share their discoveries of God's word and their spiritual experiences with Him. Many of these people are helping others and simply manifesting the reality of their faith to the people that come into their lives.

God is not limited to any one pattern or organization; He is far too creative for that. Jesus church is global and is manifested in a vast variety of ways across the face of the earth. In many third world countries church is held outside under a tree (for shade) with its members sitting on the dusty ground often with dogs, chooks and other animals roaming around. It is also important to be aware that the word church does not embrace everyone simply because they confess to be Christians (Matt. 7:21-23). Building God's house is not about financing opulent mega million dollar buildings, but rather it is about people gathering together to share their faith in any place they are able, nevertheless a building maybe required for practical purposes (i.e., the size of the congregation etc.), but if it is built by cleverly twisting and distorting Scriptures to manipulate the congregation to give from guilt or built upon vast amounts of borrowed money so that the oversight and the congregation are put under extreme financial oppression then the building is not in the will of God. The book

of Proverbs says, "The borrower is the slave of the lender" (Prov. 22:7). Building God's House (Temple) is about becoming more Christ like, and living in the will of God. New Testament Christianity is fluid and not restricted to a particular building or even a special day. The Christianity Christ taught is so exciting and real, it cannot be contained. It has no limitations and overflows into every moment of a Christian's life, the New Testament house of God is global, moving and manifested in the lives of all those who are faithful and who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ

The global family of God: since the Bible was written in an entirely different culture to ours and the body of Christ is a global family filled with people from different nations, countries, cultures, backgrounds, knowledge, levels of education (especially religious), hurts and troubled pasts there is always going to be certain amount of Scripture we will all understand differently. Paul in the book of Romans tells us to avoid those who cause divisions contrary to the doctrine that he taught the brothers and sisters in Rome. In the context of the entire letter that he wrote to the Roman brothers and sisters the doctrines he had in mind when he said, "Avoid those who cause divisions" are the following three:

1. Doctrines that are contrary to the teaching that salvation is by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ contrasted to works of the law, self-effort and keeping religious customs and traditions etc.
2. Doctrines that are contrary to the truth that Jews and Gentiles who accept Christ become one nation in Christ, contrasted to them being two separate nations.
3. Doctrines which are contrary to godly behaviour and lead people away from the Lord Jesus Christ.

These are the three major topics Paul has focused on in his letter to the brothers and sisters in Rome and the doctrines he has in his mind when he says be careful of those who cause divisions and create obstacles. Naturally within the global House of God there are many varied understandings of many Scripture, but not all teachings are important to know to be saved to eternal life nor does one have to have perfect understanding of every teaching from Genesis to Revelation to know Christ and be in union with him, but of course we must all understand the message of the cross and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. No-one has to be a walking Bible encyclopedia to be in the family of Christ and saved to eternal life, but should any teacher proclaim a message of works and self-effort to be saved or teach that Jews and Gentiles are two separate groups/nations in Christ, or teach doctrines that lead people away from godly behaviour and from Christ Paul says they should be avoided (Rom. 16:17-19). The body is the reflection of Christ on earth and therefore should be walking in the same Spirit of love, kindness, compassion and grace etc. that Christ walked in while on earth. For further information see the title: Church (The Definitions of a Church) in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

EPHESIANS 2

- **Ephesians 2:1-2:** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

The Gospel proclaims:

- All of mankind is separated from God and condemned to death for three reasons, firstly, not one of us can stand before God's Holy law and boast that we have not broken some part of it, secondly, we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23) and thirdly the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Therefore, we are already judged, sentenced and condemned to death because of our trespasses and sins.

- We all followed the course of this world. This carries the idea that one corrupt age follows another, but it also embraces the following two thoughts, firstly, conforming to the customs and ways of the world at large and that the populations of the secular world are fully influenced by the collective mind and thinking of the world in contrast to being influenced by the mind of God and secondly the idea that the populations of the world are living in trespasses and sins meaning they live a lifestyle that is totally devoid of God and to satisfy the passions, desires and cravings of our lower nature (the flesh) (i.e., self, ego, pride, lust and greed etc.).
- We all followed the prince of the power of the air. Though all may clearly see the destructive effects of this power (wars, rape, murder theft etc.), not all understand the source of it. This is because it is a power that has not only deeply penetrated us all, but blinds us to recognizing its subtle and deceptive workings. This power has been by far the most powerful force in the world throughout every historic age and continues to be the most powerful force today in this present age.

It may be a surprise too many that this power does not refer to an enormously powerful evil god named Satan nor does it refer to many hundreds of millions of evil entities flying about in the air called devils as some believe. Rather this power that by far supersedes all other powers (except the power of God) refers to a power that dwells within us. It was the cause of Adam and Eve's fall, this power, is self-will, ego, pride and greed they are the unseen spiritual destructive muscle in the world and are always in rebellion to God. These four powers have universal influence over the individual and collective mind of people of all nations who deny God. For further information see the title: "The Prince of the Power of the Air" (at the end of this chapter).

NOTE: the word devil (a very appropriate word) in the Bible embraces within its meaning the sum total of all the wickedness and rebellion toward God that dwells in the human heart and not only influences the individual mind but also the collective mind of the world away from God and against His will. For further information see the titles: Devil and Demons in, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

- **Ephesians 2:3:** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

The Gospel proclaims:

- We all once lived in the passions of our flesh. Flesh in this context refers to the following two things, firstly the fallen corrupted nature all of mankind that we inherited from our father Adam it is that part within that has no interest in God or the things of God and secondly to self, ego, pride, lust, jealousies, envy, greed and such like things. The flesh is carnally minded, meaning it is always minded to satisfy the demands of self. The expression, "Walking according to the flesh" refers to living a lifestyle to satisfy-self and self-gratification.
- We were all children of wrath which in the context of these verses means that all are judged sentenced and condemned by the most perfect and Holy Law of God to eternal death because, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23) and the law states, "The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).
- God's eternal plans and purposes will not be thwarted. Even though God has left this world at this time in the control of mankind's self-will and disobedience His eternal plans and purposes will not be thwarted. This is because God has eternal foreknowledge and eternal wisdom. He knows the beginning and the end and has therefore by this foreknowledge planned before the foundation of the world His eternal purpose and promises accordingly. This is why the prophets who were inspired by the Spirit of God were able to prophecy future events with such certainty.

God has Seated us with Christ in Heavenly Places in Christ Jesus.

- **Ephesians 2:4-7:** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Immeasurable: (exceeding in KJV) in this context carries the idea of something that abundantly and exceeding surpasses and excels far beyond and above what is considered normal.

The Gospel proclaims: The Gospel proclaims that a person who is dead in trespasses and sins is in a state of conformity to this world and as such has no desire for the spiritual pleasures of God. When we look upon a corpse, it gives an awful feeling, we see the life has gone and left nothing but the ruins of that person. Paul viewed those who are, “Dead in their trespasses and sins” (v5) as being spiritually dead for two reasons:

1. They are without Christ through who God's eternal love and the fountain of His rich mercy and undeserved grace flows.
2. Whoever is without God's grace is not an heir of eternal life, but remains destined to death.

Just as we feel that awfulness upon seeing a corpse, it is most certain that Paul felt this same awfulness toward those without Christ and that this awfulness (which is really deep compassion and concern) was the motivating power that drove him with outstanding zeal to proclaim the saving power of the Good News of the Gospel even at the risk of his own life.

The Gospel proclaims: those in Christ have been raised up and seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This statement carries the following two ideas:

1. It refers to the fact that those in Christ are delivered from the condemnation of the law and the sentence of eternal death into the glorious eternal Kingdom of God. It refers to their sins being forgiven, the favour and fellowship they have with God and with Christ, the grace that God has lavished upon them because of their devotion and love for His Son and to God's majestic and guaranteed promise of eternal life and everlasting glory. The following words of Paul, “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (v7) mean that the faithful in Christ have by faith and God's grace been raised up with Christ and are seated with him in spiritual places far beyond any riches this earthly and material world has. Paul is able to speak of this majestic event in the past tense or as though it has already taken place because it is a reality by faith in the mind of all who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. Added to this it is based on God's promise and He cannot lie therefore it is guaranteed.
2. The word heavenly from Strong's Concordance carries the idea of elevation and can refer to a heavenly state of the mind. Thus the words, “Seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (v6) can also carry the idea of the mind being lifted up into high places of joy, peace and love by the Gospel of Christ since the faithful in Christ are aware of all the majestic glorious and eternal blessings they have in Christ and that knowledge elevates the mind into a glorious state of joy, peace, contentment and wonder. It is similar to when a secular person has a fabulous day or a great win and shouts in exuberant excitement and joy, “Wow I'm in heavenly places.” It's a spiritual way of saying that the mind is in an elevated state of joy and of well-being.

The Gospel proclaims: in the coming ages God will show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward those in Christ Jesus. This verse refers to two things:

1. To the resurrection, God by His awesome creative power gloriously raised one man the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, but at the resurrection God by His awe-inspiring and breath-taking power will literally raise multitudes who are sleeping in Christ from the dead to eternal and everlasting glory and all this in the twinkling of an eye. This will be an absolutely stunning event which will by far surpass the power of any thunderstorm, lightning strike or tornado that this world has ever seen. It goes without saying all who see this glory will stand in awesome and breath-taking wonder as they witness the immeasurable riches of God's grace and kindness toward those who have loved and been faithful to His Son.
2. To the wonder and glory of the following majestic vision of a godly man on the isle of Patmos who wrote, "I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband and a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore (Rev. 21:2-4). "I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb (Revelation 21:22-23).

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads and night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever (Rev 22:3-4).

Is there any other religion on the face of our planet that proclaims such a majestic and glorious eternal hope? This author has not found one.

- **Ephesians 2:8-9:** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Grace: means unmerited and undeserved favour.

The Gospel proclaims: every brother and sister in Christ has been saved by God's grace through their faith and that it is not their own doing or a result of self-effort or works, but the gift of God. The Gift of God; relates to the following two things, firstly, the Lord Jesus Christ himself and secondly, the splendour, wonder, and awesome glory of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which states, "Sinners are saved by grace." We cannot earn it, nor can we do anything to deserve it everyone who is saved to eternal life is saved by faith and God's grace alone. It does not matter how great we are at keeping ceremonial rites, holy days or religious customs and traditions etc., nothing we do can add to our salvation or make us worthy of it. Every eternal spiritual blessing we have is because of God's grace and our faith in His Son.

God in His eternal wisdom has designed salvation this way for three reasons, firstly so that no-one can boast that they are saved by their own self-effort, works, talents, gifts or abilities, secondly, so salvation is not dependent on birthright (i.e., being born a descendant of Abraham, a Jew or a citizen of Israel) or whether someone is of noble decent or lowly, rich or poor, a leader of a great church or the church mouse it makes no difference since not one of these has any power to make us worthy for salvation and thirdly, so that every man and woman is on an equal playing field in regards to eternal life all have the same chance since salvation for all is based on faith and not our abilities or lack of them.

- **Ephesians 2:10-11:** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands.

The uncircumcision: refers to the Gentiles (i.e., everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew) and the circumcision naturally refers to the Jews (it was a sign of God's covenant with them).

The Gospel proclaims: every brother and sister in Christ (Jews and Gentiles) are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that they should walk in them. This means that every faithful brother and sister in Christ whether Jew or Gentile has been changed from a child of wrath (meaning we all are destined for death) to a child that has been made alive together with Christ to be saved to eternal life and everlasting glory by God's plan of salvation and His outworking of it contrasted to our own planning and own self-effort.

The words, "We are created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand" (v10) does not mean that God has prepared beforehand some to be saved and others to be damned. Rather it is the good works that God has prepared beforehand which is summed up in Jesus command, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt. 19:17-20) (Matt. 22:37-40) (Mark 12:29-31) which means do not deliberately do harm to other humans. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself.

The words, "We should walk in good works" means we should do everything in our power to obey the royal law love your neighbour as yourself (Jas. 2:8) and to love those not only in the Kingdom of Christ, but also those outside of his Kingdom, but our motivation in living in this manner is not to be driven by the false idea that we must add to our salvation, but because it is the loving, good and right thing to do and brings honour to the name of Jesus.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL

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- **Ephesians 2:12:** remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Prior to Christ's ministry on earth anyone born of any other nation than Israel was separated from Christ, from God and from God's promises and therefore separated from the Commonwealth of Israel.

NOTICE: this implies that those born of Israel even prior to the arrival of Christ were united with Christ. Some may wonder how this can be since Christ had not yet appeared. The answer is simple, the faithful fathers were united with Christ in the same manner as we are (i.e., by faith) they believed in the coming of the promised seed of woman spoken of in (Genesis 3:15), the promised seed of Abraham, the promised seed of David, the Messiah, the Christ it was by this faith that the Lord Jesus Christ was with the faithful Jews of the Old Testament in the same manner as he is with us today.

- **Ephesians 2:13-17:** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

Those who were far off refer to the Gentiles since they were separated from God while those who were near obviously refer to the Jews. Because the Jews were given God's commandments, His statutes, the temple, the prophets and the promises they viewed themselves as the holy race with God and the Gentiles as the unclean race without God.

The Gospel proclaims: God through Jesus death and resurrection has now abolished every religious Jewish law, custom and tradition that separated the Jews from the Gentiles and has now united both Jews and Gentiles together in Christ to create in him, one new man. In other verses this new man is also called, a new creation, a new nation, the church and the Kingdom of God.

NOTE: some religions teach that the Jews have higher value to God, because they are the LORD'S chosen nation, but Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the fact that this is no longer true. God's love for brothers and sisters in Christ is equal regardless of whether they are Jews or Gentiles.

Added to this a Gentile in Christ will now inherit the eternal promises God made to Israel whereas a Jew who denies Christ will not. This is because the true Israel is not those who are biologically descendants of Abraham, but those who are children of Abraham by faith in his promised seed who of course is the Lord Jesus Christ. For further information see the title: "The Promises of Abraham" (Galatians 3) in, Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

- **Ephesians 2:18-20:** For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. (chief corner stone in the KJV).

Saints: in this context refer to the Jews because up until now Israel has been God's special people. The LORD has always dealt with Israel differently to any other nation, He declared His word, statutes and His rules to Israel (the LORD has not done this with any other nation). They are children of Abraham the father of faith and because they are his offspring they were entrusted with the oracles of God and to them belongs the adoption, the glory and the covenants.

God says he gave birth to Israel and carried them from the womb even to their old age (Isaiah 46:3-4) and loved them when they were a child, and out of Egypt He called Israel His Son (Hosea 11:1). They were given the law, the worship and the promises, to them belong the patriarchs and from their race, came the Christ who is Lord over all that God created (Rom. 3:2) (Rom. 9:4-5, 7). Added to this; the LORD called Israel His treasured possession and the apple of the LORD'S eye, his allotted heritage and a people holy to Him. (Exod. 19:5) (Deut. 7:6) (Deut. 14:2) (Deut. 26:18) (Deut. 32:9).

The Gospel proclaims:

- Jews and Gentiles both have one Spirit to access the Father through. This one Spirit refers to the Spirit of Christ. The words, "Through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father," again clearly shows that the only way for a Jew or a Gentile to enter into communion with God the Father is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Jewish and Gentile religious world has been changed forever Gentiles are no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens with the Jews and members of the household of God. This means that Gentiles are now considered by God equal to Jews because of their faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Lord Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone of the spiritual temple God is building in Christ. Isaiah when referring to Jesus, wrote, "Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.' (Isaiah 28:16). The Lord Jesus is called the precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation because the whole building rests on him, he holds a place as important as the cornerstone of any natural building since if not for Christ neither the prophets nor the apostles alone could sustain the structure for a

moment. There is another beautiful symbolism in Christ being referred to as the cornerstone which presents Christ as also being the stone of union. This is because the stone at the corner became a part of both walls joining them together, thus Christ the cornerstone has joined the Jews and Gentiles together in the building.

- **Ephesians 2:21-22:** in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

The whole structure: embraces the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostles and prophets the Jews and the Gentiles.

The Gospel proclaims: Jews and Gentiles are being united together as one body in Christ to be a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Believing Jews and Gentiles are being prepared by the prophets and apostles' teachings and by the influence of Christ and the Holy Spirit to become a majestic and glorious sacred temple in which God dwells for all eternity. When this majestic building is completed there will be nothing so worthy of reverence since God dwells in it; so ancient since the patriarchs and prophets laboured in building it; so solid since love cements it together; so closely united and indivisible since Christ is the corner stone; so exalted since it reaches as high as heaven and to God himself; so full of wisdom since its specifications are the word of God; so full of light since the Holy Spirit dispels every dark corner; so spacious since it is spread over the whole earth; so invincible and indestructible since it is being built by God, by Christ, by the Holy Spirit and by the influence of God's eternal word; so divine since it is a living, vibrant, dynamic temple inhabited by the Holy Spirit and so universal since all its unique stones though spread throughout the world are compacted together in Christ.

God is the master builder of this majestic and glorious temple; Christ is the corner stone; faithful believers are the proper materials; the prophets and apostles are its foundation and the Gospel and love its pillars. Christ is the door and faith is the entrance into it. It is a spiritual building and through, faith and grace this living building is growing into an eternal house fit for the most Holy God to dwell in. Its beauty and radiance will surpass all temples that have ever gone before it since it will be adorned with a vast variety of rich colour made up of Jews and Gentiles of every age, country, sex, and condition: the mightiest of kings, the most renowned lawgivers, the most profound philosophers, the most eminent scholars and all those of whom the world was not worthy have formed this building. Peter wrote, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame" (1 Pet. 2:6). Every faithful brother and sister in Christ are represented as living stones that God is using to build this spiritual, majestic temple of eternal glory which will be manifested in splendour for all to see when, the Lord himself descends from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ are raised then we who are alive are caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:15-18).

EPHESIANS 3

- **Ephesians 3:3-6:** how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶ This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Paul received the Gospel by revelation from Jesus himself and did not add to it from any other teacher, prophet or apostle. This is why Paul had such great insight into the mystery of Christ that had hidden from previous generations.

The Gospel proclaims: Gentiles are now fellow heirs with the Jews and partakers of all the promises God made to Abraham and Israel this is the mystery of Christ that was not made known to the Old Testament fathers, but is now revealed to all New Testament brothers and sisters in Christ. This revelation changed forever the entire religious and spiritual world of both the Jews and the Gentiles. This is because whoever (Jew or Gentile) is in Christ by faith will inherit all God's eternal promises made to Abraham and his seed because the seed of Abraham is the Lord Jesus Christ and it is in him that all the majestic promises dwell. For further information see the title:

- The Promises of Abraham" (in Galatians 3) in Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- **Ephesians 3:17-19:** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Christ dwells in the heart through faith, this means that the character of Christ, the fruit of the Spirit, the things that Christ loves, Christ's best interest and the desire to please and obey Christ is in the heart. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends," (John 15:13). When a person's spiritual eyes are opened to perceiving their fallen condition before God and understand what it cost God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ to save them their heart is filled with overwhelming love for the Lord, it is in this sense that Christ dwells in the human heart.
- Every brother and sister in Christ should be rooted and grounded in love. The words, "Being rooted" carry the idea that they would be as a tree whose roots strike deep and extend far and wide through the soil and in the same way that the roots of a tree penetrate deep into the earth those in Christ should be rooted deep in love. This is the soil in which we are all to grow it is God's infinite love that Paul prays will strike the roots of the inner most being of every brother and sister in Christ and that from this love they would find all the spiritual nourishment needed for their full growth, until they have the mind in them that was in Jesus and are filled with all the fullness of God.
- The inward man is strengthened by the knowledge of Christ, the knowledge of God and by spiritual and heavenly influences (i.e., love, peace and righteousness). These are the divine food of the inward man (i.e., of Jesus Christ). The enormity of Christ's love that surpasses knowledge is comprehended when the inner man is fed and nourished by divine food as the body is by natural food (v18-19). The breadth, length, depth, and height of God's love in Christ the breadth implies God's omniscient presence that encompasses the globe and Christ's world-wide love, embracing all men in all ages, places, and nations.

The length implies the grace and love of God and the eternal purpose of Christ mission being extended through all ages and flowing from everlasting to everlasting. The depth carries the idea of God's goodness and love in Christ reaching down to the lowest fallen of the sons of Adam, extending to the deepest depravity of the human heart and searching for those who have sunk into the depths of sin and misery and raising them up to glory from the lowest state of life and the height not only refers to the mind being raised up to a state of heavenly happiness, mental peace and filled with a spectacular and breathtaking hope, but also to the following majestic words of Jesus as recorded in the book of Revelation, "The one who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne (Rev 3:21). This is a glorious picture of a father's love for his son and a son's love for his father. As in any earthly family the father sits in his own chair while the son sits alongside him in his chair, so it is in the words of Jesus "As I

also overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.” Here is a picture of God the Almighty and heavenly Father sitting on his throne while the beloved Son sits alongside of him on his throne; but as any son loves to be nearer to their father and the father loves to be nearer their son, so likewise in these beautiful words of Jesus, Christ the Son is pictured as climbing from his throne to be nearer to his Father and his Father with open arms and a loving heart is seen making room for the Son to sit alongside him on his throne. This is how Christ says he will receive those who come to him. Can there be any more astoundingly awe-inspiring words of wonder. Christ himself tells us that every faithful brother and sister will be seated on his throne as he sat on the Father's throne. This is the majestic height of the love of Christ and the glorious height to which that love raises those who love the Lord and faithfully follow him.

The Gospel proclaims:

- The love of Christ surpasses knowledge. Surpasses in this context carries the idea of the love of Christ surpassing and excelling abundantly far above and beyond intellectual knowledge. It was love which led the Son of God to be a man of sorrows, to be brutally persecuted and cruelly put to death in the most shameful manner – an innocent man on a cross as a criminal; and nailed there not for himself, but for others. Who could understand such love where else has there been anything like that? What is there with which such love can be compared? And how could it be fully understood, yet Paul knew something of it; he had a deep sense and overwhelming apprehension of it; he knew it had no limit and was unlike anything which had ever been revealed before and that it could be known and felt in the heart of every believer. This love of Christ that surpasses knowledge is available to every brother and sister in Christ through faith and God's grace that He abundantly lavishes on all those who love His Son.
- Through total surrender to Christ and depending solely on him alone for eternal salvation and upon God's grace the rich abundance and fullness of God's love will flood the heart to overflowing. The major thing that hinders and limits most from experiencing God's love flooding the heart to overflowing is doubt in God's grace and trusting in self-effort to earn righteousness and approval rather than trusting in Christ and God's grace. Nothing will so much excite gratitude in our hearts; nothing will prompt us so much to a life of self-denial; nothing will make us so kind or compassionate toward others and so dead to the world as being filled with the fullness of God's love in Christ. This is the richest and best gift of God to man. It more clearly teaches us our true dignity than all the profound discoveries which people can make in their discoveries of science and evolution; for no matter what they discover none can fill with the fullness of God.

It is only by the love of Christ that we can know the love of God: the love of God toward us induced Him to give Christ for our redemption; Christ's love to us induced him to give his life's blood for our salvation. The gift of Christ to us is the measure of God's love; the death of Christ for us is the measure of Christ's love. Jesus himself said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16) showing that it has pleased God that the fullness of His grace should dwell in Christ.

Where Christ's Spirit dwells, there he dwells, if the Gospel of Christ is written in our hearts, and the love of Christ is shed abroad there then Christ dwells there and we can be assured that the love of God in Christ is upon us and dwelling within us in Christ. This surpasses all the capacity of man's intellect, to comprehend it fully in his mind. The fullness of God is the fullness which God imparts through the dwelling of Christ in the heart; Christ, in whom the Father was pleased that all the fullness should dwell (Col 1:19) and in whom dwells all the fullness of God (Col 2:9). When this love touches the heart of those in Christ all the pleasures of the world that would compete for their happiness seem to be but a thousand trifles blowing in the wind.

- **Ephesians 4:4-6:** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The Gospel proclaims: every faithful brother and sister in Christ have the same standing before God regardless of birthright, (i.e., being a descendant of Abraham or born of any other nation) and regardless of whether one is noble or lowly, rich or poor, a church leader of thousands or the church mouse, all in Christ have the same privileges in the Kingdom of God and in Christ's family since there is only one body; referring to the faithful global body of Christ; one Spirit; referring to God's Spirit the source of all life flowing through Christ and onward through those who have faith in him; one hope; referring to the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the resurrection to eternal life and everlasting glory; one Lord; referring to the Lord Jesus Christ; one faith; referring the, Good News of the Gospel of Christ; one baptism; referring to water baptism; one God and Father; referring to the all-powerful Almighty creator the God of all life and of Abraham Isaac and Jacob.

- **Ephesians 4:7:** But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

The Gospel proclaims: grace was given to those in Christ according to the measure of Christ's Gift. This refers to Christ's death and resurrection. Jesus said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Jesus is the gift of God's grace who all in God's Kingdom has received by faith. Without grace we are separated from Christ and without Christ we are not only separated from God, but remain held captive to the bondage and judgment of the law which declares us guilty, condemned and sentence to eternal death (Rom. 6:23).

Jesus is, God's gift of grace: the following words of Paul are breathtakingly awe-inspiring and overwhelming comforting to all who fully depend by faith on Christ and on God's grace. Paul wrote, "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose" (Gal. 2:21)." This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begin to justify themselves through the law, they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ's death was of no value. Equally as horrific as this Paul says, "We are separated from Christ when we forsake grace to justify ourselves by the law" (Gal. 5:4). This is because it was only by grace that God made us alive in Christ. Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that; "It is only by grace that any brother or sister has been saved" (Eph. 2:5). Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by grace and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). This means that without grace no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life. This means that in regards to eternal salvation, Christ, God, grace and faith are all on an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to eternal life without any one of them.

This is the reason the author in the book of Hebrews spends so many chapters brilliantly and skilfully explaining to the Hebrews that they must stop their sin of trusting in religious works, the Levitical Law and their priesthood to be counted righteous before God and start trusting in the grace of God that is in Christ and in his righteousness to be saved to eternal life. By extension this means that Christians must stop trusting in attending a church building every week, strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions to be saved. Though the practice of some of these maybe good in themselves they become grossly sinful when believers trust in them for their salvation since not one of them has any power to save to eternal life.

- **Ephesians 4:15-16:** Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus Christ is the head of the church the global body of Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles walking in honesty and in love growing up together in love all having the same heartfelt desire to become more Christ-like and to be a good reflection of the Lord. Love is the cement that binds the body of Christ together and having the grace and patience to allow each other to grow up in love gives each brother and sister time and space to grow as an individual, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually within a collective group. It is certain we are not all going to see everything in the same way since the global worldwide body of Christ is made up of people from different cultures, languages, levels of education (especially religious) and come to the Lord with all sorts of baggage and past hurts. This is why the Gospel proclaims that the structure of the church should be built in love which means we should show our brothers and sisters in Christ's global family compassion, mercy and an abundance of grace as we grow together until the head of the body the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory. For further information see the title: Church (The Definitions of a Church) in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

NOTE: the words, "Speaking the truth in love" in this context means that whenever we have to discipline a brother or sister in Christ or correct a false interpretation they may have regarding certain Scriptures or behaviour it should always be done with love, compassion and grace toward that person and not simply for doctrine sake. The motivation should stem from the desire and passion to help and protect and correct in contrast to a dogmatic attitude that simply pushes people further away from those who approach them with harsh legalistic coldness.

- **Ephesians 4:30:** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

The Gospel proclaims: that every brother and sister in Christ is sealed for the day of redemption. Sealed means to stamp with a signet or private mark for privacy, security and preservation, it carries the idea of keeping secret, protecting from misappropriation and a sign of genuineness. The faithful in Christ are referred to as being sealed because the righteousness that God imputes to them is not based on their own self-effort nor is it dependent on any religious rites, ceremonies, customs or traditions that they might practice, but rather it is founded on their faith in Christ and on God's grace.

The Bible tells us that God has designed salvation this way so that he could promise it to Abraham the father of faith, since if righteousness that leads to eternal life was based on our own self-effort God could not promise it nor could he guarantee it since not one of us can stand before the Father and boast that we are without sin. John in his letter says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10). Added to this; if it was possible for us to attain to the perfection of God's Holy Law, Christ died for no purpose.

NOTE: the words, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God" means two things, firstly, do not do anything that would offend God or bring dishonour to the name of Jesus or to God and secondly, we should show love, kindness, and compassion and be tender hearted and forgiving toward each other (all the things the Holy Spirit, God and Christ delight in) in contrast to being bitter, angry, and disorderly and maliciously slandering others or causing divisions etc., which all grieve the Holy Spirit.

- **Ephesians 4:2:** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

The Gospel proclaims: that brothers and sisters should treat each other with respect, decency, kindness and when we offend each other, be quick to forgive and restore our fellowship as Christ forgave us even while we were sinners.

EPHESIANS 5

- **Ephesians 5:2:** And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

And in verse eight Paul said:

- **Ephesians 5:8:** for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

The Gospel proclaims:

- The wonder, splendour and glory of God's love in Christ and the majestic love Christ has for those who belong to his family. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). This means that if you are in Christ Jesus considers you his friend. Since Christ loves us with such great love we should love those who he calls his friends.
- Once those in Christ were in the kingdom of darkness, but are now in the Kingdom of the Lord and should therefore live, speak and behave as children who belong to God's Kingdom and Christ's family.
- Those in Christ should "Walk as children of the light" this does not mean study until you have every detail of the Bible perfectly interpreted, but rather to live a lifestyle that is faithful to Christ and to do what is right and good, meaning live in the fruits of the Spirit (i.e., showing grace and mercy to others). It is by living in this manner that we are children of light and acceptable to the Lord, simply put it means reflect Christ in word and behaviour.

NOTE: sometimes we may find ourselves wondering what the best action to take might be for a certain situation since not everything in life is clearly black and white (especially if we are emotionally involved) and the Bible does not give us detailed answers for every circumstance that we may be faced with (i.e., how should Christian parents treat a son or daughter who is gay? How should a divorced parent treat the children of their new spouse? Or how should Christian parents treat a child who lives with their partner outside of marriage)?

Though the Bible does not give specific detail on how to cope with these kinds of circumstances it does present an overall principle that can be applied to them all. When we are faced with these kinds of decisions (and many others like them) our best guide is to follow the advice Paul gave to the Ephesians and try to, "Discern what is pleasing and acceptable to the Lord" (v10). To help discern this it is always good to ask ourselves the following two questions, "What is the loving action to take?" and "What action will show kindness and grace toward those affected?" When taking any action we should always remember that, "God showed his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8) and that God is a God of love, compassion and mercy which means that though we do not want to compromise the standards of God whatever we do should always be done in love and with compassion and mercy.

PHILIPPIANS 1

- **Philippians 1:27:** Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,

The Gospel proclaims:

- Every brother and sister in Christ is called to live a lifestyle that honours the Gospel, honours God, honours the name of Christ and honours the Christian faith whether they are with other Christians or their secular friends they are to live, speak and behave in a manner that honours the Lord.
- No brother or sister should be standing alone, but rather should be like a Roman army in battle with each soldier standing alongside the next with their shields up protecting each other from the arrows of the enemy standing side by side supporting, strengthening and encouraging each other with one mind and one spirit all striving together to win the victory of the battle.

PHILIPPIANS 2

- **Philippians 2:2:** complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

The Gospel proclaims: that those in Christ should have the same mind, have the same love and be in full accord with each other. Notice having one mind is in the context of love and having the same attitude. To be of one mind in this context does not mean that every brother and sister in Christ must dogmatically believe every detail of the Bible in the exact same manner. Having one mind is about accepting that whoever believes the message of the cross and has come to Christ through honest repentance and water baptism believing that Jesus is the Son of God who died and rose to the right hand side of the Father in heaven and knows that it is only by their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace that they are counted as righteous by God and not because of their own self-effort or any ceremonial rites, holy days or religious customs or traditions that they may be keeping.

Having one mind: is about loving the Lord and desiring to honour God and the name of Jesus, it is about being fully assured the Lord will return from heaven and believing the dead in Christ will be resurrected and those who are alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so will they always be with the Lord in eternal glory (1 Thess. 4:14-18). Being of one mind is about being united on these foundational things and accepting that despite other difference if Christ and these things are the foundation and passion of anyone who faithfully follows the Lord Jesus Christ they are in the Kingdom of God and are a brother or sister in the family of Christ.

Having the same love: means being filled with the fruits of the Spirit, (i.e., compassion, kindness, grace, forgiveness, patience mercy and such like things). It embraces the idea of being empathetic and doing as much as we can that is in our power to encourage, support and strengthen others in the family of Christ. Having the same love is understanding that in the global family of Christ there will be brothers and sisters acting as infants in Christ who can still only be fed on milk (Scriptures that teach right behaviour) and not solid food (Scriptures that teach Revelations and prophecies etc.) because they are not only still being merely human, but are also behaving in a human manner? (1 Cor. 3:1-4), but that does not mean that they are excluded from the Kingdom of God, but it may mean that they will suffer loss since Paul states:

- **1 Corinthians 3:10-15:** According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

This means having the same love is about understanding this principal and rather than judging and condemning brothers and sisters who maybe acting in a human manner we imitate Paul who with love and compassion did all he could to help the brothers and sisters who were still behaving in a human manner from suffering loss when Christ returns.

Being in full accord: the word accord from Strong's Concordance means to be similar in spirit and sentiment, meaning, similar in opinion, emotion, feeling, judgment, and attitude and thought it implies a companionship of like-mindedness with a resemblance in possessions, hobbies and enjoyment. When Paul said, "Be in full accord and of one mind" he was not saying that we all have to be clones of each other, but rather that we are similar in spirit and judgment, meaning that our mindset should be one of showing patience, grace and forgiveness toward each other in contrast to being jealous and envious. Being in full accord carries the idea that we understand that many brothers and sisters in the global family of Christ come from different cultural backgrounds and have different levels of education (especially religious). It is about understanding that many are battling to overcome various past habits or deep emotional hurts while some are struggling to support their families and others are coping with persecutions or the emotional hurts of divorce and broken families and such like things. Being in full accord is about setting our minds to work together in a kindred spirit to encourage, support and strengthen each other in the faith understanding that not one of us stands perfect before the Lord and that each faithful brother and sister in the family of Christ has their own particular troubles to cope with.

- **Philippians 2:9-11:** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Gospel proclaims: even though Christ was humbled and appeared in the form of a servant God has now raised him up to the throne of glory and to universal dominion and, "Given him a name which is above every name," a name that no other name can be compared. This name stands alone. Jesus is not only the Redeemer, Saviour and the Christ the anointed of God, but is also the only Son of God and as such his rank, his titles, his dignity are above all others. The name above every name refers to the name of Jesus the Saviour as no other being either in heaven or on earth can possess this name as Christ who is the Redeemer of the world does.

Jesus alone is the only Saviour for fallen mankind there is no other that can redeem us to God, but Christ and throughout eternity he will ever appear as the sole Saviour of the human race. Even before his birth, Gabriel stated that his name should be called Jesus and gave the reasons for this stating that he will save his people from their sins. The qualifications of the Saviour of the world were so extraordinary, the redeeming acts so marvellous, and the results so glorious both to God and man, that it is impossible to conceive a higher name or title than that of Jesus the Saviour of the world.'

The Gospel proclaims: every knee will bow at the name of Jesus. This means that a new age is coming in which every angelic being in heaven, everyone on earth and everyone raised from the dead will submit themselves to Christ and honour him as LORD and King. This immediately transcends the mind of the ardent Bible student to John's vision of Christ in the book of Revelation where the Lord is pictured as a great warrior with the name, "King of kings and Lord of lords written on his robe and on his thigh" (Rev. 19:16).

This is a picture of a mighty and universal deliverer of nations a title of great honour? Here Christ is exalted to be the Prince and the Saviour of men and woman of all nations. In this new age Christ, the King will rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) during his glorious millennial reign to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth. For further information see notes following (Matthew 23:39) (above).

- **Philippians 2:13:** for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

The Gospel proclaims: God by His Spirit works within the heart of every brother and sister in Christ. The words, "God's will and His good pleasure that He works in those who belong to Christ" is that they would, "Do all things" that are lawful and pleasing to God without grumbling, murmuring and without disputes, contention, strife or questioning (see previous verse). It means that we should do all things from a spirit of love, compassion, patience, kindness showing grace and mercy toward each other and being quick to forgive these are the things that it is God's good pleasure to work in us. This of course is because the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is a God of love.'

- **Philippians 2:15:** that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

The Gospel proclaims:

- Every brother and sister in Christ should be blameless children of God without blemish. This does not mean being without sin before God (Only Christ was able to achieve that perfection of Holiness). The focus and context, is about being blameless and without blemish in the eyes of the secular world. Every brother and sister is called to do what is right and good in the world so that in the eyes of the lost we are seen as being decent, honest and trustworthy people so that we do not bring shame to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and make our faith appear a sham and hypocritical to those we share the Good News of the Gospel with.
- The faithful in Christ shine as lights in a world of darkness. This is the universal call of everyone who belongs to the family of Christ and the Kingdom of God. God has not called us all too great and marvelous works, nor does he expect us to achieve anything that is beyond our talents, gifts and ability, but He does expect us to live a lifestyle of doing-right and doing-good. Since not one of us attains to this goal in absolute perfection there are two things that should always be remembered, firstly, it is solely by God's grace that we are saved, and secondly, to keep uppermost in our minds the steadfast attitude Paul lived his life before Christ with which he so beautifully expressed in the following words: ""Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own the one thing I do forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14).

NOTE: the words, "In the midst of a crooked and twisted generation" clearly show two things, firstly, there has not been an age that has not been any better or any worse than another before the eyes of God and secondly, God already knows the world will continue in its wicked ways until Christ returns. For this reason, no brother or sister in Christ should be surprised when they see or hear of certain false religious ministers and secular leaders of governments and nations in high places of authority and influence being corrupt since it is the normal and natural course of this world. But this does not mean that every secular man and woman is wicked or has a corrupt heart, many are full of great compassion and give their lives to helping the less fortunate, the weak and the poor, but it does mean that the dominant spirit of the world (i.e., the collective mind of the world) is against God and against Christ and against God's will and God's ways.

PHILLIPIANS 3

- **Philippians 3:3:** For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

Circumcision in the Jewish mind was without doubt deemed to be one of the highest standards of righteousness since they believed that an uncircumcised person was separated from God and therefore unclean. Because of this mindset no religious Jew (especially those in high position of leadership) would willingly put themselves in the company of an uncircumcised person since they considered them to be unclean. The reason the Jewish nation held circumcision in such high regard was because God made the following covenant with Abraham and his offspring saying, "Every male among you shall be circumcised and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised it shall be an everlasting covenant and any male who is not circumcised shall be cut off from Israel because he has broken my covenant" (Genesis 17:10-14) (Gen. 17:23-27).

NOTICE: circumcision was a sign they were God's people and not a guarantee of salvation. We know this because Paul tells the Roman church that, "Faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness before he had been circumcised. Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he already had by faith while he was still uncircumcised so that God could make Abraham the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to the uncircumcised as well, to the circumcised who also walk in the footsteps of the faith Abraham had before he was circumcised (Romans 4:9-12).

Nevertheless, though circumcision was a sign of God's covenant with Israel many in the Jewish faith had turned it into the means of salvation (i.e., as long as they were circumcised, they were right with God). This is one of the reasons for the lack of the fruits of the Spirit amongst many of the religious rulers of Jesus and Paul's generations. Throughout Paul's ministry circumcision was a re-occurring thorn to the Gospel amongst the Jewish brothers. The problem Paul faced was not that these Jewish brothers didn't believe in Christ, but that they denied grace to be saved. This is why these Jewish brothers were so deceptive, it is most likely they taught the promises of Abraham, Jesus was the Son of God and the death and resurrection of Christ, but lacked insight into God's saving grace and that it is our faith that God counts as righteousness and not the act of circumcision or any form of self-effort in keeping religious holy days, ceremonial practices or religious habits and traditions.

The Gospel proclaims: the real circumcision is those who worship by the Spirit of God; this means to worship in sincerity from an honest heart full of gratitude as opposed to worshipping in hypocrisy and pretense as the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes were doing in Jesus era.

Glory in Christ Jesus: carries the idea of boasting and rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace for our righteousness and salvation in contrast to boasting in our own religious successes, abilities, self-effort or how perfectly we adhere to ceremonial rites, holy days and religious customs and traditions.

Put no confidence in the flesh: means not relying on the law, good deeds and works to earn salvation it means that we do not trust in anything we can do to be saved, but solely rely on the righteousness God imputes to us because of our faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. It means that our heart, mind, intellect and emotions are totally surrendered to God's foreordained and eternal plan of salvation in Christ contrasted to trusting in anything we may do or be doing no matter how good it maybe.

NOTE: though brothers and sisters in Christ are not saved by the law they should nevertheless aim to live by it, but not to earn salvation, but because living a law abiding lifestyle and one that is worthy of the Lord is not only pleasing to God, but honours the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and brings a good testimony to the Christian faith. Added to this is the obvious fact that it is the just, right, good and loving thing to do. Though the law is splendid as a guide to understanding God's will; as a means of reunion with God, the God we have sinned against, it is a hopeless failure nevertheless both law and grace go together, the law without the Gospel

is diagnosis without remedy, but the Gospel without law is only the Good News of salvation for people who don't believe they need it because they have never heard the bad news of judgment. The law is not the Gospel, but the Gospel is not lawless (Rom. 3:19-20) (Eph. 2:13-22). (Author unknown).

- **Philippians 3:9**⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

The Gospel proclaims:

- We are saved not by our own righteousness or by adhering to the law and keeping ceremonial rites, holy days and religious customs and traditions but by a righteousness that God imputes to us and depends on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the very heart of the Christian faith and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every brother and sister in Christ should be absolutely confident that to be found in Christ and accepted by him has nothing to do with law keeping or self-effort to attain to righteousness that leads to eternal life, but is solely dependent on the righteousness that comes from God through faith.
- Everyone can be righteousness before God and saved to eternal life despite the inward sinful and corrupt nature we have all inherited from our earthly father Adam, but this righteousness is dependent on us not trusting in the righteousness we might outwardly attain by self-effort or in adhering to ceremonial rites holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions etc., but rather by being fully dependent on Christ's righteousness that God imputes to us because of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's abundant grace that He lavishly blesses us with. This is because righteousness that is attained by the law only deals with outward actions and not the inward nature. The Pharisees, chief priest and scribes outwardly kept the law in the smallest detail, so in that sense under the law they were righteous, but inwardly they were so corrupt Jesus said of them:

- **Matthew 23:23-27:** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."²⁴ You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!²⁵ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence."²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean."²⁷ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.

Though most brothers and sisters in the Christian faith are not like the scribes and Pharisees nevertheless we do all live in a corrupt fallen body that is not only tainted with self, ego and pride but infected with all sorts of sinful dysfunction and aberrations such as jealousies, anger, coveting, lustful thoughts, greed and selfish desires etc., which means not one of us can stand before the Holiness of God and boast we are without sin and pure before him.

In fact John in his letter tells us, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, but if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).

Christ Jesus has made me his Own.

- **Philippians 3:12-14:** Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Whoever has faith in Christ he makes his own: these awe-inspiring, stunning and comforting words mean that Jesus has made whoever accepts the Gospel his own meaning he accepts them into his eternal family as his own brother and sister.
- The Christian life is an "Upward call of God in Christ Jesus" for the following two reasons, firstly, God the Creator and heavenly Father reaches down to the lowest of the sons of Adam and lifts them from the depth of sin to the highest heights in the eternal heavens and secondly, every sinner saved begins as a spiritual infant full of worldly desires, past baggage, hurts and false teachings and all sorts of fruits of the flesh (i.e., selfish ambition, ego, pride, jealousies, anger sinful passions and greedy desires etc.), but as they grow in the love of Christ and in God's grace these things slowly fall away and are replaced with the things that bring a good testimony to the name of Christ.

This is the reason the Christian faith is called an upward call.

- That no brother or sister in Christ (not even Paul) has ever reached the glorious state of perfection or attained to the perfect demands of the law or God's pure Holiness. Since not one of us can attain to perfect Holiness and a life free of sin our mental attitude should be the overcoming attitude Paul expresses in these verses. This attitude should not only be made the stronghold and wallpaper of our mind but be spiritually engraved into every cell of our being. Following are two reasons for this statement:

1. Not one of us can stand before the Holiness of God and boast we are without sin in fact if we do it shows that we do not understand the Scriptures or the Good News of the Gospel since John tells us, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).
2. Though those who long to honour God never give up the pursuit of perfection they are always aware that they have not obtained it and for some brothers and sisters in Christ the mental torment and condemnation of failing to live up to the holy standard the law demands robs them from the joy of being in Christ and even worse can result in them falling away from the faith since for them the high calling in Christ Jesus seems impossible to attain to.

This is why the attitude Paul expresses is so majestically beautiful, instead of being trodden under foot and defeated by our sinful aberrations and dysfunctions we not only put them behind us, but forget them and continue to move forward with our mind and our eyes firmly set on the prize of eternal life and everlasting glory. Paul's statement is even more magnificent when we consider that the purpose of the law is to bring us to this place of hopelessness in attaining to its perfect standard of Holiness so that we will clearly see our sin and trust solely upon the Lord Jesus Christ for our righteousness that leads to eternal life and not our own self-effort or ceremonial rites, holy days and religious customs and traditions etc.

- **Philippians 3:20:** But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The citizenship of every faithful brother and sister in Christ is in heaven, this statement carries the following two ideas, firstly, we belong to the eternal Kingdom of God and not the temporal kingdom of this world and secondly, we are humble and filled with the fruits of the Spirit and our minds are set on the things that honour God and the name of the

Lord Jesus Christ in contrast to being driven by pride and ego and having our minds set on earthly and worldly things that would offend God and bring a bad testimony to the name of Jesus. It is from this mindset and this citizenship that we patiently await the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

PHILLIPIANS 4

- **Philippians 4:8-9:** Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice (do in the KJV) these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

The Gospel proclaims: that every brother and sister in Christ should think upon whatever is good, positive and worthy of praise, this is not limited to religious thoughts only, but also embraces the good things of the secular world, (i.e., music, art, acts of kindness, courage, self-sacrifice brilliant skills and entertaining talents etc.), when we make things that are non-offensive to God our focus it will keep our mind healthy just as a good diet keeps the body healthy. Having a healthy mind produces mental calm and peace and mental peace strengthens the bodies' immune system and so helps the well-being of our physical body even our modern-day medical doctors and scientific practitioners would agree with Paul's advice to train the mind to think on what is good.

NOTICE: Paul also says, "Do them" (v9) showing that the Christian faith is not simply about meditating on the Scriptures and living in some state of mental bliss and spiritual euphoria in our minds, but also involves the outward practice of what we believe inwardly, which is manifested outwardly by brothers and sisters in Christ fulfilling the royal law (James 2:8) which Jesus summed up in the words love your neighbour as yourself (Mark 12:31). Under normal circumstances no sane person deliberately causes themselves harm, everyone will try to avoid hurting themselves emotionally, physically, financially and spiritually, people do what they can to protect themselves, no-one wilfully tortures themselves, but rather will do whatever they can to protect the body and protect self, meaning they do-good to themselves and not evil or harm. This is exactly what Paul means when he said, "Do them" (v9) and what Jesus meant when he said, "Love your neighbour as yourself." Loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself. The thing God hates the most is when we do harm to another person, physically, financially, sexually, verbally, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do good to others. It is interesting to notice that the major crime that God points out in Noah's time and one of the main reasons for the flood was because of all the violence in the land.

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- **Philippians 4:13:** I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

The Gospel proclaims: those in Christ can do all things through Christ who strengthens them, this means no-matter what our circumstance is we can be content whether we have wealth and riches or are amongst the less fortunate, whether we have an abundance of this world's goods or a lack of them and whether life is charmed or difficult and troublesome. Paul's statement, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (v13) has been used by certain religious ministers to teach those in Christ that no matter what they choose to do (start a business, a church, a new career etc.,) they will succeed because they "Can do all things in Christ who strengthens them." But this is not what Paul is saying, the focus and context the verse is in is about contentment and having a peaceful mind. In the context of this verse Paul is saying, "No matter whether he is rich or poor, has plenty or lacks he is content and at peace since he can cope with any situation or circumstance (good or bad) through Christ who spiritually and mentally strengthens him.

NOTE: this does not mean that we should not have ambitions, goals and dreams and be passionate about them, in fact quite the contrary. God gives us ambitions and dreams of all sorts and if we are not passionate about them, we will never achieve them. One of the reasons (there are of course many more) God's desires that we make Christ the exalted King and Lord seated on the throne of our inner most being is so that should our goals, dreams and ambition fail or should we be struck with terminal sickness, the loss of a job, home or child though we will obviously be grieved we will not be crushed because the royal King sitting on the throne of our heart will in that crises and that sorrow stand up and comfort us with a comfort that not only transcends natural thinking, but also our own strength, in that crisis moment and experience.

- **Philippians 4:19:** And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

The Gospel proclaims: God will supply the need of every brother and sister in Christ according to God's riches in glory in Christ Jesus. This is most likely one of the most abused verses in the Bible since many religious leaders use it to teach their followers that God will fulfil their dreams, prosper them and fill their bank accounts to overflowing etc., this is not only reading far more into the verse than what Paul is saying, but a good example of taking a verse out of context (mostly to entice people into the church by false promises).

The glorious, royal and majestic words, "God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." by far surpass anything this mortal world can offer since anything the world gives can not only be taken in a moment, but is also only temporary whereas God riches in Christ are eternal and no-one can rob them nor can anything take them from a brother or sister in Christ.

God's riches in glory in Christ Jesus refer to those in Christ: having their sins forgiven; having favour and fellowship with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; having been adopted into the eternal family of God; having been given the free gift of righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ and having God's promise of being resurrected to eternal life and everlasting glory

NOTE: Paul most likely used the words, "My God" (v19) in these verses for three reasons, firstly to separate his God (the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of all creation and of heaven) from all other gods the pagans believed in, secondly, to separate the god of this world (i.e., the god of mammon (money) and materialism from the God of heaven and thirdly because he is speaking from a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Every brother and sister in the Lord should not only see God as the Almighty God and creator of the world, but also see God in the same way as Jesus and Paul viewed God, as their God.

COLOSSIANS 1

- **Colossians 1:5-6:** because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth,

The Gospel proclaims: every brother and sister in Christ has a hope laid up in heaven. In the context of this chapter the hope spoken of refers to the Gentiles in Christ becoming partakers with Israel in all the promises God made to Abraham and the promise of eternal life with the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father in everlasting glory. This hope includes the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, our mortal body putting on immortality, the resurrection to eternal glory and rulership of the world from the heavenly Jerusalem with the Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords establishing God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and

peace over the earth. This is what God's promised majestic and glorious "Hope laid up in heaven" (v5) is for all who are faithful in Christ Jesus. It is called "The grace of God in truth" (v6) because both it and the hope come by faith and God's grace to all who belong to Christ

NOTE: when salvation to eternal life is spoken of as the hope of the faithful in Christ, it is not called hope because it might or might not happen, but because it is unseen and yet future. The hope itself is guaranteed because it is based on God's promise and he cannot lie. The apostle Paul wrote; "In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began" (Titus 1:2). The Christian hopes to be resurrected from the grave to be raised up to eternal life and everlasting glory to be made perfectly free from sin; to be everlastingly happy, but it is faith that gives these things a mental reality in the mind and it is under this influence of faith that those in Christ allow these unseen and yet future events to control their mind as if they were a reality now.

Faith and hope: the difference between faith and hope is that by faith alone we are sure of eternal salvation it is certain and guaranteed by faith whereas by hope we look forward with confidence that we will be raised to eternal salvation. All Christians hope stands on faith since it is faith that secures and guarantees the promise of God. Faith and hope go together they are partners that complement each other since the same things that are the focus of our hope are the same things that our faith is trusting in. Faith secures while hope looks forward to what is secured by faith. The majestic and glorious words, "The grace of God in truth" does not refer to every doctrine of the Bible or of the New Testament, but to the glorious truth about God's grace. The Colossians have clearly understood something about God's grace that others haven't (especially certain Jewish converts) and even today many who confess to believe in Christ still don't fully understand the truth about God's grace. This awe-inspiring and humbling truth is that we are not saved by self-effort and religious rites, customs and traditions, but by God's grace. This is what Paul is referring to when he states that the Colossians have clearly understood the grace of God in truth. For further information concerning grace see the title, "Jesus is God's gift of grace" following Ephesians 4:7 (above).

The whole world: (v6) does not mean that the entire world of Paul's era was being saved, but that the, "Hope laid up in heaven and the grace of God in truth" (v6) is now available to the entire world and not just Israel only, because the hope of salvation to eternal life and God's grace are in the Lord Jesus Christ and whoever accepts the Gospel and believes in Christ will be saved. Jesus himself said that he laid his life down for the whole world (John 3:16) so it is in this sense that the hope and God's grace has come to the whole world.

- **Colossians 1:13-14:** He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The Gospel proclaims: God the Father has delivered Jews and Gentiles alike from being separated from God to being united with God and that God does not forgive our sins and redeem us because we legalistically keep certain ceremonial rites, holy days and religious customs and traditions, but because of our faith in His beloved Son. It is by faith in Christ that God the heavenly Father is able to reach down to the lowliest child of Adam and lift them in Christ to the highest heights of eternal glory.

- **Colossians 1:15:** He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation (or New Creation).

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. The word image means a likeness, resemblance and representation it carries the idea of the faintness of a copy. This verse means that Jesus is the perfect reflection of his heavenly Father in the following two ways:

1. He not only manifested God's holy character, God's love, God's compassion, God's grace and God's mercy etc., while on earth, but also the miraculous power of God's spoken word, to heal, to control the weather (calming the storm) and to create from nothing (feeding the five-thousand). Added to these he taught God's eternal plan of salvation, God's promises, God's will and God's desire without fault. Though Jesus was not God himself he was nevertheless the perfect mirror image and reflection of God materialized on earth in human form.
2. Jesus is the fullness of God's Spirit in that he was God's word perfectly and fully manifested in the flesh (a human body) teaching the wisdom, knowledge, plans, purposes and promises of the invisible God in heaven and God's entire plan of salvation for all mankind (Jews and Gentiles) in this sense Jesus was the manifestation or perfect image of God's mind on earth.

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus is the firstborn of all creation. This statement can apply to the following two things firstly; Jesus was the first to be to be resurrected to eternal glory and everlasting life (see v18). Though others had been resurrected to mortal life, none had been resurrected to eternal life and secondly, since his death was in reality his birth into the eternal world of God the expression "Firstborn of all creation" refers to his resurrection to eternal glory and everlasting life.

- **Colossians 1:16-17:** For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

The Gospel proclaims: all things in heaven and on earth were created by the Lord Jesus Christ." To clearly understand this statement, we need to put it in the context of the entire chapter. Paul's focus throughout this chapter has been on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; the truth of God's grace and love in the Spirit; being filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom; understanding and living a lifestyle that is worthy of Christ; enduring with patience in the faith and sharing in the eternal inheritance and being delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of God's beloved Son and redemption and the forgiveness of sins. Paul's entire focus throughout this chapter is on Christ being the head of the church, on the church itself and on the new Kingdom Jesus has created in himself. When Paul's statement, "By him all things were created in heaven and on earth" is read with this in mind it becomes clear that Paul does not have the original creation of Genesis in focus, but rather to all things that were created or came into being through Christ's death and resurrection (i.e., the global church which is also called a new creation in Christ, a new nation, the body of Christ and the Kingdom of Christ).

It is this New Testament age of the New Covenant and the worldwide Kingdom of God that Jesus has created in his name that Paul's statement refers to. If anyone doubts the majestic magnitude and enormity of this glorious world God has created through the Lord Jesus Christ simply consider the world without Christ, we would still be under Moses laws of purification, the Levitical priesthood, the demands of the law and no-one could go to God without going through an earthly priest. Christ through his death and resurrection destroyed the old world of the old covenant and has created a new world and a new covenant or it could be said that Jesus death and resurrection destroyed the old religious world and created an entirely new spiritual world of which he is the head. Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist" (Matt 11:11) this is because it was John who introduced to the world the Lord Jesus Christ and it was Christ who totally changed the old religious world of God forever by establishing an entirely new spiritual word (or age). For over four-thousand year's circumcision, the Sabbaths, the feasts, the sacrifices, the entire Levitical priesthood and the ceremonial law was the Jews world. Jesus death and resurrection

entirely destroyed this world and created an entire new Christian or spiritual world. This is reason it is called a new Creation in Christ'. This new word that Christ created is based on grace and one eternal merciful and perfect High Priest the Lord Jesus Christ through who all (Jews and Gentiles) can boldly enter into the presence of God and be saved to eternal life in contrast to the old world in which only the high priest could ever enter into the presence of God and salvation belonged to the Jews and to those who adopted Moses laws and the religious customs of Israel. The all things in this context refer to salvation by grace now made available to Jews and Gentiles alike and to the global and worldwide church it is the church that is created by Christ since without his obedience to God and his death and resurrection it would not exist.

Christ is before all things, and in him all things hold together." The word before from Strong's Concordance means, in front of, prior to and above, figuratively carries the idea of being superior to. When the verse is read with the understanding that the word before does not mean that Jesus pre-existed with God, but rather that he is superior to and above every authority, power and government it becomes clear that Paul is not saying Jesus existed before creation, but that he is the superior head who is above all principalities and dominions. It is in this sense that Paul is saying, Jesus is before all things (i.e., he is before all things in authority, rule and dominion) which of course harmonizes with the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

In Christ all things hold together: this means that in Christ all things in the global world-wide church are held together. The following are the two reasons for this glorious truth, firstly, because there is no-other name under heaven whereby anyone can be saved and secondly because in Christ; is love, compassion, kindness, grace and mercy etc., and it is these that are the glue that holds brothers and sisters together in the Lord and the cement that holds them together in his eternal worldwide Kingdom and in his spiritual global family.

- **Colossians 1:18-20:** And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Christ is the head of the body the church. Here the global and worldwide church is pictured as an eternal awe-inspiring body with Christ as its head.
- Jesus is the beginning the firstborn from the dead. This shows us that God views death as a birth and a new beginning. Unfortunately some religious teachers use this verse to support the mistaken theory that certain faithful Old Testament fathers were raised to heaven when they died, but that would contradict Paul statement that Jesus was the first to be resurrected from the dead, meaning he was the first to be resurrected to eternal life and everlasting glory.

If the Old Testament fathers had been raised to heaven Paul would not be able to make this statement. God planned and purposed that Jesus would be first to be raised from the dead to eternal life and everlasting glory so that he would be pre-eminent (v18), meaning he would be the most high-ranking authority in God's Kingdom and stand out in majestic and royal glory amongst all others in all things regarding salvation, dominion and rule. For further information see the title: "Heaven" and the title, "Death (what happens when we die)," both titles are in, Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

- In Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. This does not mean that Jesus is God (as many believe), but that God's Spirit dwelt in him without limitation. John the Baptist said of Jesus, "For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without

measure, the Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand" (John 3:33-35) which means that God gave Jesus His Spirit without any limitation or restraint. This is why Jesus was able to heal everyone who came to him regardless of whether their sickness was physical or mental, a virus or a disease and why he was able to create fish from nothing and calm the storm by a spoken word in contrast to the prophets of the Old Testament and apostles of the New Testament having a limited measure of God's Spirit and in contrast to every brother and sister in Christ even today having a limited portion of God's Spirit (also called the Holy Spirit) dwelling within them.

- Through Christ God is reconciling to Himself all things making peace by the blood of his cross This statement shows us the following two things, firstly, that it is God's desire that mankind would be saved and secondly, why God was so thrilled with His Son. Ponder for a moment: if Jesus had not been prepared at the Garden of Gethsemane to say those famous words, "Father not my will but yours be done" (knowing in that moment he was surrendering his life to brutal torture and a cruel death) God's plan of salvation would have failed is it any wonder God has exalted Christ above all principalities, authorities, dominions and powers and why Christians make the Lord the most treasured possession of their heart and mind.

NOTE: the following verses show that God is able to take a portion of His Spirit from one person and place it onto others: "Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD and he gathered seventy men of the elders and placed them around the tent then the LORD came down in the cloud and took some of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on the seventy elders as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not continue doing it and Eldad and Medad remained in the camp and the Spirit rested on them and so they prophesied" (Num. 11:24-26).

This clearly shows that God is able to pour out His Spirit in varying portions on whoever he chooses.

Gentiles were Alienated and Hostile in Mind to God.

- **Colossians 1:21-23:** And you (Gentiles), who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Every brother and sister in Christ should be holy and blameless and above Reproach before God. The word, blameless in this context does not mean that we can attain to a state of sinlessness, but that God counts us righteous because of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why Paul adds; "If you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the Gospel." It is in our faith in Christ that we are counted blameless before God and not by our self-effort to attain to it by religious works or self-effort.

Though good conduct and godly behaviour may store up eternal rewards in heaven they have no power in themselves to save a person to eternal life.

- The mind of all mankind is carnal (dominated by self, ego, pride, greed and lust etc.,) and as such is against God and therefore alienated from Him which is manifested in the teaching and theory of evolution and corrupt works throughout all nations, but this alienation is spoken particularly of the Gentiles because the Jews were at least by profession dedicated to the true God while the Gentiles were given up to denying God altogether or to the worship of other gods or other spiritual teachings which they dedicated themselves, their minds and their religious and spiritual service to.

NOTICE: this alienation is seated in the mind and leads to a lifestyle contrary to the will of God. It is not the result of a fleeting passion or excitement, but has a much deeper seat that takes hold of the intellectual powers of the mind which renders reconciliation with God difficult. This alienation is a result of sin (empowered by self, ego, pride, lust and greed etc.,) it has corrupted the moral and intellectual powers of the mind and thereby set the whole of mankind against their Creator, but despite this God through Christ has brought harmony, love and friendship between Gentiles and Himself. It should be mentioned that all this change is on the part of man and not God since it is us who have to lay aside our hostility toward God and not God toward us since His whole desire is to reconcile us to Himself so much so that Jesus himself said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

The Gospel has been proclaimed in all creation: obviously this does not mean that every man and woman has heard the Gospel, if this were the case Paul could stop preaching. What it does mean is that the Gospel has now gone out to the Gentiles in contrast to the word of God being limited to Israel only. Salvation is now available to people from all nations in contrast to the Jews only it is in this sense that the Gospel has been proclaimed to all creation.

- **Colossians 1:26-27:** the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The Gospel proclaims: the mystery hidden for ages and generations has now been revealed. The people of Israel believed that all the promises God had made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David regarding the coming Messiah the Christ and all that the Old Testament prophets had spoken about the promised seed to come who would bless and rule the nations where restricted solely to the nation of Israel. The Jews clearly believed that God's promises and the coming Messiah the Christ were for their nation and their nation only. The mystery of Christ that was hidden in the Old Testament was not only that all the promises God made to Israel would also apply to the Gentiles, (because all God's promises are in Christ), but also that the Messiah the Christ would embrace the Gentile nations as well as the Jews.

The mystery of Christ that was hidden in the Old Testament was that: both Jews and Gentiles would be saved by faith in Jesus Christ; the plans, purposes and promises of God would be revealed in Jesus and would all be obtained through faith in Christ; Everything that is needed for salvation for Jews and Gentiles would be in Christ and that the character nature and power of God and God's love, grace and mercy would be revealed in Christ to both Jews and Gentiles alike. Following are the three most common teachings regarding the majestic and awe-inspiring words Christ in you:

1. The word, 'in' from Strong's Concordance means, in, by, with, among, at, on, through and together with. Based on this understanding the verse could read, "Christ amongst you" meaning that Christ by his Spirit is amongst the church and those who gather in his name. Though this is certainly a true statement since the Lord himself said, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matt 18:20) it does not mean that the verse is wrong in saying, "Christ in you" since Christ by his Spirit and through faith dwells in every brother and sister by love who is devoted to him.
2. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends," (John 15:13). When a person's eyes are opened to their fallen condition before God and perceive what it cost the Lord Jesus Christ to save them their heart is filled with love for him, it is in this sense that Christ dwells in the human heart. The following is a true story and a good example of a person being in the heart of another by love. An eight-year old disabled girl, whose best friend was her mother

was doing her first live stage show. The mother loved her daughter but could not be at the opening show as she was in hospital with terminal cancer. A television reporter asked the young girl if she would be sad and miss her mother at the opening of the show. The small girl with tears in her eyes said, "Yes I will miss her, but she will be in my heart where she belongs." love for a person creates the reality and presence of that person in the human heart. This presence is in direct proportion to the love (i.e., the greater the love the greater the presence). Every Christian, by looking at the cross knows that God and Jesus love them.

3. Christ is the head of a new race and those outside this new race enter into it by faith in belonging to Christ. Adam was the head of the old race that believers were in prior to being in Christ's new race therefore the words, "Christ in you" in this context means fully belonging to Christ; being together and in union with Christ; agreeing with and sharing in the divine nature of Christ and having the same mind as Christ (i.e., desiring to honour his heavenly Father).

COLOSSIANS 2

- **Colossians 2:2-3:** that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The Gospel proclaims: the riches of the knowledge of God's mystery, is Christ. This mystery in Christ was planned and purposed in God's eternal mind before the foundation of the world began. It refers to the truth that salvation would not be limited to God's chosen people the Jews only, but would also embrace people from all nations (i.e. the Gentiles) through faith in God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ. The mystery that is now revealed is that the Gentiles would become eternal partakers with Israel in all the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David, this is the knowledge and wisdom that Paul was anxious all brothers and sisters in Christ would understand. The words, "The riches of full assurance" refer to brothers and sisters in Christ being fully convinced of the following two truths, firstly, they cannot be saved by good works, self-effort or by adhering to ceremonial rites and keeping religious laws, customs and traditions because even though some of these maybe good in themselves and may reap eternal rewards not one of them has any power to save a person to eternal life and secondly they can be fully assured and confident that they are saved to eternal life solely by their faith in Christ and by God's grace and not by works of the law.

The riches of God's mystery: in Christ that are now revealed are that Jesus is the seed promised in (Gen. 3:15) that would bruise the serpents head; the promised prophet to come like Moses; the promised seed of Abraham and of King David; the promised Messiah and Christ of Israel; the only way to God the Father and eternal life; in Jesus are all the promises God made to Abraham, David and Israel and he is the ultimate King of kings and Lord of lords who will return in glory to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth. Paul knowing the abundant richness of the love of Christ dwelling in him earnestly desired that every brother and sister in Christ would know the Lord in the same intimate way, but was fully aware that without a full understanding of faith in Christ and God's abundant and boundless grace a brother or sisters relationship to Christ to some degree would be hindered not only from attaining full mental peace free from condemnation, but would also be hindered from attaining to spiritual and heavenly places in their spiritual relationship with Christ.

- **Colossians 2:9:** For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily (ESV).

The Gospel proclaims: in Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." The King James Bible says, "In Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The word Godhead from Strong's Concordance

means, deity and divinity. The verse means that all the heavenly treasures and spiritual riches of God needed for salvation and eternal life are in Christ and that all the following spiritual blessings are in Jesus and in him alone: forgiveness of sins and redemption to eternal life; the inheritance and eternal promises made to Abraham, David and Israel; entry into the Kingdom of God; eternal life and everlasting glory; full assurance of salvation and all the wisdom and knowledge of God. When Paul said, "In Jesus the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily," he was not mystically or secretly saying as some religious ministers teach that Jesus the Son is actually God the Father (if that was the case Paul would simply say so) rather Paul was saying that God gave Jesus all dominion and authority to rule and judge and the power to give eternal life and a name above every name. Every power and authority that God has, He gave to Jesus His Son it is in this sense that Paul is saying, "In Jesus the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." It means that Jesus is the perfect mirror reflection and image of God the Father's character, power, promises and Spirit, because Jesus was filled with God's Spirit without limitation. Paul was not implying that Jesus is God, but that he has the Spirit of God and all the power of God dwelling in him without any limitations.

In Christ dwells the fullness of God also carries the following two ideas, firstly, Jesus Christ was the fullness of God and the perfect image of God in that he was God's word manifested in the flesh (human body) displaying the wisdom knowledge love, kindness, compassion, grace and mercy of the invisible God in heaven in absolute perfection while here on earth and the majestic miracles he revealed God the Father's love for a lost and dying sinful world. Secondly, Jesus was the complete fulfilment of the eternal plan of redemption and salvation for all mankind that God had purpose and promised in His eternal mind and foreknowledge. It is in this sense that Christ is spoken of as having, "The whole fullness of deity dwelling in him." Paul is saying that Jesus Christ is not just another human man or great prophet, but the only begotten Son of God the Father, in who is the entire plan of God's eternal salvation dwells.

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It means that in Christ alone is salvation in contrast to all other great prophets of the Bible who only had the power to lead people to Israel's Messiah, the Christ and Saviour of the world, whereas in Christ alone is forgiveness of sins and eternal life, he is the final Lamb of God without blemish to be sacrificed for man's sin and in him God's complete plan of eternal salvation for Jews and Gentiles alike is fulfilled it in this sense the whole fullness of God dwells in him.

The Gospel proclaims: brothers and sisters in Christ can, "Know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, and be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephes. 3:19), no-one reading this today believes that a brother or sister who is filled with the fullness of God actually becomes God, rather we all know that Paul is saying that we can be filled with God's Spirit so why is it when Paul said, "For in Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell (Col. 1:19) that certain religious teachers based on these words of Paul's proclaim that Jesus the Son became God the Father? Rather than accept that God by His Spirit dwelt in Christ without any limitations in the same way that God's Spirit (with limitations) dwelt in the prophets and apostles and in all who faithfully trust in Christ and faithfully follow him.

The Gospel proclaims: both the Father and the Son are the Saviour this is because God the Father planned and purposed salvation before time began and Christ fulfilled that plan in his ministry, death and resurrection. This means that the words, "For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" mean that in Christ alone is the fullness of God the Father's plan of salvation for all or mankind. It means that there is nothing a believer can add to the Gospel of salvation of Christ to make themselves more saved. Those who belong to Christ are complete (for eternal salvation), meaning they are totally justified and redeemed in Christ and in him alone because in him is the fullness of God's plan of eternal salvation. This is what the Bible means when it says "For in the Son dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" and "you are complete in Christ" both terms simply mean that in Christ is God's full plan of salvation. Jesus

the Son of God is the fullness of the complete and entire eternal plan of God's salvation for all mankind which God purposed before time, began. There is no other plan or way for man to be redeemed. Jesus is God's promise of eternal life and it is through faith in him all believers are complete, meaning they are fully forgiven, justified and redeemed to be counted worthy of eternal life. For further information see the notes following Matthew 16:16 (above).

NOTE: God lifting portions of the Spirit off Moses and placing a portion on the seventy prophets is a good example of God's Spirit being poured out upon believers with varying levels of power (Num. 11:24-26). Though brothers and sisters in Christ can be filled with God's Spirit no one thinks they can become God no matter how much of His Spirit they may be filled with, yet when Paul talks of Jesus being filled with God's Spirit it is used to support the mistaken theory that Jesus is God, but Paul is not teaching that Christ is God, but that he is filled with the fullness of God's Spirit in every way and without any limitations.

- **Colossians 2:10:** and you have been filled in him (complete in him in the KJV), who is the head of all rule and authority.

The Gospel proclaims: all who belong to Jesus are complete in him for salvation, this not only means that through faith in Christ everyone is filled with everything they need for salvation to eternal life, but also that there is nothing more they can do to add to it because God's salvation in Christ is not only complete in Christ, but a free gift and whoever is saved in the Lord is saved in Christ alone. Jesus is the head of all rule and authority, this statement immediately transcends the spiritual mind to the beautiful letter Paul wrote to the Corinthian brothers and sisters in which he said, "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "All things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him.

When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:27-29) (see also Ephes. 1:22-23). These verses clearly show that God has exalted Christ as the head above all things, but they also tell us something more and that is, "When all things are subjected to Christ then he will also be subjected to God so that God will be ALL in ALL. The expression, "God will be ALL in ALL" in this context lifts the mind of the ardent Bible student at lightning speed and transcends it forward in time to the glorious and majestic vision of a godly man on the isle of Patmos who wrote:

- **Revelation 21:1-5:** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

Here we see an eternal age in which God is ALL in ALL. This is the splendour, the glory the wonder of the climax of God's promise to Abraham made many thousands of years ago and the inheritance of all who are children of Abraham by faith and brothers and sisters of Christ. Is there any other religion on earth that proclaims such a glorious eternal hope? (This author has not found one).

- **Colossians 2:11:** In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.

The Gospel proclaims: those who believe in Christ have been circumcised with a circumcision made without hands. This refers to the life changing moment when a sinner in honest repentance humbles themselves before God and accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord

and Saviour. In this climatic and spiritual life changing moment not only is their heart (inner most being) filled with God's Holy Spirit which transforms their mind and their passions from craving after the things of this temporary and mortal world to desiring the things of God's eternal world, but they are also by the Spirit, by God's grace and by love united in union with Jesus himself and from this union desire to live their life to honour his name. Though there is a desire to honour God in the heart it does not mean every wrongful action or inward attitude is instantly changed, this is an ongoing process as one spiritually grows in the Lord from being a spiritual child to being a spiritually mature adult full of the fruits of the Spirit (i.e., compassion, grace, mercy, kindness and forgiveness etc.).

NOTE: Old Testament circumcision was a sign that a person was separated for God (Rom. 4:9-12) today this has been replaced by water baptism.

- **Colossians 2:12:** having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

The Gospel proclaims: every brother and sister in Christ has been buried with Christ in baptism, and raised with him through faith. The resurrection of Lord Jesus Christ is every brother and sisters guarantee that God will raise them to eternal life as He raised Christ from the grave to die no more, so likewise all who belong to the family of Christ will be raised from the grave to eternal life and everlasting glory instead of being condemned by the law and judged guilty because of sin and sentence to eternal death. Paul's words, "Buried with him in baptism" (v12) is alluding to the immersions practiced in the case of adults, wherein the person being baptized appears to be buried under the water.

This is because water baptism is identification with Christ who died for our sins, was laid in the grave, where he continued for a while and then rose on the third day to eternal life and everlasting glory. Likewise, when a repentant sinner is baptized they are covered with water as if they were buried in it, because water baptism is a representation of the burial of Christ and a representation of our burial with him, as being dead to sin, to the law, and to the world by our faith in Christ and a testimony of a total change of life as a marriage is to a relationship of love.

In regards to water baptism three things should be noted: -

1. The words, "Buried with him in baptism, and raised with him" (v12) shows that water baptism was performed by covering the whole body in water because no other form of administration of baptism, as sprinkling, or pouring water on the face, can represent a burial and a resurrection in such majestic fashion as going down into the water and being under it, represents Christ's descending into the state of the dead, and his continuance in it, so the emersion, or coming up out of the water, represents his rising from the dead, and that of his people in him, in order to walk in newness of life.
2. There is nothing spiritual in the ceremony of water baptism itself since without repentance before God and faith in Christ and his death and resurrection water baptism will be of no use. A person being baptized without faith is simply being dunked in water, but when a person has a right heart toward God and the Lord Jesus Christ and enters the waters of baptism in faith, God by His Spirit responds accordingly.
3. In climates where total immersion is safe the normal method of biblical water baptism and the one most in accordance with Scripture is full immersion, but where total immersion would be inconvenient (i.e., a third world country where there is not even enough clean water to drink) or where it could be dangerous to a person's health or life (i.e., sickness) to insist on total immersion in such cases is not only enforcing legalistic ceremonialism that is devoid of the spirit of God and ignoring the faith of the one being baptized, but is also placing unnecessary

hardship on the repentant believer since in these circumstances God who sees the honesty of the heart and responds to faith accordingly will accept any form of sprinkling or dipping in water that is administered in faith.

For further information see the title: Water Baptism (ON WEBSITE MENU).

- **Colossians 2:13-14:** And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands (KJV ads, which was contrary to us). This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

The Gospel proclaims:

- God nailed to the cross the legal demands of the law. Without Christ the law has every right to condemn us to death. This is because the universal law of sin and death that affects all mankind states, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) meaning if a person sins they are judged and sentenced by the law to death. Those who remain held captive to the law of sin and death are referred to as being uncircumcised in their flesh in contrast to those who by faith in Christ have been set free from the laws power to condemn to death.
- That a record of debt stood against us with its legal demands; this refers to the following two things: all our past sins and the laws demand that it must be kept in every aspect, because whoever breaks one part of the law is held guilty before the law and judged and condemnation to death. It does not matter that we might only break small parts of the law we are still held guilty. It is like someone who steals \$5 dollars, it's not much in the grand scheme of crime, and drugs, bank robberies, rape and murder nevertheless they are still guilty of stealing.

NOTE: the law does not have mercy or compassion its demand on those that are under it is strictly official, formal and legal and enforced without compassion or any sense of sorrow toward its condemned victims. The universal demand of the law states; "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) meaning if anyone fails to keep the law in any aspect, they are guilty of breaking the law it then without mercy rightfully and legally judges and sentences its guilty victims (all mankind) to eternal death. It is futile to attempt to attain to righteousness that leads to eternal life by keeping the law since the law states, "You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour's" (Exod. 20:17).

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In today's world this would be stated, "You shall not covet your neighbour's house, his wife, his very successful business, his new car, beautiful boat or anything else that belongs to him." Added to this the royal law states, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Rom. 13:9) (James 2:8) and Jesus said all the commandments regarding mankind are summed up in the words of the royal law because the spirit underpinning the Royal law, is desiring the best for others contrasted to the spirit underlying coveting which is craving the best for self.

The law, you shall not covet: it is futile to attempt to attain to righteousness by keeping the law for the following two reasons: -

The law states:

- **Exodus 20:17:** "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

In modern language this means, you shall not *covet* any other persons house, their wife or husband, or anyone's very successful business, their riches and wealth, their new car, their beautiful boat or anything that belongs to any other person.

The royal law sums up the law with the following words:

- **Romans 13:9:** You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus said all the commandments regarding mankind are summed up in the words of the royal law (James 2:8) because the spirit underpinning the royal law, desires the best for others contrasted to the spirit underlying coveting which is craving and seeking the best for self.

COVET: (covetousness) means; to set the heart upon, to desire, long for or lust after (rightfully or otherwise) it carries the idea of holding onto or desiring more than one has or needs (the practice of greediness) and embraces those who live a lifestyle of unlawful sex, orgies adulteries and sexual immorality to fulfil their own lust and to anyone whose heart is craving after and worshipping and exalting another person as a god (an Idolater).

By implication covet: can refer to those who are not honest and true and who use pressure or coercion to force or entice others to fulfil their own selfish need or ambition and to anyone who intentionally deprives somebody of money or property by dishonest means because they are greedy and eager for gain. The commandment, "You shall not covet" exposes human selfishness, pride, ego, lust, and greed etc. It reveals the dysfunctions and aberrations that are imbedded within our fallen corrupted human nature that hinder us from attaining to the perfection of God's Holy law. It exposes our self-centeredness in our desires for more than we need, our excessive avariciousness toward materialism, our overeating of tasty foods the craving to be important or esteemed, our sensual and lustful thoughts, the desire to be rich and have abundantly more than we need etc.

The commandments, "You shall not covet" and "Love your neighbour as yourself," shines a spotlight on our self-interest, they highlight our lack of willingness to give to those less fortunate and those in need, they expose our degrading, resentful, bitter and jealous thoughts of others and the list goes on. In summary the command, "You shall not covet" embraces all those attitudes and thoughts that dwell within our members that are contrary to the law of love and the Holiness of God which means the entire human race is held guilty before the law and therefore it legally has the right and the power to condemn us all to death which it does without hesitation, compassion or mercy the law shows no mercy or compassion its demand on those that are under it is strictly official, formal and legal and enforced without compassion or any sense of sorrow toward its condemned victims. The universal demand of the law states; "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) meaning if anyone fails to keep the law in any aspect, they are guilty of breaking the law.

It then without mercy rightfully and legally judges and sentences its guilty victims (all mankind) to death. The law is splendid as a guide to an understanding of God's will, but as a means of reunion with God, the God we have sinned against, it is a hopeless failure, but God always knew it would be, not because of a fault in the law but because a flaw in us. The royal majesty, the wonder and the glory of the Good News of the Gospel not only proclaims that, "God through Christ has cancelled the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands" (the debt being all our trespasses and sins) (Col. 2:13-14), but also tells us that God set aside the laws legal demands, nailing it to the cross, this of course refers to the fact that Christ fulfilled all the legal demands of the law throughout his life on earth and to his brutal, bloody and cruel death on the cross.

Jesus, before the eyes of men went to the cross as a common criminal, but before the eyes of God he was innocent and without sin and therefore through his life and his death all the legal demands of the law were fulfilled. Christ took all the legal demands of the law to the grave with him and because he was without sin the law had no power to hold him in the grave and therefore God had full and legal right not only to raise him from the grave, but to raise him to eternal life and everlasting glory. Jesus

through his death and resurrection has become the royal robe of grace and the majestic crown of righteousness that God clothes all who by faith trust in the Lord for their righteousness and eternal salvation and in this manner, "The legal demands of the law have been nailed to the cross" (Col. 2:14)) since Christ through his death broke the power of the universal law that states, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) and superseded and overruled it with a far higher law that proclaims, "The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:23). This is the humbling, awe-inspiring Good News of the Gospel.

COLOSSIANS 3

- **Colossians 3:1:** If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

The Gospel proclaims: those in Christ have been raised with Christ. This statement immediately takes our minds to the previous chapter in which Paul told those who had been water baptized, "You have been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also *raised with him through faith* in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead." (Col. 2:12) and to his words to the Ephesian brothers and sisters, "Even when we were dead in our trespasses, God made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved and *raised us up with him* and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (Ephes. 2:5-6). In our own strength we can no more ascend than a bar of iron can lift itself up from the earth, but God's power and Christ's love working through our faith is a powerful magnet drawing us upward. God's majestic design of the Gospel is not merely to give rules, but mainly to produce passions and supply motives to live a life worthy of Christ's name.

The eternal and majestic words: "You have been raised with Christ," carry the following two ideas: -

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1. It is every brother and sisters' privilege that they have risen with Christ, meaning they have benefited by the resurrection of Christ, and by virtue of their faith and their union with him they are justified and redeemed and will be raised to eternal life and everlasting glory with the Lord. This is guaranteed to those who are in Christ because it founded on God's promise and He cannot lie, thus the reason Paul can say that those who are in Christ have been raised with Christ with such confidence and in the present tense. Added to this the Scriptures pictures Christ as being the head of the body and as with any body were the head is the body must be. Paul with the words, "If then you have been raised with Christ (v1) is not only contrasting the believer's former state of being alive to the world, but dead to God and their present state, dead to the world but alive to God, but is also contrasting the mental and spiritual earthly state and abode of the unbeliever to the mental and spiritual heavenly state and abode of the believer (1 Col. 15:47, 48). Paul in his letter to the Ephesians wrote, "God raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places (Ephes. 1:20) and is now telling the Colossians and by extension every faithful brother and sister in Christ that by God's promise we are already seated in Christ as our head and in our union with him are by faith already seated alongside the Lord in heavenly places.
2. Paul's statement: "If then you have been raised with Christ" (v1) or more correctly "If then you have been raised together with Christ," implies that a definite act has taken place. This definite act is named in the previous chapter in which Paul told those who had been water baptized that they, "Had been buried with Christ in baptism, in which they were also *raised with him* through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. (Col. 2:12). Paul is saying, "If from the heart and in faith you rose with Christ to a, new spiritual life then seek those things which are above and let your aspirations, hopes and desires ascend there. The definite act or the thing that faithful

brothers and sisters through water baptism have been raised to is; a new spiritual eternal and heavenly life to be lived in union with Christ. It is through an intimate union of love between Christ and those who faithfully follow him and by faith in his death and resurrection that they have died (v3). Death in this context does not refer to a natural or human death or to being unaffected mentally or emotionally by earthly things because even though they are in Christ they are still living in the world and in a fallen corrupted body. The expression, "You have died" (v3) means they are dead to the laws demands and to adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions to be counted righteous and dead to the condemnation of the law and its damning power it is in this manner that believers have died with Christ.

They are not only truly dead to all expectation of justification by the law and justification by adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and religious customs and traditions etc., but also live in freedom and the joyful expectation of an eternal future in everlasting glory knowing that it is in Christ alone that they are saved. All hopes of happiness that this present world can give, is secondary to the hearts passion to know the love of Christ and all their dreams and aspirations for life in this world take a secondary role to the things that are above. This is because through faith in the Lord's resurrection those in Christ have risen to a new spiritual life united with God and with Christ and therefore from this union of love their affections are in heaven with Christ, he is the supreme passion and the attachment of their affections, their cares and their love. It in this sense their minds are in heavenly places, meaning they are set on the things above seeking to dwell with the Lord in glory.

- **Colossians 3:2:** Set your minds (affections in KJV) on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

The Gospel proclaims:

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- Those in Christ are to "Seek the things that are above." This means that through the Gospel brothers and sisters in Christ are invited to walk together with Christ in a union of love and from this love they are not only called to do-good and what is right, but when able help others in need so that by their behaviour and life they bring a good testimony to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. To seek the things that are above means to seek after those things that honour God in contrast to seeking after the things of the world because heaven and earth are contrary one to the other and both cannot be followed together since the affection to the one will weaken and abate affection to the other.
- Brothers and sisters in Christ are to "Set their mind and affections on things that are above." This means to think on things that are good, pure, decent and right and fix the emotions, passions and affections on things that honour God in contrast to "Setting the mind on things of the earth," meaning only ever focusing on things that are devoid of God, craving after worldly success, fame, importance and power and being so fully consumed with money and how to make more that not only is there no time given to God, but He is totally devoid of a person's life and totally barren in their thoughts.
- **Colossians 3:3:** For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

The Gospel proclaims: those who are in Christ are dead to sin this is because sins dominion is broken and its power is gradually subdued in the following ways: by God's grace working in the inner most being of every faithful brother and sister in Christ; by the love of Christ that dwells in the heart of those who are in Christ; by understanding and perceiving the wisdom of Christ teachings in regards to godly behaviour and applying them to our life and by the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. It is in this way that brothers and sisters are not only dead to sin in their affections and cravings but the lust of the flesh (self, pride, ego, greed etc.,) is gradually being extinguished and mortified as they grow in the grace and love of

Christ. To be dead means the passions and affections of those who have the grace of God, the love of Christ and the Holy Spirit, dwelling within them are transformed from craving after the things of this earthly and temporal world to having their passions and affections set upon the things that are above and eternal.

The Gospel proclaims: the life of a believer is hidden with Christ in God. This statement not only carries the idea of secrecy, but also denotes security because Jesus himself said, "Because I live you also will live" (John. 14:19). Christ is at present a hidden Christ, or one whom we have not seen; but this is our comfort, that our life is hid with him, and laid up safely with him (another reason those in Christ love him whom they have not seen) (1 Peter 1:8). In this sense our comfort of happiness is out of sight since the one who fills the redeemed with such inexpressible joy is sitting at the right-hand side of God in heaven unseen and hidden from unbelieving human eyes and seen only by the redeemed through spiritual eyes of faith in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your life is hidden with Christ in God: (v3) the language here is most likely taken from treasure which is hidden or concealed in a place of security with the idea being that eternal life is an invaluable jewel or treasure which is laid up with Christ in heaven where God is. There it is safely deposited. It has this security, that it is with the Redeemer, and that he is in the presence of God and therefore nothing can reach this invaluable jewel or take it away. It is now laid up far out of our sight, and far from the reach of all our enemies, and with one who can, "Keep that which we have committed to him against that day" (2 Tim 1:12). Our eternal life therefore, is as secure as it could possibly be made. The true condition of the redeemed is that though they are dead to this world they have immortal life and that life is secure in the holy keeping of their Redeemer who is now in the presence of God. It is from understanding this majestic and awe-inspiring glory that God's eternal inheritance is being kept in heaven for every faithful brother and sister in Christ that they are called to set their affections on the things above and regard themselves as living for heaven.

Christ is the treasure of those who are redeemed: Jesus himself said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21). Christ by his Spirit and by love lives in the heart of those who faithfully follow him and, in this sense, they are seated in heavenly places with the Lord. He is not only the passion of their hearts, but also their best thought and in this sense their life is hidden in him. The union of love between the Lord Jesus and the redeemed is so close that it might be said that the one lived in the other.

NOTE: being dead to the world does not mean being lazy to the world, the Gospel was not designed to make people inactive, stifle their own-efforts or cause people to do nothing. The effect of the Gospel is not to make one dead in regard to laying aside their natural energies since true religion will never produce a lazy person or one that is self-indulgent, but rather produce people engaged in doing-good and living a life that brings a good testimony to Christ as they go about doing whatever is set before them, whether it is raising a family, seeking a career, pursuing a talent or gift or being a minister in the Lord's service whatever it is in life we are doing. Obviously not every brother and sister in Christ is called to minister, teach, or serve the Lord in full time capacity, but we are all called to do all as unto the Lord and aim to live a life that honours God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Colossians 3:4:** When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

The Gospel proclaims: Christ is the life of every one who belongs to his family. This statement carries the following two ideas:

1. Though every brother and sister in Christ now lives on earth surrounded and affected by the trials, cares and anxieties of this life and their own inward life is full of sinful dysfunctions and aberrations

their true and authentic life is the Spirit of Christ dwelling within. It is from this hidden life that they are motivated to behave according to the principles Jesus has taught meaning they aim to do-good, what is right and live to reflect the hidden life of Christ dwelling within and to honour God.

2. Those in Christ do not trust in their natural life, meaning they do not trust in their own self-effort or in adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days or in keeping religious customs and traditions to be justified, but rather they trust in their spiritual life of faith and on the righteousness of Christ. They know that in Christ they are dead to the law in the sense that it has no power over them to condemn them so they walk in the newness of life that they have in the Lord fully trusting in him for salvation to eternal life in contrast to trusting in their own self-efforts to attain to it. Jesus said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16). Faith fastens upon this love; "Christ gave himself for me" And those who have true faith live by this love and by this faith.

The Gospel proclaims:

- When Christ appears, those who belong to his family will appear with him in glory." These magnificent and wonderful words refer to the following awe-inspiring words Paul wrote:
- **1 Corinthians 15:51-54:** Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable (corruptible in KJV) body must put on the imperishable (incorruption in KJV), and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable (corruptible in KJV) puts on the imperishable (incorruption in KJV), and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

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And also, to the following celebrated, awesome and humbling words: -

- **1 Thessalonians 4:15-17:** For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

It is when this breathtaking and world changing event takes place that those whose life is hidden in Christ will appear with him in glory (Colossians 3:3-4).

- **Colossians 3:10-11:** and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

The Gospel proclaims: every brother and sisters new-self is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. This shows that it is God who has created the new-self. This new-self is the Spirit of Christ that dwells within everyone who belongs to the Lord. God in His eternal mind planned and purposed before the foundation of the world that His Son the Lord Jesus Christ would be the Saviour of the world and that every humble and repentant sinner who came to Christ in faith would be indwelt by the Spirit of Christ and in this manner their heart, mind, passions and desires would be transformed from seeking after earthly, worldly and temporal things by Christ's indwelling love to desiring and seeking after God and the eternal things above. This is what takes place in the heart of every repentant sinner who humbles themselves before God and accepts Christ as their Saviour to eternal life. From this moment on every brother and sister in Christ is called to live according to this new-self that God has created within them through their faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel proclaims: Christ is all, and in all these glorious, majestic and uniting words, mean that all God's eternal promises made to Abraham, Isaac Jacob and Israel are no longer restricted to the Jews because all the promises are in Christ therefore whoever is in Christ whether Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, noble or lowly, male or female it matters not since everyone in Christ is the Lord's treasured brothers and sisters, and the adopted children of God and as such become rightful heirs to all the eternal promises and eternal inheritance made to Israel. This is what the words, "Christ is all, and in all" means, he is no longer only the Messiah and Christ of Israel but the Christ and Lord of whoever humbles themselves before God and accepts him as their Saviour to eternal life. Jesus himself said, "Whoever comes to me I will never cast out (John 6:37) it is in this sense that Jesus is all in all (i.e., he is in all who come to him).

God's chosen Holy and Beloved Ones.

- **Colossians 3:12-15:** Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

The Gospel proclaims: every brother and sister in Christ is God's chosen ones, holy and beloved." This is how the eternal Almighty God the source of all life and creator of all things views those in Christ. We may not see ourselves as very holy or worthy of being loved by such an awesome and Holy God, but in spite of how we may view ourselves if we are in Christ God looks upon us as chosen, holy and with love since it is our faith in His beloved Son that God counts as our righteousness and not our own self-effort. Knowing that God loves every brother and sister in Christ with the same love and the same grace should not only motive us all to treat each other with the same love, compassion and kindness as God has shown to us through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, but also motivate us to be being quick to forgive each other since not one of us is without sin.

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NOTICE: the glue that holds the body of Christ together is not dogmatic, legalistic doctrine but love. Every doctrine should be clothed in love, mercy and grace, remember even the law of God was placed under the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant.

- **Colossians 3:17:** And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The Gospel proclaims: whatever those who belong to the family of Christ do they should do in the name of Jesus, this means that they should live and speak as though Christ is alongside them so that whatever they say or do will honour God and the Lord Jesus Christ; the body of Christ will be held together in unity and harmony; no-one will hurt or harm others or get into trouble with the law etc., and so that by their good conduct others will be encouraged to seek after God.

COLOSSIANS 4

- **Colossians 4:5:** Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Every brother and sister in Christ is to conduct themselves wisely toward those outside God's Kingdom. There is perhaps no-other more important instruction in the New Testament than this regarding Christian behaviour. People of the world judge Christianity not from preaching, or from books, or from the conduct of its Founder and his apostles, but from what they see in the lives and hear in the conversations of those who confess to believe in Christ, because those

outside the Kingdom of God understand the nature of Christianity so well that they know when its members are not consistent with it. Those who do not know Christ set a much higher value on honesty and integrity than they do on the doctrines and duties of religion; and if the professed friends of religion are destitute of the principles of Christ and honesty, they think they have nothing of any value. Though Christians may be very devout on the Sabbath; very regular at prayer-meetings; very strict in the observance of rites and ceremonies – they are of little worth in the estimation of the world, unless accompanied with a life of integrity and honesty.

- If a person confessing Christ cheats someone (no matter how small), it is vain for them to endeavour to introduce that person to be a Christian because they will feel, (even though they may not say it) that they want nothing to do with a religion that does not make a person honest. The honour of Christianity is dependent on its adherents and their interaction with others and the lives they lead. This is the reason Paul calls all those in Christ to walk “Wisely toward outsiders” (v5) so that they will have no occasion to reproach the name of Christ or the Christian faith. This does not mean that a brother or sister in Christ should stop witnessing until they have obtained to the perfect standard the law, since then no-one would be able to testify, rather the idea underlying the words “Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders” (v5) is that those in the Kingdom of God should live a life of honesty and integrity and treat those outside the Kingdom of God with respect and decency.

1 THESSALONIANS 1

- **1 Thessalonians 1:1:** Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

The Gospel proclaims: the church is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that every repentant sinner when being water baptized should see themselves as being baptized into God and the Lord Jesus Christ and not into any particular religious group or denomination. This is because biblical water baptism is not about being baptized into a church or a religious organization, but about being baptized into Christ and thereby being reconciled to his heavenly Father.

- **1 Thessalonians 1:4:** For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,

The Gospel proclaims: God has chosen those in Christ. This does not mean that God had predestined before the foundations of the world that they would be saved, but that because of their faith in Christ they are thereby members his family and thereby adopted sons and daughters of God, it is in this sense that God chose us. We from our free-will choose Christ and God chooses (accepts) us because we by faith belong to the family of Christ; God’s Son.

For further information concerning predestination see: Ephesians 1 in Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

- **1 Thessalonians 1:5:** because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

The Gospel proclaims: that the Gospel came not only in word, but also in power. This does not refer to Paul’s miraculous power, but the power of the Gospel to change a person’s life. The words, “The Gospel came to them not only in word, means not only in intellectual knowledge, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit, meaning power not only to deliver a sinner from the domain of darkness and transfer them into the Kingdom of God’s beloved Son (Col. 1:13), but also power to change their passions in such a manner that they now desire to live a life that honours God and the

name of the Lord Jesus Christ while the words, "With full conviction" means that they are fully convinced that the Gospel message is the true word of God.

- **1 Thessalonians 1:10:** and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Everyone who belongs to the family of the Lord should stand firm in their faith despite the struggles and crisis of life while they wait patiently for God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ to return from heaven.
- God raised Jesus from the dead. This clearly shows that it was Christ's heavenly Father that raised him from the dead. God at Christ's resurrection raised only one man, but at the resurrection of believers God in the twinkling of an eye will literally raise multitudes from the dead to eternal life and everlasting glory. This phenomenal event will not only change the entire world as we know it, but will by far supersede every other wonder God has done throughout the history of the world.
- Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come. This is one of the reasons (there are many others) the Gospel is called the Good News. Whoever belongs to the family of Christ will be delivered from God's judgment of wrath which means they will not be condemned to eternal death, but instead resurrected to eternal life and everlasting glory.

NOTE: many sceptics today attempt to demean those who trust in Christ and degrade the Christian faith by mockingly saying that people have been waiting for the Lord to return for hundreds of years, but this is the wisdom of God. The Bible is written in such a manner that every generation is able to live with this glorious hope living in their heart and mind.

No-doubt one of the reasons God designed it this way was because this eternal hope produces tremendous joy in the heart and mind that no-one can rob nor can anything take it away and it anchors the heart, the mind and the emotions through hardship and troubling times. Added to this it should always be remembered that no believer has ever waited for hundreds of years since the instant they die is the instant they are with Christ and therefore the longest any of us will ever wait is one lifespan and to God and to eternity that is like a blinking of the eye. For further information on this topic see the title: "Sleeping in the Grave and Sleeping in Christ," in Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

1 THESSALONIANS 2

- **1 Thessalonians 2:12:** we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Those who belong to Christ's family should walk in a manner worthy of God. Clearly not every brother and sister in Christ is called into full time ministry, but all are called to encourage each other in the faith and to live their life in a manner that honours God, honours the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and brings a good testimony to the Christian faith.
- God calls those in Christ into His own Glory." These glorious and majestic words transcends the mind of the ardent Bible student to the following awe-inspiring mystery that will take place at the sound of the last trumpet and our natural mortal, dishonourable and perishable body is not only raised to be a spiritual imperishable body in glory,

power and immortality, but also raised in the image of the Lord Jesus Christ to eternal glory (1 Cor. 15:42-51) this is the breath-taking and eternal glory God is calling those in Christ into.

- God calls those in Christ into His own Kingdom. It is through the message of the cross, the Good News of the Gospel and through the Lord Jesus Christ that God calls us into His own Kingdom.

Following are the two most common theories today amongst religious leaders concerning this Kingdom that God is calling us into

1. Many believe it refers to the present spiritual Kingdom of God that exists worldwide as an invisible spiritual Kingdom being established in the hearts and minds of those who are in Christ which is outwardly manifested amongst all nations in the testimonies and good behaviour of the faithful who endeavour to live a life that honours God and collectively through the global church.
2. Others believe it refers to the Kingdom to come when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

Since both of these theories are true they can be easily harmonized in the following way, prior to the resurrection no-one, not even the apostles fully understood that Jesus was going to be put to death and rise again they basically preached only the Kingdom of God on earth because they never really understood that Jesus was going to be its eternal King, but after his death and resurrection the apostles focus is on the King of the Kingdom rather than the actual Kingdom itself, this is because whoever belongs to the King will inherit the Kingdom. Jesus the King is the royal path into the Kingdom, while the Kingdom is the inheritance of those who belong to the King. The Kingdom of God has existed, in different forms and shapes throughout history. It existed in the Old Testament under the Judges, David and Solomon and many other kings of Israel. It was not a perfect Kingdom and never has been. Jesus was not the King and many of the kings that did reign were far from godly nevertheless it, was God's Kingdom because God was the King. Today there is an invisible and spiritual Kingdom of God existing through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ which has taken on a different shape and form to that of the Old Testament Kingdom. When Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God literal and visible Kingdom on earth God's Kingdom will take on a different shape again, but even this is not the final and ultimate shape of the Kingdom as it will once again change its appearance at the Great White Throne judgment when God descends to earth and is ALL in ALL. Understanding this shines a brilliant spotlight on the truth that it is the King who determines whose Kingdom it is and not the shape or form of it. Even though all four Kingdoms mentioned have been different in shape, form and appearance they are all called God's Kingdom simply because God and the Lord Jesus Christ is their King whether the Kingdom is seen or unseen. For further information see the title: Kingdom (ON WEBSITE MENU).

1 THESSALONIANS 3

- **1 Thessalonians 3:11-13:** Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, ¹² and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, ¹³ so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

The Gospel proclaims: The Lord will establish our hearts blameless in holiness before God. In this context the word blameless does not mean without sin, only one man throughout history has ever been able to achieve that perfection and he is the Son of God the Lord Jesus Christ. Having our hearts blameless in holiness in this context is about loving our brothers and sisters in Christ which means showing each other

compassion, kindness, mercy, grace and forgiveness etc., and about showing the same love to those outside the Kingdom of God. Micah said, "What the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God." Isaiah tells us, "The LORD loves justice and hates robbery and wrong doing" and Jeremiah says, "Those who know God practice steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights" (Micah 6:5-10) (Isaiah 61:8) (Jer. 9:24). The thing God hates the most is when we do harm to another person, physically, financially, sexually, verbally, mentally, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do-good to others. It is interesting to notice that the major crime that God points out in Noah's time and one of the main reasons for the flood was because of all the violence in the land. The great prophets Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah clearly show us that the people the LORD loves are not only those who acknowledge God, but who also uphold justice, do not lie, deceive or make promises they do not intend to keep, but speak the truth, do what is right, show respect and give help to others when able and make choices that lead to peace. A wicked person is primarily one who deliberately and consciously denies the existence of God and does harm to other humans.

NOTE: when we stand before the Lord at his return we will not be given a doctrinal exam to do, but we will be judged according to our devotion to Christ and how we have fulfilled Jesus royal commandment, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt. 19:17-20) (Mark 12:29-31) (Jas. 2:8). This means do not deliberately do harm to other humans. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself.

1 THESSALONIANS 4

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- **1 Thessalonians 4:9:** Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.

The Gospel proclaims: brothers and sisters in Christ "Have been taught by God." This is because Christ is the perfect mirror image of God's love on earth. All any of us have to do to be taught by God is look at the life Jesus lived and how he treated others and then imitate him it is in this sense that we are taught by God because God's Spirit of love dwelt in Christ without limitation and he perfectly manifested God's compassion, mercy, kindness and forgiveness to all mankind not only in his life, but also in his death.

- **1 Thessalonians 4:11-12:** and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you,¹² so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

The Gospel proclaims: every brother and sister in Christ should not only show love compassion, mercy, kindness forgiveness and grace to all who belonged to the family of the Lord and increase in love even more by minding their own affairs (don't gossip) and working to support themselves (don't be lazy and bludge off others) and to live quietly, meaning calmly, gently and confidently in peace contrasted to causing contention, strife, quarrels and divisions. Brothers and sisters who love one another and live in this manner are not only a good testimony to Christ before the unsaved world, but bring honour to God.

NOTE: although God hates laziness to such an extent that the apostle Paul wrote, "We give you this command if anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat" (2 Thess. 3:10) it should be mentioned that this does not apply to a person who is out of work, but desire to work, they are deserving of support. Laziness is about attitude and only applies to those who are able to work, but for no good reason (other than laziness) deliberately choose not to.

- **1 Thessalonians 4:15-17:** For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

The Gospel proclaims: when the Lord Jesus Christ returns, those who have died in faith will be resurrected and those who are alive will be gathered together to be with them and the Lord in glory. For further information concerning sleeping in Christ, see the title: Sleeping in Christ (following 1 Cor. 15:18-19) (above).

NOTICE: the following verse “The living and the dead will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (v17) does not actually say that they will be caught up to heaven. Air; from Strong’s Concordance comes from the Greek word ‘aer’ and means to breathe or blow (i.e., air as surrounding) there is no implication that it means heaven. Throughout the history of Christianity there has always been two main theories regarding the Lord Jesus Christ return.

1. That the dead and those who are alive will be caught up to heaven and forever be with the Lord in heaven. Most who believe this do not think they are going to be sitting on clouds playing harps with the angels, but rather that they will be in an eternal world of glory full of joy and peace and free of suffering and sorrow a place that by far supersedes any beauty and bliss our finite mortal and corrupted minds can comprehend.
2. The Lord will return as, King of kings and Lord of lords to rule and reign from God’s Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God’s Holy Mountain) to establish God’s Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace during his glorious millennial reign on earth. For further information concerning this Kingdom see the notes following Matthew 23:39 (above).

Prior to Christ’s death and resurrection, the focus is upon the Kingdom of God whereas after his death and resurrection the focus of the writers is mostly upon the King of the Kingdom, very little detail is given concerning the place and shape of the eternal Kingdom (i.e., what eternity will look like). Most New Testament writers simply say that the faithful in Christ will be resurrected to eternal glory and don’t go into detail of where that glory will be other than saying we will have an immortal body, be full of joy and happiness and never again suffer or experience sorrow added this awe-inspiring wonder we will be with the Lord for all eternity and for those who know his love this is enough. Those who live with this promised and eternal hope of Christ’s return as the anchor of their mind will never be emotionally or mentally crushed and the hidden glory of this belief will produce a quiet calm and a deep joy which will result in a feeling of happiness and continue to increase as they grow in the love and grace of the Lord. This no-doubt is one of the reasons Paul says, “Encourage one another with this hope” (v18) in contrast to trusting in worldly success, prosperity, riches, material possessions or fame which are all temporary and will eventually fail.

The hope of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ is the hope and encouragement of all Christians, this hope is not called hope because it might or might not happen, but because it is unseen and yet future, but the hope itself is guaranteed because it is based on God’s promise and He cannot lie. Paul wrote, “In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began” (Titus 1:2) is there any other religion or faith that promises such an awe-inspiring and glorious eternal hope (this author has not found one). Concerning heaven and the Kingdom of God on earth it should be pointed out that at the end of Christ millennial reign God Himself descends to earth and is ALL in ALL after this breath-taking event the Bible says very little so to make the question of heaven or the

Kingdom of God on earth a matter of salvation is most likely being far too dogmatic since none of us can fully understand what ETERNITY will look like at the end of Christ's glorious millennial reign as King of kings and Lord of lords and God Himself descends to earth and is ALL in ALL. For most it is enough to know the Lord is returning in glory and they will be gathered up to be forever with him eternal glory. No faithful brother or sister will be rejected by Christ simply because they did not fully understand the detail of his return or the detail of eternity especially since the joy and excitement of all who know the love of Christ is not where they will be, but that they will be with him. For further information, see the title: "The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgement)," in, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU) and the title: "Heaven," in Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

1 THESSALONIANS 5

- **1 Thessalonians 5:2-3:** For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.³ While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

In the Night: (v2) could literally mean in the night or that the people of the world are spiritually blind (i.e., in spiritual darkness).

NOTICE: it does not say when there is peace, but when people are saying, "Peace and security" (v3) which could imply that the Middle East or the entire world has suffered so many wars or acts of terrorism that the collective voice of the world's population is crying for "Peace and security." It is at this period of time when people are calling for, "Peace and security" that Paul says, "There will be sudden destruction."

The Gospel proclaims: Christ's return will come like a thief in the night. When a thief comes in the night those being robbed are in darkness and totally unaware that the thief is coming. Once they are alerted that the thief has robbed them, they are struck with sudden fear and shock when they find that all the things they treasured and valued have been taken therefore the words, "The Lord will come like a thief in the night" implies the following four things:

1. The Lord will come unexpectedly
2. The Lord's return will take people by surprise and come upon them suddenly and with fear and shock
3. The Lord will return as the King of kings and Lord of lords and take total control of the world's governments, leaders and rulers, the economies, banking systems, trade and the way money is distributed amongst the rich and the poor amongst the global world.
4. Sudden destruction will come upon unbelievers as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman." Paul's use of the words, "Labour pains" (v3) here is brilliant because it immediately takes the mind of the ardent Bible student to the following words that Paul wrote to the Roman brothers and sisters in Christ, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies, for the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19-24). The labour pains of a pregnant woman not only continue to increase, but they become more rapid until they are almost unbearable, the poor mum to be is at this point screaming in pain to be delivered of her child, but; and this is the glory, once she is holding that new born child in her arms all the pain is overtaken by overwhelming love and joy. Just as a pregnant woman's labour pains increase in strength and become more rapid until the child

is born so too will the labour pains of the earth. There will be an increase in natural disasters and the world's suffering as this world approaches the Day of the Lord. When this destruction comes there will be no escape the world's governments, man's heroes, weapons of war, billions of dollars and the world banks will not be able to save the world from this coming destruction.

NOTE: this is not about the end of the world, but the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and a total change of the world's governments, authorities, leaders and trade, economies and banking systems as we know them today. The Bible personifies the earth as a pregnant woman who is struggling to give birth to the sons and daughters of God. This breathtaking and awe-inspiring world changing event will take place when the Lord returns in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace during his glorious millennial reign on earth

- **1 Thessalonians 5:4-5:** But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵ For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

The Gospel proclaims: those who belong to Christ's family should not be taken by surprise when the Lord returns and the labour pains of the earth reach their climax. The words, "Children of the light," refer to those who trust in Christ, live to honour God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and who are eagerly looking forward to the return of the Lord.

- **1 Thessalonians 5:9-11:** For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

The Gospel proclaims: God has not destined those who belong to the family of Christ for wrath." God's wrath as used in these verses cannot refer to natural disasters and troubles since there has been throughout history (and still is) many faithful brothers and sisters in Christ whose family homes have been destroyed and who have lost loved ones and greatly suffered because of tornados, earthquakes and floods etc. When we notice that God's wrath in the context of what Paul is saying is linked to those who will obtain salvation to eternal life it becomes clear that the wrath of God in verse nine refers to the opposite of eternal life which is the grave as the place of eternal death (i.e., total extinction and non-existence) which is the destination of the wicked who deny the existence of God, contrasted to the faithful who belong to the family of the Lord Jesus Christ being resurrected and saved to eternal life and everlasting glory.

2 THESSALONIANS 1

- **2 Thessalonians 1:10-12:** when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. ¹¹ To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, ¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel proclaims:

- When Christ returns, he will be glorified in his brothers and sisters. These awe-inspiring words are absolutely fabulous since they mean that everyone who faithfully follows the Lord Jesus Christ has his Spirit dwelling deep within their inner being. Even though Christ's Spirit is unseen in the human heart and trapped in a corrupted and fallen body controlled by self, ego and pride the glory and majesty of it will be revealed for all to see when the Lord Jesus Christ returns and our

corruptible body puts on incorruption, and our mortal body puts on immortality (1 Cor. 15:42-54). When this majestic world changing event takes place the Spirit of Christ dwelling in the heart of the faithful who love him will be manifest outwardly for all to see in brilliant light.

- All those who have believed in him will marvel, Christ's return will be so spectacular that no-matter what expectations we have of this world changing and awesome event we will all be amazed and overwhelmed as we gaze in breathtaking awe and wonder upon this event that will by far surpass everything that has happened in the history of mankind.

2 THESSALONIANS 3

- **2 Thessalonians 3:3:** But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.

The Gospel proclaims: The Lord will establish and guard those who belong to his family from the evil one. The evil one in this verse can refer to any person who denies the Lord Jesus Christ and opposes those who proclaim the Gospel. In this context the phrase the evil one can refer to the following three groups of people, firstly to the Jews who were persecuting the Thessalonian brothers and sisters, secondly to the leaders of the pagan faiths that the Gentiles had forsaken to embrace the Christian faith and thirdly to the Romans who imprisoned and afflicted those who proclaimed Christ as their Lord and their King.

Rather than go into lengthy detail to explain all the various groups or individuals who were involved in withstanding God the Lord and those who proclaimed the Gospel biblical writers would simply use the term, 'the evil one.' It is an expression that embraces in its meaning all who aggressively oppose Christ and the Christian faith and persecute those who follow the Lord. Some may wonder; "How is the Lord going to guard and protect believers on earth when he is in heaven?" The answer to this question is simple when it is understood that Paul did not have in mind that Christ would protect them from suffering and persecution, but that he would by his Spirit establish the Thessalonians and guard them from forsaking their faith. When Christ sees his brothers and sisters standing in faith in the face of persecution the Lord by his Spirit will keep them for eternal life regardless of what man can do to them.

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The Gospel proclaims: living with Christ is a two-way relationship as is any relationship of love. Those who belong to the family of the Lord live from the heart to honour God and the name of Christ and God responds to their love and faithfulness by comforting their heart with His love and fills their inner most being with joy, contentment and peace. It is a spiritual relationship with the brother or sister in Christ working upward toward God and God reaching down to them it is their spirit uniting with God's Spirit and their heart uniting with God's heart. No-one can destroy this spiritual relationship since neither God nor the Lord will ever withdraw their love therefore the only person who can destroy it is the brother or sister themselves and even then, they would have to consciously and deliberately deny God and wilfully reject Christ. To support this statement, we only have to read the following humbling and breathtaking words Paul wrote to the Roman brothers and sisters:

- **Romans 8:35-39:** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

These verses shine a brilliant spotlight on the truth that the only person who can rob us from the love of God in Christ is ourselves.

- **1 Timothy 1:5:** ⁵ The aim of our (the apostles) charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

The Gospel proclaims: those in Christ should live their lives from love a pure heart, a good conscience and sincere faith in contrast to intellectual head knowledge, dogma, legalism, hypocrisy and pretense.

- **1 Timothy 1:15:** The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

The Gospel proclaims: Christ came to save sinners of who Paul considered himself as the chief of sinners. These verses show us the following two things, Paul was fully aware of his horrific sins (ravaging the church and casting Christians into prison etc.) and that no-matter how horrific our pasts may have been God's grace in the Lord Jesus Christ is far greater and fully able to completely wash a humble and repentant sinner so clean that they can walk before God as white as snow. Paul's words, "I am the foremost of sinners" shine a brilliant spotlight on the truth that if Christ can forgive Paul's horrific, cruel and brutal deeds against faithful Christians prior to his conversion and not only shower him with such great love, but use him in such a mighty way no-one should ever think that because of their past they are beyond the grace and love of Christ.

- **1 Timothy 1:17:** To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Gospel proclaims: God is not only the immortal, invisible Almighty God the creator and source of all life and King of ages, but also the only God. Some Bible teachers use this verse to support the mistaken theory that Jesus the Son is actually God the Father, but that is not what Paul is saying, we know this for three reasons:

1. Jesus was not the King of all ages (he came through the Virgin Mary).
2. Jesus was not immortal (he died).
3. Jesus was not invisible (everyone saw him).

In this verse Paul is praising God the Father for his glorious plan of salvation that He planned and purposed in his eternal mind before the world began. It is for God's overwhelming grace and mercy that came to Paul and by extension to every brother and sister in Christ through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that Paul is praising the one and only true God. The following verses show that God the Father is the immortal, invisible King of all ages: -

- **Psalms 29:10:** The LORD (Y^ehovah) sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.
- **Psalms 44:4:** You are my King, O God; ordain salvation for Jacob!
- **Psalms 47:2:** For the LORD (Y^ehovah), the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth.
- **Psalms 47:6:** Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
- **Psalms 74:12:** Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.
- **Psalms 89:18:** For our shield belongs to the LORD (Y^ehovah), our king to the Holy One of Israel.
- **Psalms 145:1:** I (David) will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.

- **Matthew 5:34-35:** But I (Jesus) say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.
- **1 Timothy 1:17:** To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.
- **Revelation 15:3:** And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!"

These verses clearly show that God the Father is the immortal, invisible King of all ages while Christ is God's anointed and foreordained King of the age we live in and the age to come since he is the fulfilment of God's eternal plan of salvation. For further information see the title: "Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity)" in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

2 TIMOTHY 1

- **2 Timothy 1:1:** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus,

The Gospel proclaims: eternal life is in the Lord Jesus Christ." This verse clearly shows that eternal life in Christ and not intellectual head knowledge. No-one can be saved without trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and being devoted to him in love. It is by love that a brother or sister is said to be in Christ, or born again. Christ showed how much he loved us in that he laid down his life while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:8) we show our love toward him by our faith and devotion and it is in this love that we are said to be in Christ and thereby saved to eternal life. Jesus himself said to religious Jews who believed in God, read the Old Testament Scriptures daily and held fast to keeping every religious rite, law and tradition, "You do not have God's word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.

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You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life (John 5:38-40). These words of Jesus clearly show that the purpose of the Scriptures is to bring us to Christ. David in prayer and in faith echoing Christ wrote, "Blessed are those who put their trust in the LORD and make the Lord their trust (v3-4) then speaking of himself, but echoing Christ says, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me (v7) and concludes his prayer with, "You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God! (v17) (Psalm 40), these verses clearly show that the security David had for his salvation to eternal life was not in doctrine, but in his daily and faithful relationship to God the Father and the coming promised seed of Abraham, Israel's Messiah the Christ.

Thousands of years later the author of Hebrews in his letter cites the following words of David, "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book'" (Heb. 10:7) to prove to the unbelieving Jews two things, firstly, that salvation to eternal life is not in intellectual knowledge of the Scripture, but in a devoted living and faithful relationship with the Father and with His Son the Lord Jesus Christ and secondly that the purpose of all Scripture is to deliver a sinner from the domain of darkness and transfer them into the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col. 1:13) by bringing them into this fellowship with Christ and with his Father. When we all stand before the Lord's judgment seat Christ will not sit us down to do a written doctrinal exam, but he will examine our lives to see if our religious actions stemmed from a devoted and loving heart toward him and his Father or from self, ego, and pride and will measure us against the royal law, "Love your neighbour as yourself" meaning did we treat others with love, kindness, compassion, grace, mercy and forgiveness etc., especially our brothers and sisters in Christ.

NOTE: this does not mean that studying the Scriptures is of no value, quite the contrary, since the more we understand the Bible the stronger our faith and our hope grows and the more we learn of the nature, character will and the heart of the one we love. The following is a simple example: a young man may meet a girl that he is attracted to, so he takes her out on a few dates and finds she has a pleasant personality and caring nature, now, he knows this girl, no-one can say anything against her that he would believe because he knows her nature and her character, but if he never takes her for another date, it won't be long before that relationship will dissipate and other things will take its place. So it is with the Scriptures they are our date with Christ and through them we gain eternal and heavenly insights into treasures of God that touch our hearts in a manner that nothing in this world can.

- **2 Timothy 1:9-10:** who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began (before the world began in KJV), ¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

The Gospel proclaims: no-one is saved by works and self-effort, but by God's grace and by His eternal purposes which He established in His wisdom and eternal foreknowledge before the world began.

Paul is not saying that God before the ages began chose who would be saved to eternal life and who would be condemned to eternal death since that would totally violate God's gift of free-will and the law of justice since no-one could be held accountable for rejecting the Lord if they had already been programmed by their creator to do so. Here Paul is teaching that God before the world began purposed that those who would be saved to eternal life would be saved in Christ and in Christ live a godly life. It is the plan of salvation and the type of lifestyle those who are saved would be called to live that God planned and purposed before the ages began and not who would be saved and who wouldn't.

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The Gospel proclaims: that no-one is saved because of any worth in themselves, it is not because of our good works or lack of them that anyone is saved, but for God's own purpose and by His Grace. This is because God purposed and promised that salvation would be in the seed of Abraham He confirmed this promise with Isaac and Jacob and made the same promise to David, now if this promise depended on us attaining to the perfect standard the law demands and to attain to God's perfect Holiness God could not make such a promise because if it depended upon us attaining to the perfect standard the law demands and the perfect Holiness of God it would fail, because we all live in a corrupted fallen body full of sinful aberrations and dysfunctions that limit us from satisfying the demands of the law and attaining to God's Holiness. God fully understanding the limitations of human nature in His eternal wisdom and before the ages began purposed that salvation to eternal life would be by grace and not works and in this way, He could guarantee the promise. This is the majestic glory of Christian salvation and the eternal wisdom of God. For further information regarding predestination, see the title: "Predestination" (ON WEBSITE MENU).

2 TIMOTHY 2

- **2 Timothy 2:8:** Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel,

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus is the offspring of David." Here is the glory of Scripture, thousands of years before Christ appeared God swore to David with an oath that he would set one of his descendants on his throne (Acts 2:30) and many Bible prophecies proclaimed that Israel's Messiah the Christ would come from the loins of David meaning his bloodline (a descendent). Then at the right time the angel Gabriel came to a young

virgin woman named Mary and said, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God, behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, of his kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:30-33). The book of the genealogy of Jesus records that the Lord is the son of David (Matt. 1:1, 21) and when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a colt all the crowds shouted, "Hosanna to the son of David" (Matt. 21:9). This came about through Jesus foster father Joseph and Mary. Joseph was from the bloodline of David's son Solomon and many scholars suspect that Mary was from the bloodline of David's son Nathan so in this manner both God's promise to David and the prophecies proclaiming Jesus Christ would be the offspring of David were fulfilled.

- **2 Timothy 2:11:** The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him;

The Gospel proclaims: whoever dies with Christ now in this mortal world will live with him in the eternal world to come. Dying with Christ in this context refers to anything we do for God and the Kingdom of Christ that requires sacrifice of self, ego, pride, labour, time, money, popularity and such like things. This is because sacrifice involves suffering (obviously different levels) in the sense that to give to others there has to be a denying of ourselves. Dying with Christ is not limited to these things only, but also affects our attitudes, (i.e., if a person grossly offends or hurts us in some manner; we want revenge, but the Spirit says forgive, so we forgive) this also is dying with Christ since to forgive in this circumstance goes against everything our emotions and mind wants so in this sense dying with Christ is mentally and spiritually denying our old-self to do what is right for the Lord.

- **2 Timothy 2:12-13:** if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; ¹³ if we are faithless (if we believe not in KJV), he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.

The Gospel proclaims:

- If we deny Christ, he will also deny us." This statement reflects the glory and beauty of Christ's Spirit being in perfect harmony with God's Spirit. God will never force himself upon anyone; He will never violate a person free will. This verse shows us that the Lord Jesus Christ like his heavenly Father will also never violate a person's will, thus the reason if we deny the Lord, he will let us go.
- Even though a brother or sister denies Jesus the Lord himself will never deny them it is not Jesus leaving them; it is them making a conscious and deliberate choice to forsake the Lord. Jesus remains faithful; his faithfulness never changes in contrast to human faithfulness that can fluctuate up or down especially if circumstances get tough. But even when brothers or sisters do turn away Jesus faithfulness remains the same in that his faithfulness is always ready to receive back with love and grace any brother or sister who returns in honest heartfelt repentance no-matter how much they may have hurt God or brought a bad testimony to the Lord himself, such is the majestic splendour of Christ's boundless love, grace and faithfulness.

NOTE: this is an important principal to keep in mind when witnessing; God calls people into His Kingdom by love not by force. The Lord Jesus Christ is God's invitation to an eternal wedding banquet. Those who chose to respond from their own free will to this invitation will be accepted into the eternal family of Christ. God's gift to those who reject the invitation is to eat, drink and be merry as long as they can because that is there lot for life since all that awaits them is a coffin and the darkness of the grave.

- **2 Timothy 2:19:** But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

The Gospel proclaims: The Lord knows those who are his.” These are some of the most comforting words of the entire Bible and one of the reasons no brother or sister in Christ should spend fruitless time in judging whether a person who confesses to believe in the Lord is saved or not saved because Jesus clearly knows who belongs to his family. Certainly, we are to judge outward behaviour so that it doesn’t corrupt others, but we cannot judge a person’s salvation to eternal life since we cannot see into the heart and know the true motivations or the hidden hurts and battles and struggles that maybe going on within.

- **2 Timothy 2:20-21:** Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. ²¹ Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

The Gospel proclaims: in God’s Kingdom there are vessels of gold and silver and of wood and clay. This is a fabulously realistic picture of Christ’s spiritual Kingdom existing now (also called the body of Christ and the church) since it clearly shows that within the Kingdom of God at this present time there are good servants and wicked servants, faithful servants and unfaithful servants of the Lord. The words, gold, silver, wood and clay immediately take the mind of the ardent Bible student to the following words Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians: -

- **1 Corinthians 3:11-15:** For no one can lay a foundation (Being the Lord Jesus Christ) (v11) other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³ each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

This shines a spotlight on why no one should waste time in judging another brother or sisters salvation because though they may not be acting as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ who can only be feed on milk (babies drink milk) and full of jealousy and strife behaving only in a human way? As the Corinthian brothers and sister were doing (1 Cor. 3:1-4) it does not always mean that they are not saved, but it does mean they are in danger of suffering loss.

TITUS 2

- **Titus 2:1:** But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

The Gospel proclaims: teachings that are in accord with sound doctrine, this primarily refers to the message of the cross, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e., those teachings that lead to eternal life) and godly behaviour. Paul in his letter to the brothers and sisters in Rome wrote:

- **Romans 16:17:** watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

The three major doctrines Paul had in mind and taught throughout the book of Romans for brothers and sisters in Christ to avoid were:

1. Doctrines that led people away from the Lord Jesus Christ and deny grace
2. Doctrines that taught that Israel and Gentiles in Christ are two separate nations.
3. Doctrines that led to ungodly behaviour.

These are the three major doctrines throughout Paul’s letter to the Romans that he warned the brothers and sisters in the city of Rome to avoid. Based on what Paul considered in his letter to the Romans the three major doctrines that are contrary to sound doctrine is any doctrine that

leads people away from Christ, doctrines that do not teach that Jews and Gentiles are saved in the same manner (i.e., through faith in Christ) and become one nation in Christ and any doctrine that leads people to ungodly behaviour. Certainly, all other doctrines are important, but it was only teachers who were teaching these three that Paul told the Roman brothers and sisters to depart from. In regards to all other teachings brothers and sisters differ on Paul's ideal was that they would remain together in the faith and love of Christ and reason them out in a spirit of peace and grace with each other. Remember the early church was called to humbly submit to each other and grow in love showing each other grace.

Consider for a moment: during the early church Jews who had been steeped in Moses Law and Jewish customs and traditions for about four-thousand years were coming together in Christ with Gentiles who had been steeped in pagan faith and other gods from the time they had been born. The difference would have been astounding, had they divided over every difference there would be no hope of Jews and Gentiles ever growing together in Christ. It is most certain that the early church in their new found faith had much excitement discovering together the glorious truths of the Bible. It is only when brothers and sisters with different levels of understanding leave pride, egos, dogma and legalism outside the door when they come together that meetings of spiritual adventure and discovery will be free of contention and enormously exciting and rewarding. Paul's concept of the early church was to reason together in love, understanding and grace (i.e., in the fruits of the Spirit) (perhaps over a coffee) and discover the wonder and beauty of Bible, prophecies promises and doctrine together, but should any brother or sister be teaching any doctrine that leads away from the Lord Jesus Christ and deny grace or teaches contrary to the truth that Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ and save in the same manner or teaches doctrines that lead a brother or sister toward ungodly and corrupt behaviour they should be avoided.

- **Titus 2:11-12:** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,
¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,

The Gospel proclaims: that the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people. These glorious and majestic words refer to the Lord Jesus Christ himself (teachings do not appear) showing that it is by our faith in Christ and God's grace in Christ that we are saved to eternal life. No-one, no matter how good they maybe or how rigidly they adhere to ceremonies rites, holy days or keep religious customs and traditions can be saved by these things. Everyone who will inherit eternal life will inherit it, not because of their self-effort to be righteous, but because of their faith in Christ and God's grace. Jesus appeared and brought salvation by faith and by grace to all mankind and it is Christ who not only by his words, but also by his life teaches those who belong to his family the way to live a life that honours God his heavenly Father and brings a good testimony to Jesus himself and to the Christian faith. There is an important principle we can learn from these words of Paul and that is that it is not by dogmatically and legalistically demanding brothers and sisters to keep laws and rules that will motivate them to live a life that honours God, but by bringing them into greater levels and higher understandings of God's grace and love that is in Christ Jesus.

- **Titus 2:13:** waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus is the blessed hope of everyone who trusts in him. Jesus is referred to as a Christians blessed hope because when he returns those who have died in faith and those who are alive who belong to his family will be caught up together to eternal life and everlasting glory to be with the Lord for all eternity. Jesus is the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Since every Christian knows the Lord Jesus Christ is their Saviour some religious teachers use this verse to support the mistaken theory that that Jesus is God. Sadly, this stems from ancient religious teaching, tradition, a lack of understanding Bible language and

from not understanding the glorious relationship of perfect love and perfect unity that God the heavenly Father and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ have with each other. God is the Saviour of us all since he is the source of all life. Before time began God in His eternal mind planned and purposed that salvation to eternal life would be in his Son, so Jesus is the fulfilment of God's foreordained plan of salvation for all mankind, without Christ no-one can be saved, this means that both God and Christ are the Saviour but in a different manner. God is the Saviour in that He is the source of all life and planned and purposed the eternal way of salvation, but Christ is our Saviour in that he is the fulfilment of God's eternal plan. Without God there would be no salvation, but God's eternal plan without Christ would be left bankrupt, this is why the Bible in various contexts can refer to God the Father or the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour. Added to this all one has to do is punctuate the verse with a coma i.e., "Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God, and Saviour Jesus Christ" (v13) which clearly separates the great God and the Saviour Jesus Christ. For further information see the title: "Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity)" in Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

NOTE: when salvation to eternal life is spoken of as the hope of the faithful in Christ, it is not called hope because it might or might not happen, but because it is unseen and yet future. The hope itself is guaranteed because it is based on God's promise and he cannot lie. The apostle Paul wrote; "In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began" (Titus 1:2).

- **Titus 2:14:** who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people (peculiar people in KJV) for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

The Gospel proclaims: Christ laid down his life to a brutal, bloody and cruel death not for himself, but to redeem a people for his own possession. Here is the glory the beauty and wonder of the Christian faith it is not about having an overload of intellectual head knowledge, but being united in love with the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Jesus himself said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). It is from this great love that Christ has for his brothers and sisters (his friends) that those who belong to his family are zealousness from the heart to live a life of doing what is good. The statement Jesus laid down his life to redeem us from all lawlessness (i.e., from all wrong-doing). Does not mean that Christians will never again sin, if they could attain to that glorious state of perfection Christ died for no purpose, but it does carry the idea that they will live a law-abiding lifestyle.

The desire to live a godly lifestyle is not motivated by the demand of the law, but by love for the Lord dwelling in the heart. The greatest motivating power on earth is love people will, willing lay down their lives for someone they love. There is no other greater power that influences the human heart to do-good than love. It is from love that those in Christ endeavour to live a life that honours God and it is from love that Christ redeems them from all lawlessness, meaning through love he calls those who belong to his family to live a life that brings honour to his heavenly father, a good testimony to Christ's name and to the Christian faith.

This of course is one of the reasons God in his eternal mind and eternal wisdom purposed before the world began that salvation to eternal life would be in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ and in love for him rather than in attaining to an abundance of intellectual head knowledge or legalistically adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and religious customs and traditions since it is love that motivates from the heart to do-good and not the demands of the law.

TITUS 3

- **Titus 3:4:** But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,

The Gospel proclaims: the goodness and loving kindness of God appeared in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus manifested God's love, compassion, kindness, mercy, grace and forgiveness to all mankind when he appeared on earth. It was through Christ that God's favour (his loving kindness) came to the Jews and the Gentiles alike.

NOTE: since every Christian knows the Lord Jesus Christ is their Saviour some religious teachers use the following verse "The glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (v13) to support the mistaken theory that that Jesus is God. Sadly, this stems from ancient religious teaching, tradition and a lack of understanding Bible language and the relationship of love between the heavenly Father and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

God is the Saviour of us all since he is the source of all life. Before time began God in His eternal mind planned and purposed that salvation to eternal life would be in his Son, so Jesus is the fulfilment of God's foreordained plan of salvation for all mankind, without Christ no-one can be saved, thus both God and Christ are the Saviour, but in a different manner. God is the Saviour in that He is the source of all life and planned and purposed the eternal way of salvation, but Christ is our Saviour in that he is the fulfilment of God's eternal plan. Without God there would be no salvation, but God's eternal plan without Christ would be left bankrupt thus the reason the Bible in various contexts can refer to God the Father or the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour. For further information see the notes following Matthew 16:16 (above).

- **Titus 3:5-7:** he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The Gospel proclaims: everyone who is saved is saved by faith and by God's grace and not by their own self-effort or works. The words "done by us in righteousness" (v5) refer to adhering to ceremonial rites and keeping religious customs and traditions. The Gospel teaches that it does not matter how ridged a person has been in adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days, Sabbaths and keeping religious customs and traditions not one of them has any power to save us to eternal life. There is only one power under all of heaven that has the power to save anyone to eternal life and it has nothing to do with the religious things we do, but rather is totally dependent on faith in the Lord and God's love and grace in Christ.

The Gospel proclaims: the following two glorious truths, firstly, God did not base His eternal plan of salvation for mankind on human self-effort or good works and secondly, no matter how strictly a person adheres to religious works they have no power to save them to eternal life. If people could be saved by their own self-effort and good works, there would have been no need of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ; If our own deeds were now the basis of our title to eternal life, the work of Christ would be equally unnecessary and if anyone of us could attain to the perfect state the Law demands Christ died for no reason. It is a great and fundamental principle of the Gospel that self-effort and good works come in for no share in our justification. They are in no sense a consideration on account of which God pardons a person and receives them to favour. The only basis of justification is the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the matter of justification before God all mankind is on the same level because salvation to eternal life is, according to God's mercy; has its origin in God's mercy; is by God's mercy and compassion and not by works and is an expression of God's great mercy and conferred, awarded and granted only by God's mercy. Whatever we have done or can do, when we come to receive salvation from the hand of God, there is no other element which enters into it but mercy. It is not because our deeds deserve it; it is not because we have by repentance and faith wrought ourselves into such a state of mind that we can claim it; but, after all our tears, and sighs, and prayers, and good deeds, it is a pure favour and gift of God. Here is the wonder, splendour and spectacular glory of the message of salvation: our justification and our redemption is not in our works or our own self-

righteousness, but in the kindness and love of God who accepts us through the excellences and virtues of Christ alone and not from any desert in us, but according to his own mercy and by his grace and his free unmerited goodness. Clearly this is one of the glorious reasons the Christian message of salvation is called the Good News.

The Gospel proclaims: all who belong to the Lord are saved "By the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." In this context the words, regeneration and renewal carry the idea of a spiritual rebirth (the state or the act) such as a spiritual renovation, restoration or renewing. In order to gain a correct understanding of the words, "The washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" it is necessary to determine whether it is referring to water baptism (as some believe) or whether it refers to something quite different. The context that the verse is seated in is of being saved to eternal life not by works of righteousness, but by God's mercy. If the words washing of regeneration are referring to that outward washing of water baptism it would mean that people are saved by being water baptized. Certainly water baptism is one of the ordinances connected with salvation as Jesus himself clearly stated, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16), but it is not affirmed in these words of Jesus that water baptism is the actual means of salvation in fact his following words, "But he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16) point to the fact that the actual means of salvation is in believing and not the actual outward act of water baptism which is in harmony with all teaching regarding salvation (i.e., we are saved by faith and God's grace in Christ and not by our own religious works of which Paul has just gloriously stated in the previous verse (v5) of this letter to Titus.

A new life in Christ and the words regeneration and renewal carry the idea of a new birth, reproduction or renewal. When used spiritually they apply to a person who has found new life or in some way new life has begun or commenced in them so that they may be said to be newly alive which is the state of those who are born again into Christ therefore the words washing of regeneration are referring to the new life in Christ that begins in all who the Father, delivers from the domain of darkness and transfers into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom they have redemption and the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:12-14). The following are five reasons why the words, "The washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (v5) cannot be referring to water baptism.

1. Without faith on the part of the person being water baptized, baptism no-matter how high the religious standing of those doing the actual baptism it is no different to taking a bath and will certainly not bring about any change in the life of the person being baptized. For this reason it is to be understood that the words, "The regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (v5) refer to the grace and love of God that inwardly renews and changes the heart and mind to a new way of living which are a result of faith not works, while the act of water baptism beautifully testifies outwardly that this regeneration and renewal of God's grace by the Holy Spirit upon the heart and mind has been effected inwardly. Water baptism is a rite commanded by Christ himself clearly showing that all who confess to believe in the Lord should enter the waters of baptism. No-doubt one of the reasons Paul immediately links the new birth to water baptism is because water baptism is a visible sign which outwardly evidences that the inward cleansing, purifying influences of the Holy Spirit have transformed and converted the heart to a new way of living and it is only natural and should always be expected that the thing that is used to signify something is linked to the thing it is symbolizing.
2. Another strong reason that the words, "The washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (v5) cannot be referring to water baptism is the fact that if a person who lacks faith is being water baptized there will be no spiritual benefit without belief it is no different to simply taking a dip in some cold water. The power lies in the person's faith not in the outward act. It is upon this faith that God by his Holy

Spirit makes the outward act of water baptism an outstanding, wonderful and magnificent spiritual moment for the one being baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is God's Spirit of love, mercy and grace working on the inner man that cleanses and purifies, without believing faith water baptism changes nothing inwardly. This is why infant water baptism is not biblical, but simply a church tradition that has been passed down through the generations, mostly I expect because it's a nice thing to do and gives parents some sense of spiritual security for the new born child whether they themselves are committed to Christ or not.

3. Sinners should be regenerated before they are water baptized (though some may be baptized and not regenerated) therefore it is clear that, "The washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (v5) does not refer to the ordinance of water baptism, but to new life which is cause by the Spirit of God acting on the heart prior to a person being water baptized.
- 4 If a person was saved by water baptism that would contradict Paul's statement that no-one can be saved by works of righteousness. Thus the expression, "The washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (v5) means by the regenerating of God's grace on the heart and refers to being born of the Spirit (also called being born again) which carries the idea that a new life has begun. It is naturally linked or compared with washing of water because of waters purity and cleansing virtue since those who are regenerated and sanctified are said to be washed and cleansed, having their hearts purified by faith, and their consciences purged from sin by the blood of Christ.
- 5 The phrase, "The washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (v5) not only refers to a sinner under the influencing effect of the Holy Spirit being converted to newness of life, but also to the gradual increase and progress of the work of grace renewing day by day the spirit of the mind and wooing those who have entered into this new life to greater depths of God's love and his service as they grow in the Lord. It is through this "Washing of regeneration" that the new creature, the new man, the new heart, and new spirit is formed in the inner most being. A sinners first step toward salvation is the discovery of the love God has toward them, without this regenerating and renewing there is no entrance into eternal life since it is the foundation of all grace and the only means by which brothers and sisters in Christ are heirs of the heavenly inheritance.

SUMMARY: God the Father is the fountain from which the Holy Spirit flows, to teach, regenerate, and save his fallen creatures; and this blessing comes to mankind through Christ God's beloved Son. The spring and rise of this fountain is the kindness and love of God to mankind. Love and grace have, through the Spirit, great power to change and turn the heart of a person to God whereas the outward act of water baptism will avail nothing, thus washing of regeneration refers to that which is inward and spiritual it is the work of the Spirit of God on the inner man, while the act of water baptism is the outward sign that this regeneration of the Spirit on the inner man has been effected.

Water baptism and circumcision: in the Old Testament the LORD said to Abraham, "This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you as (Gen. 17:10-14) (Gen. 17:23-27). This was God's covenant with the people of Israel, but it was not the way by which they were saved to eternal life but a sign of their lives being committed to God.

Water baptism has in this sense replaced the covenant of circumcision and in the same way is an outward sign that a person life is now going to be committed from here on to living with Christ seated on the throne of their minds and hearts influencing their choices, speech, actions and behaviour toward what is decent, right, good and loving.

Water baptism and marriage: water baptism is very much like what a marriage is to a courting couple the influence of love in the heart has taken place long before the couple enter into the act of marriage. The marriage is that final comment to their partner that they are surrendering the rest of their life to live for the one they love. This is why when a man proposes to a girl she is over the moon with joy, because it is not only the ultimate evidence of his love for her, but also the ultimate evidence to the rest of the world that he is not available to any other lovers nor does he desire them. His wife to be is the only woman he desires to sit on the throne of his mind and his heart. Likewise, water baptism is the ultimate act of our love toward Christ and symbolizes in the same manner that the one being baptized has no desire for any other Lord or King to sit on the throne of their heart. For further information see the title:

- Water Baptism (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The Gospel proclaims: those in Christ are heirs according to the hope of Eternal Life (v7). When salvation to eternal life is spoken of as the hope of the faithful in Christ, it is not called hope because it might or might not happen, but because it is unseen and yet future. The hope itself is guaranteed because it is based on God's promise and He cannot lie. The apostle Paul wrote; "In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began" (Titus 1:2). Those who belong to the family of Christ have by their faith become brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus Christ and therefore adopted children of God and legal heirs of God's promise of eternal life. When the Lord Jesus Christ returns all who belong to his family will be gloriously caught up to be with him. They will not only inherit an immortal body that will never again feel tired, depressed, sad, jealous, angry, lustful or have any other sinful thoughts or attitudes, but they will also never again experience pain, sorrow or sickness. Added to this, wild animals will be harmless and they will inherit an eternal family of brothers and sisters in Christ who will rule and reign with Christ as a Kingdom of priests to God (Rev 1:5-10)

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The Gospel proclaims: when the Lord returns in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:14-16) he will establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth, but this is not the end of God's awe-inspiring and breath-taking promise of eternal life, but rather only the beginning since at the end of this glorious age of Christ's millennial rule God Himself descends to earth and is ALL in ALL. A godly man named John, exiled on the isle of Patmos had a glorious vision of this climatic and awesome event, he wrote: -

- **Revelation 21:1-5:** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

This is the splendour, the glory the wonder and the Gospel and climax of God's promise of eternal life and the inheritance of all who belong to the family of the Lord. Is there any other religion on earth that proclaims such a glorious eternal hope? (This author has not found one). The Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in sharp clearness proclaims the stunning splendour of Gods salvation, and that the royal path to this eternal inheritance is not dependent on our abilities, our talents or our lack of them since God before the beginning of time planned and purposed in His eternal wisdom that salvation to eternal life and everlasting glory would be available to all through faith. No-one has any advantage over another because it is not by our own self-effort or works that we are saved, but through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace. Can there be any better news than this? I think not clearly this is another reason the Gospel of Christ is called the Good News. How sad it is that some religious teachers today have turned the glorious eternal Gospel of

the Lord Jesus Christ into a Gospel of money, success, wealth and worldly possessions to be attained here and now. The faith that should have been the least materialistic has in certain religious groups today become one of the most materialistic religions on earth (is it any wonder many turn to new-age faiths and spiritual teachings) when the spiritual riches, blessings and promises that are in Christ are being traded for the delights, pleasures and instant gratification of this mortal world. For further information on God's descent to earth see the title: "The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment" in, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

PHILEMON 1

- **Philemon 1:1-2:** Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker² and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house.

The Gospel proclaims: God's glorious message of eternal salvation is not contained in opulent buildings or limited to religious church buildings and architecturally designed cathedrals but flows out to wherever the words of Christ are spoken. Here the church is in the homes of faithful brothers and sisters in Christ. This is because the church is not a bricks and mortar building no-matter how magnificent, but people who God has delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of His beloved Son (Col. 1:13) no-matter where they maybe fellowshiping.

- **Philemon 1:4-5:** I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers,⁵ because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints.

The Gospel proclaims: the highest testimony anyone who belongs to the family of Christ can have before God is not dogmatic, legalistic doctrine or the strict adhering to ceremonial rites and religious customs and traditions, but in having strong faith and a deep devotion and love toward God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ and all who belong to his family.

- **Philemon 1:13:** I would have been glad to keep him (Onesimus) with me, in order that he might serve me on your (Philemon's) behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel.

The Gospel proclaims: even though a brother or sister in Christ faithfully serves the Lord Jesus Christ it does not guarantee that they will live a trouble-free life. The Lord Jesus Christ himself called Paul through a miraculous vision to take the Gospel to the Jews, the Gentiles, kings and those in great religious authority, yet Paul (one of God's most faithful servants) was never free of troubles and hardships. At the time of writing this letter he is in prison for faithfully proclaiming the Gospel. This shines a brilliant spotlight on the truth that no one who commits their life to faithfully serve the Lord should think that it will guarantee them a trouble-free life.

HEBREWS 7

- **Hebrews 7:11:** Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?

The priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek refers to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions etc., have no power to make a person perfect or righteous. If it was possible for anyone to attain to perfection by self-

effort, by the law or by religious works there would be no need for God's eternal plan of salvation through Christ and there would be no need for Christ to lay down his life to a brutal, bloody and cruel death for no reason.

- Christ laid his life down and became our eternal High Priest not because we could through faith in him attain to perfection (i.e., a life free from sin) but because we couldn't, if we could Christ died for no reason.
- **Hebrews 7:15-17:** This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶ who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷ For it is witnessed of him, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." (Cited from Psalm 110:4).

The Gospel proclaims:

- Another priest would arise not because the law required him to be priest because he was a descendant of Levi, but because he willingly chose to offer himself up to a brutal, bloody and cruel death on behalf of the people. God resurrected Jesus to his right-hand side to be seated on the throne of grace and mercy and appointed him the compassionate eternal High Priest for all who seek after God.
- Jesus priesthood was, "After the order and in the likeness of Melchizedek" this statement embraces many things, but in this context it primarily refers to the following two truths, firstly, Jesus is a Priest and King as was Melchizedek since no king or priest of Israel ever held both titles and secondly verse three states; "Melchizedek continues a priest forever" obviously this does not mean that he is in heaven alongside Christ acting as priest.

The genealogy of every other priest mentioned in Scripture was carefully traced and preserved in striking contrast there is no account of Melchizedek parents, none of his birth, none of his death, none of the beginning or end of his priesthood which means he appears in the record without parents, genealogy, beginning or end, simply as one that liveth (v8), a fitting type of Christ whose priesthood and kingly state endure forever. In this respect, Melchizedek and Christ stood alone. They were not in a line of priests; they were not preceded by anyone in the sacerdotal office, nor were they followed by any and nothing is recorded as to the beginning or end of Melchizedek's life. It is in this way he resembled the Son of God; whose existence is from everlasting to everlasting, who had no one that was before him, and will have no one come after him in his priesthood.

- **Hebrews 7:18-19:** For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

The Gospel proclaims:

- The law made nothing perfect. This is because the law though perfect in itself is made weak because of sin in the flesh (i.e., selfishness, ego, pride and greed etc.) it is this sin in the flesh that limits all mankind from attaining to the perfection in actions, thoughts and motive that the law demands. This is why not one of us can be saved by works of the law or by strictly adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days or keeping religious customs and traditions etc. Though the law is perfect it has no power to make mankind perfect, this is why it has been set aside as a means of attaining righteousness that leads to eternal life.
- A better hope than the law, the better hope of course is Jesus Christ and the Gospel of grace in contrast to the law which could make no-one perfect all who humble themselves in honest repentance before God and accept Jesus as their Saviour is granted as a pure and free gift righteousness that leads to eternal life. This is the glory, the wonder and splendour of the Christian Gospel message, everyone in

Christ is saved by faith and God's grace and not by the works of the law. This is the reason Jesus is given the title, "The better hope" and the reason why Jesus is able to save to the uttermost since it is his righteousness that saves us not our own.

Added to this unlike all human priests he is eternal and never changes, but remains a compassionate merciful priest before God on our behalf forever unlike the Levitical priests who could be good or bad, kind or harsh, compassionate or legalistic, merciful or condemning is it any wonder Jesus our eternal merciful and compassionate High Priest is called, "The better hope."

- **Hebrews 7:24-25:** but he (Christ) holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

The Gospel proclaims: Christ saves to the uttermost all, who come to God through him. The author of Hebrews in these verses is shining a brilliant spotlight on the superiority of Jesus over all other priests.

- **Hebrews 7:26-28:** For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.²⁷ He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.²⁸ For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever. (the word of the oath refers to Psalm 110:4).

The Gospel proclaims:

- In stark contrast to the high priests of the old covenant who daily offered sacrifices for their own sins and for the sins of the people of Israel, Jesus did this once for all when he offered himself up to his enemies to be slain as the Lamb without blemish.
- God has appointed a Son who has been made perfect forever (v28). Jesus was born of a woman so that he could have the same nature as all humanity it was God's purpose to have an eternal priest born with the same nature as we all have. Though Jesus never outwardly sinned he was tempted in every respect as we are so that he might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. We do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 2:17) (Heb. 4:15).

The glory of the Gospel is that Jesus is able to understand human weakness and what it is that limits us from attaining to the perfect standard the law demands, this is what makes Jesus Christ the perfect High Priest he has experienced our nature. God nature is such that He is holy in mind thought, motive and intent there is no darkness in any part of God, he is pure light. This is why not one of us can enter into the Most Holy Place of God's presence without a covering. There is no-doubt that any man or woman who does not outwardly break the law can on man's level be referred to as a righteous person, but the instant that person stands in the Holiness of God, everything that dwells in the heart and the mind is exposed to His light thus the reason we all need a covering. God's nature is such that to enter into fellowship with Him requires Holiness not only outwardly, but also in our mind, our thoughts and our heart, which means not one of us can stand before God and claim we are worthy since we are all tainted with the ugliness of darkness in some area of our lives. But here is the breathtaking awe-inspiring and humbling Good News of the Gospel, "God, the almighty creator and source of all life so loved you and I, that he gave his only Son, that if we believe in him we will not remain in the grave but be raised to eternal life and everlasting glory" (John 3:16). But the Good News of the Gospel gets even better, how some might wonder? Simply this, no one has to go to a church building, Bible meetings, prayer groups and such like things to earn God's love and eternal life?" No! The Bible says:

- **Romans 10:9-10:** because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

When any man or woman honestly humbles themselves before God in repentance and accepts His Son as their Saviour God will not only accept them in love and grace, but also fill their heart with His Spirit. They are born again meaning they are made spiritually alive to God. They are an infant in Christ beginning a spiritual journey in God who not only have a, perfect eternal heavenly brother who calls them his friend, but will also act on their behalf before God as their merciful, sympathetic and compassionate High Priest.

No-one who is devoted to Christ should ever fear being rejected when they in prayer confess those things within that we all keep secret from others. Some men and woman have a best friend who they know they can trust and will still love and accept them even when they open their lives wide open to them. This is the relationship Christ desires to have with all his friends he desires not only to be our perfect high priest, but also to be our best friend. This is the beauty, the wonder and glory of the Gospel of Christ. God counts those who love His Son as righteous. The righteousness our Heavenly Father imputes to us will be manifested outwardly and in perfection when Christ returns and the sons and daughters of God are gathered to together to be with the Lord in eternal glory.

Until that glorious day, we all live in a fallen corrupted body that has sinful dysfunctions and aberrations and therefore all have weaknesses. We are all flawed at some level, this flaw influences our actions, our mind, our thoughts and our motives it is this flaw that separates us all from God and limits us from attaining to the perfection that the law demands. This is why the author of Hebrews is spending so much time proving to the doubtful Hebrews that Jesus Christ is the better hope and that we are all saved and accepted by faith and God's grace despite the sinful flaws that dwells within us.

NOTE: the words, "The law appoints men in their weakness as high priests (v28) refers to the law which stated that a high priest must be a descendant of Aaron. Their appointment was not dependent of whether they were worthy of it or not, but on birthright this is the reason there were good and bad high priest amongst the people of Israel. Whereas Christ appointment to High Priest is not only by God's choosing his very own Son, but also by Christ's perfect life of compassion, kindness, grace and mercy toward sinners which was tried and tested even to death. This is the reason God has exalted him as the eternal heavenly High Priest forever.

HEBREWS 9

- **Hebrews 9:12:** Christ entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

The Gospel proclaims: God's very own Son the Lord Jesus Christ laid down his life once for all and ascended into the Most Holy place of God in heaven securing eternal life by his own blood to all who belong to his eternal family. Just as God accepts the death of Christ (the innocent Lamb without blemish) in place of the death of the sinner (the penalty of sin) the LORD under the Levitical priesthood accepted the sacrifices of an innocent animal without blemish in place of the death of the people of Israel and in this, the sacrifices were a shadow of good things to come (Hebrews 10:1).

- **Hebrews 9:14:** how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

The Gospel proclaims: if the blood of an animal was effective in cleansing from sins and ceremonial pollutions, how much more power will the blood of the Son of God being infinitely more precious have to purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. The phrase, dead works though it may embrace sin in general the term in this context mostly applies to trusting in religious works to earn righteousness. The author of this letter is writing to Hebrews who have been indoctrinated in the Levitical priesthood for over four-thousand years and though they are not enemies of Christ they were still trusting in adhering to the Levitical law and the Jewish priesthood.

Today the words, dead works would apply to trusting in church attendance and performing ceremonial rites adhering to holy days and religious customs, duties and traditions to earn righteousness that leads to eternal salvation and everlasting life, these are the types of works that the author of Hebrews means by the expression dead works. He is telling his audience if the blood of animals could make the unclean clean by their sacrifice then the blood of Christ being far more precious to God should set the conscience free from trusting in religious service and duties to trust solely in the shed blood of Christ apart from adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions to be made wholly clean and acceptable to God.

Obviously, this does not mean that regularly attending church and the practice of religious services duties and performing ceremonial rites and keeping religious customs and traditions is wrong or sinful in fact some of these things are spiritually healthy they only become grossly wrong before God when we are trusting in them for our righteousness. The instant a brother or sister in Christ begins to trust in anything other than Christ's righteousness is the instant they nullify what he achieved for us on the cross and even worse make his death count for nothing.

The Gospel proclaims: Christ offered himself through the eternal Spirit. The, eternal Spirit in this context primarily refers to the eternal logos of God referring to God's eternal plan, purposes and promises. Before the foundation of the world were set in place God planned like a master architect and purposed that His Son the Lord Jesus Christ would be the centre of mankind's salvation for all ages and all eternity. Christ did not offer himself up from his own will (meaning his own plan), but by obedience to the will of his heavenly Father (meaning according to God's eternal plan). This idea is supported by Jesus prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane where while extremely sorrowful and troubled he fell on his face and prayed, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me" (Mark 14:36). Here Jesus, fully aware of the brutal and cruel death he is about to face is praying to God, "If there is any other way to save mankind please remove this cup of suffering from me." Clearly there was no other way that God could save you or me from our sin. Jesus though hoping there might be a loophole in God's eternal plan that would allow him to escape the horror of what he was about to face no-doubt knew that his prayer could not be answered as he wished, and therefore from love for his Heavenly Father and love for you and me ended his prayer under extreme agony with the words, "Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36).

The Gospel proclaims:

- Christ offered himself up without blemish this statement contrasts that of the sacrificial animals in two ways, firstly, Christ's sacrifice and offering of himself was a conscious voluntary choice, unlike that of brute beasts that had no volition and no sense of the reason why they were offered and secondly, Christ was "Without blemish or spot" (1 Peter 1:19) inwardly and outwardly whereas animal victims chosen for sacrifice were only without blemish on the outside. Jesus was a perfectly righteous, sinless man who voluntarily in perfect obedience to the will of his heavenly Father laid his life down even unto the suffering of death in contrast to the sacrificial animals that had no will to consent in the act of their sacrifice, but were instead offered

according to the law. The majesty of Christ's offering began on the altar of the cross and was completed in His entering as our eternal and perfect High Priest into the Most Holy Place with His blood on our behalf into heaven.

- All those in Christ should purge their conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Though the expression dead works can embrace works which are acknowledged as sinful, in this context it primarily refers to works which go under the name of religious services and duties which are performed in a merely legal spirit and to religious works done to be justified and to earn righteousness that leads to eternal life. These are called dead works because they do not stem from living faith and they cannot save to eternal life.

NOTE: in the same way as contact with a dead body ceremonially defiled the Hebrews under the Levitical law so dead works spiritually defile the inner consciousness of those who practice them to earn righteousness and justification. This is because they are not an act of faith, but of law and trust in self-effort. Since Christianity is pre-eminently the religion of faith the severest and most radical of tests should be applied to these kind of legal works since it is these that prevent a believer moving from the Holy Place (the place of legal religious service and duty) to entering into the Most Holy Place the place of mercy and grace and the very presence of God. The severest test of Christ's power to redeem is his ability to lose the bonds springing out of a legal religion, by which many are bound even though they have escaped the dominion of gross sinful habits.

Under the Levitical law the ceremonially unclean could not serve God in the outward service of His people; likewise, those who trust in the performing of religious works (dead works) cannot serve God or His people in spiritual communion nor can they impart spiritual life. No matter how lifelike a person religious works may look outwardly if they are performed to earn justification, they are dead and cannot therefore be accepted by God since they nullify the work of Christ and make his death serve no purpose. Malachi wrote, "It is evil to offer blind, lame or sick animals in sacrifice to God" (Malachi 1:8) so how much more evil would it have been to offer a dead animal; such an evil would have been a gross insult, in the same manner to offer to God religious works to earn justification in place of the sacrifice of His Son and his shed blood for the guilty is a gross evil since it nullifies what Christ achieved on the cross and denies God's Grace. In contrast to this are those whose justification is in Christ's shed blood and who serve him from a living faith, they will receive a crown of glory for their service because they perform them from love and faith and not as a legal duty of the law. John wrote: "God-desires living spiritual service from the heart and from love and not from the letter of the law" (John 4:24).

God's Promised Inheritance to Abraham.

- **Hebrews 9:15:** Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Christ's death delivers those seeking God from having to strictly adhere to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious laws, customs and traditions etc., to be counted worthy of righteousness and redemption. The glory and splendour of the New Covenant of grace that Christ is the mediator of is that it proclaims that we are saved by faith and God's grace and not by self-effort and religious works.
- The Lord Jesus Christ is the mediator of the promised eternal inheritance. This promise is the stunning glory, wonder and splendour of God's eternal message kept for us in the cannon of the Bible. The promised eternal inheritance that all those in Christ (Jews and Gentiles) will share in together refers to the oath the LORD God made to

Abraham thousands of years ago. God promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation and that he would be the father of a multitude of nations. God swore by an oath that Abraham's offspring would be as the dust of the earth and the stars of heaven so that they could not be numbered and that God Himself would be their God. The LORD God confirmed this promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their offspring after them throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant promising Abraham that in his offspring all the nations of the earth would be blessed and that his seed (being Christ) would inherit the world.

(Gen. 12:1-3) (Gen. 13:14-17) (Gen. 15:4-7) (Gen. 17:1-8)
(Gen. 22:15-18) (Deut. 9:5).

That the majestic wonder, glory and beauty of Gods promised eternal inheritance is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul in his letter explains that the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law, but through the righteousness of faith that is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all Abrahams offspring—not only to the adherents of the law (referring to the Jews), but also to the ones who shares the faith of Abraham (referring to the Gentiles), who is the father of us all (Jews and Gentiles) as it is written: -

- **Romans 4:17:** as it is written, "I have made you (Abraham) the father of many nations" (i.e., not just Jews)—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead (the resurrection) and calls into existence the things that do not exist (creation).

In hope Abraham believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." Paul tells us that "The twelve tribes of Israel earnestly worshipped night and day hoping to attain to this promise (Acts 26:7). And then gloriously points out that the Scripture does not say, "And to offspring's," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to Abraham's offspring, who is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). Some may think the promised eternal inheritance made to Abraham was for the Jews only, but Paul magnificently explains in the book of Galatians that the promises of God have been extended to all nations through being baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ and clearly shows that the promised eternal inheritance made to Abraham and to his seed the Lord Jesus Christ are not limited to the Jews only, but embraces whoever will come to God through faith in Christ. (Rom. 4:13) (Rom. 4:16-18) (Gal. 3:16) (Gal. 3:27). For further information see the title: "The Commonwealth of Israel, at the end of this study.

The Gospel proclaims: God's promised eternal inheritance to Abraham will be fulfilled when the seed of Abraham the Lord Jesus Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth. The book of Revelation states, "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7) and in Revelation chapter five we are told that, "Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10). At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory. For further information see titles: "Kingdom of God" (ON WEBSITE MENU) and the title: "The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment" in, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Without the Shedding of Blood there is no Forgiveness of Sins.

- **Hebrews 9:22-23:** Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.²³ Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

The Gospel proclaims: no sin was pardoned except by the shedding of blood. Some impurities might be cleansed by water and fire, but the stain of sin is so deep and ingrained only blood can cleanse it. It is a universal truth that in order for there to be forgiveness of sin blood must be shed. Sin never has been and never will be forgiven except in connection with the shedding of blood. It is upon this universal principle that pardon of sin and God's plan of eternal salvation by the death of His Son is based. There is not the slightest evidence that any man or woman has ever been pardoned except through the blood shed for the remission and forgiveness of sins. Those who reject the sacrificial death of Christ have no evidence that their sins are pardoned though they do have an abundant of evidence that they are a sinner, and those of other faiths can point to no proof that their sins are blotted out.

From the beginning of creation not one single member of the human family has ever had the slightest evidence of pardoned sin, except through the sacrificed blood of another. In God's eternal and divine plan all sin which is forgiven is forgiven through the blood of another, a principle which has never been changed and which never will. It follows, therefore that no sinner can hope for forgiveness except through the blood of Christ and if people are ever saved, they must be willing to rely on the merits of that blood. All people are on an equal level in regard to salvation, since all are saved in the same way and all the redeemed will sing the one and the same song in heaven; the song of Christ's love and of his redeeming blood.

The Gospel proclaims:

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- The following two universal truths, there can be no salvation except through the sacrificial death of Christ of which the Old Testament sacrifices were types and shadows and that the law itself cannot grant any remission of sin without the blood of a victim. This is because the law without compassion or mercy states, "Whoever does not perfectly keep all its commandments, is condemned to death (2 Cor. 3:9). This law of death was carved in letters on stone by the finger of God. In the New Testament it is called the, law of sin and death because it states, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) meaning whoever sins must die. This means all mankind is held captive to this law of death and imprisoned by it.
- Every sinner has forfeited their life by their transgressions. It is not the Ten Commandments that are at fault, since they are not only perfect and express God's perfect will, it is our corrupt fallen nature with all its sinful dysfunctions and aberrations (self, ego, pride, greed, lust etc.,) that that are the problem since they prevent all of us from attaining to the perfection the Law demands. This is why the blood of a sacrificial victim, which is its life, is shed as a substitute for the life of the sinner. By the innocent life of these victims being taken on behalf of the guilty the sacrifice of Christ was typified. He gave his life for the life of the world, the innocent for the guilty.

NOTE: since the Old Testament Bible shadows, patterns and types are a glorious picture of the Gospel the following is a brief overview of their wonder and splendour. The high priest would sprinkle himself with the blood of sacrificed goats and bulls before he went into the Most Holy Place and into the presence of God so he could make atonement for the people. The Bible says, "The life is in the blood" (Lev. 17:11) which means the blood symbolizes the innocent life of goats, and bulls taken in place of the guilty. Here we witness another type and shadow of the imperfect pattern echoing the perfect to come thousands of years later. The blood of Christ

speaks of the death of Christ (wherever blood is shed there is death). Christ our High Priest was sacrificed on our behalf and being raised has gone into the Most Holy Place not made of man, but heaven itself into the very presence of God and this not with the blood of bulls and goats but with his own blood. Since we are all limited by our finite and mortal mind we cannot fully comprehend the great depth, breadth and height of the mystery and the boundless and unlimited love and grace in the sacrifice of Christ nor can we fully search out the magnitude of God's wisdom that is in it, but in considering and meditating on the sacrifice of Christ, faith finds life, food, and refreshment.

- **Hebrews 9:27-28:** And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

The Gospel proclaims:

- That we are all destined to die once (with the exception of the faithful who are alive when Christ returns). This shows that no matter how developed scientist and medical researchers worldwide become in the knowledge of stem cells, human DNA or how advanced they become in putting together a map of human genes they will never conquer death.
- Christ died once and he will die no more; here is the comfort of every brother and sister in Christ, though they die the first death they shall not be hurt of the second death (Rev. 20:6). Since death is certain (dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return), but the time of death is not certain we should all live with joy and thankfulness in the Lord while quietly submitting unto what is certain to come, but all the time knowing with full confidence and a peaceful calm that we will be raised from our sleep to eternal life and everlasting glory.
- Christ is not returning to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him (v28). This shows that Christ is returning to gather to himself those who belong to his Kingdom. The book of Revelation tells us that those who attain to the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5) will be kings and priests of God and of Christ and reign with him during his glorious millennial reign and that the second death will have no power over them (Rev. 20:6). Nor will they be hurt by it (Rev. 2:11). The second death refers to the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal death (i.e. total extinction (Rev. 20:14) (Rev. 21:8).
- There are two groups of people to be raised; one group raised to rule and reign with Christ and another group to be raised to a universal judgment. This universal judgment will have no power over those who were raised in the first resurrection.

For further information on these two deaths, see the title: The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment in, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

HEBREWS 10

- **Hebrews 10:9-10:** then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second.¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The Gospel proclaims: the following two glorious and eternal truths, firstly, the Lord Jesus Christ came to abolish the Old Covenant and to establish the New Covenant. Jesus death and resurrection did away with the entire Levitical priesthood, the religious laws of Moses, the Jewish ceremonial rites, holy days, customs and traditions and secondly, there is no other Gospel or sacrifice to be established throughout all eternity; Christ's offered himself as God's Lamb without blemish so that we could be redeemed by faith and God's grace apart from self-effort and religious practices, customs and traditions.

- **Hebrews 10:11-14:** And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time (forever in KJV) those who are being sanctified.

The Gospel proclaims: Sins (selfishness, ego, pride, lustful thoughts, greed and jealousies etc.), are so deeply ingrained in our fallen corrupted human nature that even if we sacrificed thousands of bulls and goats for all time it would still be impossible for these sacrifices to remove all our sin. This is why Christ (the sacrificial Lamb without blemish) has offered himself as a sacrifice once and for all.

This does not mean that sins are abolished, if anyone of us could attain to that glorious state of absolute sinlessness then Christ died for no purpose, but it does mean that there are no more sacrifices to be made and that though sins are not removed now, they will be when God's plan is complete.

It is by being in Christ that we are counted righteous and blameless before God and not because we are without sin, nevertheless the sacrifice of Christ impacts on the human heart in a way that animal sacrifices never could in that the faithful who look upon the bloodstained cross of Calvary understand what it cost God to save us and the love Christ displayed to redeem us and from this love they endeavour to do all they can to live a lifestyle that honours God and brings a good testimony to the name of Jesus and the Christian faith.

The Gospel proclaims:

- The greatest gift is love" (1 Cor. 13: 13), and Jesus himself said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13) this love changes the heart of a person in a manner that animal sacrifices could never do. When a sinner perceives the love God has for them displayed in the Lamb without blemish, God's Son, bloody and bleeding laying down his life from his own will so that despite our sin we could be redeemed to God and saved to eternal life apart from works and religious duties the sinful passions of their heart, mind and thoughts are transformed by that love from living to gratify self to desiring to live to honour God and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- God will make all Christ's enemies his footstool, this is an allusion to the following words of David, "The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool" (Psalm 110:1). This entire Psalm is about God making an oath to Christ that he will rule from Jerusalem in the midst of his enemies, execute judgment among the nations, conquer kings throughout the world and his people will offer themselves to him freely, but until that time God tells Christ to sit at his right hand until God makes his enemies his footstool (Psalm 110:1-7).
- By a single offering Christ has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified (v14) this does not mean that those who are in Christ are literally sinless, but that they are perfected by faith through the single offering of Christ for all time, in contrast to the faithful of the Old Testament having to continually offer sacrifices for sin. The author is saying those in Christ are redeemed and forgiven fully in the single sacrifice of Jesus there are no more sacrifices to be made.
- Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God and it is impossible for corruption to inherit incorruption (1 Cor 15:50) (KJV) this corruptible body must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality so when this corruptible puts on incorruption and this mortal puts on immortality then death will be swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:53-54) (KJV). When this breathtaking and awe-inspiring eternal and majestic event takes place every brother and sister in Christ, we will be made perfect in the true sense of the word.

NOTE: the phrase "Being made perfect" (v14) is not about being saved, but about those who are saved being conformed to the image of Christ. No-one in the family of Christ will be made perfect in the literal sense until that glorious day when Christ returns and we are gathered together in everlasting glory to be with the Lord. For further information on being saved see the title: "Being Saved" in, Salvation (ON WEBSITE MENU).

- **Hebrews 10:18-20:** Where there is forgiveness of these (sins and lawless deeds) (v17), there is no longer any offering for sin.¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,

Under the Old Testament covenant the common people were totally dependent on the Levitical priests to intercede for them. They had to go to the priests for their offerings to be made acceptable to God, to be cleansed and to have their sins forgiven and therefore the people of Israel were totally dependent on the priests for all matters that concerned the LORD their God.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Where there is forgiveness of sin, there is no longer any offering for sin. This is contrasting the Old Covenant with the New Covenant; once we are forgiven in Christ as long as we remain in Christ, we are forever forgiven unlike the faithful of the Old Testament who had to repeatedly offer up goats and bulls to make atonement for their sins. God through Christ forgives sins and chooses not to remember them so there is no need for any sin offering because those in Christ are counted as righteous not by works or by religious deeds, but by faith and God's grace through the single sacrifice of Christ (the Lamb without blemish) at Calvary, therefore whoever is in Christ does not need to offer any more sacrifices for sin because God forgives the sins of those in Christ and chooses not to remember them.
- We have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the Blood of Jesus. Entering into the most Holy Place of God today means that in prayer those in Christ can come directly before God the Father. This is in total contrast to the Old Testament covenant under which only the high priest could enter into the Most Holy Place of God's tabernacle and temple. The author is using the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle which the Hebrews had held sacred for over four-thousand years to show that all those in Christ can have full confidence to enter into the Most Holy presence of God by the blood of Jesus.
- Those in Christ can enter the Most Holy Place by the new and living way through the curtain, that is, through his flesh. Under the Old covenant only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place. There was a majestic royal curtain dividing the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, all priests could enter the Holy Place (symbolizing religious service and works), but only the high priest could enter behind the veil (curtain) into the Most Holy Place (the place of God's presence). The expression, "Through the curtain, that is, through his flesh" (v20) refers to this curtain between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.
- The wonder, beauty and glory of the Bible, when Jesus on the cross gave up his life and breathed his last breath the dividing curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51) symbolizing two glorious truths, firstly, Christ's death opened the way into the Most Holy Place for the common people and secondly, Jesus death began a new and living way to enter into communion and fellowship with God.

NOTE: the Holy Place was the place the priest performed their religious duties, that is why the author of Hebrews says it was a symbol of their present age, (meaning a symbol of the age of law and performing religious works, duties and service), but he goes on say that this Holy Place had to be torn down before the Most Holy Place could be opened. This means no-one can come to God and be saved to eternal life by religious works,

duties and service all must come through the blood of Christ to enter the Most Holy Place of God. This is what the words, "Christ has opened a new and living way for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh." This means we no longer come to God through animal sacrifices and religious works, duties and service, but through the death and resurrection of Christ (i.e., through his flesh in contrast to the flesh of sacrificed animals)

- **Hebrews 10:21-22:** and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus Christ is the great High Priest over the global house of God and that within this house are people from different cultures, languages and nations world-wide who should walk before God with a true heart in contrast to a heart that is trusting in self-effort and religious works and in contrast to a heart full of hypocrisy and indifference. They should have full assurance of faith as opposed to fear, doubt and a feeling of condemnation and their heart sprinkled clean by the blood of Jesus Christ and their bodies washed with pure water (referring to water baptism) and their conscience should be lacking any evil.

NOTE: though having an evil conscience can apply to all forms of evil in the context of this chapter it refers to trusting in ceremonial rites, holy days and religious customs and traditions etc., rather than trusting in Christ and God's grace to be counted righteous and saved to eternal life. Trusting in self-effort and religious works to be counted worthy before God rather than trusting in Christ and God's grace is a gross evil before God for the following reasons, firstly it nullifies what Christ achieved for us on the cross and makes his death count for nothing and secondly, nothing other than trusting in Christ and God's grace has any power to save to eternal life this why the author calls it having an evil conscience it denies God's eternal plan of salvation.

HEBREWS 12

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- **Hebrews 12:2:** looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Jesus is the founder of our faith, the rock, the cornerstone, the foundation upon which everything else is built.
- Jesus is the beginning of our faith without Christ there is no Gospel of grace and everything else is meaningless, vain and just empty words.
- Jesus is the perfecter of our faith all who come to Christ by faith he clothes in his crown and royal robes of righteousness and it is because of our faith in him that we will be raised and made perfect in eternal glory.
- Jesus is the finisher of our faith there is no other Saviour or way to God and to eternal life; nor will there ever be.
- Jesus is the judge of our faith it is Christ who will judge whether our works that we have done in his name are works of gold, silver and precious stones or wood, hay and straw.
- Jesus is the rewarder of our faith it is Christ who will determine if we are to be rewarded or suffer loss.
- The reason Jesus was willing to surrender his life to the hands of his persecutors and allow them to judge him as a common criminal sentenced to suffer brutal torture and a cruel and bloody death was

because of the joy that was set before him, this shines a spotlight on the following two things, firstly, Jesus had faith that his heavenly Father would raise him from the grave to eternal glory and secondly Jesus faith gave him the fortitude and willingness to spend his life revealing God's love and grace toward sinners because he knew that it was his heavenly Father desire that all would be saved (John 3:16).

- That the faithful who are facing persecutions or struggling with the difficulties and hardships of life should consider the life of Jesus and set their focus on the same joy that he set his heart upon. The spiritual muscle that will carry us all through present troubles is the ability to focus on the joy of the eternal reward as Christ our exalted and eternal brother did.

The joy set before Christ: refers to the eternal honour and glory Jesus would have when resurrected and seated at the right hand of his heavenly Father and to the joy of having a family of brothers and sisters who he would inherit because of his death and resurrection. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). All who believe the message of the cross and the Gospel and trust in Christ for their righteousness are his friends. This is the joy Jesus was willing to lay his life down for (i.e., so that despite the sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that dwell within our fallen corrupted body you and I and every other seeker of God could not only be Christ's eternal friends, but his eternal brothers and sisters in the family of his heavenly Father).

- **Hebrews 12:22-24:** But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

The Gospel proclaims: in contrast to the ancient Hebrews standing in fear and trembling when they received the old covenant at the foot of Mount Sinai while watching it burn with fire and hearing the loud thunder and seeing the lightning flashes appearing out of the thick darkness, cloud and gloom. Those who come to the new covenant are not coming to a mountain of fear and trembling, but to Mount Zion. This is the mountain the city of Jerusalem sits on, following are only a few of the Scriptures that speak of God's Holy mountain; Mount Zion:

- Beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, *Mount Zion* in the far north, the city of the great King (Psalm 48:2).
- Those who trust in the LORD are like *Mount Zion* which cannot be moved, but abides forever (Psalm 125:1).
- The LORD will create over the whole site of *Mount Zion* and over her inhabitants a canopy of his glory (Isaiah 4:5).
- The LORD of hosts, who dwells on *Mount Zion* (Isaiah 8:18).
- *Mount Zion* the place of the name of the LORD of hosts (Isaiah 18:7).
- The LORD of hosts reigns on *Mount Zion* and in Jerusalem (Isaiah 24:23).

There is no other mountain on earth that God has given this glory to or spoken of in such an exalted manner.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Jerusalem is the city of the living God, the name Jerusalem means peace, it is by far the most important site on this earth it is called the royal city, the city of the LORD, the faithful city, the Holy mountain and the city of the great King. Jerusalem was the capital of the only Kingdom God has (thus far) established among men. The temple was erected in Jerusalem it was the city of the prophets, the kings of David's

line and in Jerusalem the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ occurred at Jerusalem and at Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended in Jerusalem giving birth to the Christian church. The Lord Jesus Christ will return to Jerusalem and the inhabitants of the city will mourn over the one who they pierced. A New Jerusalem will be established on earth and Christ will rule over all nations as King of kings and Lord of lords and bring peace to the entire planet. He will end all forms of war and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into the New City. There is no other city on earth that God has given this Glory to or spoken of in such an exalted manner.

- Those in Christ have come to the heavenly Jerusalem in this context the heavenly Jerusalem is symbolic of the message of salvation by grace as opposed to the earthly Jerusalem that was symbolic of the law. The earthly Jerusalem symbolizes attaining to righteousness by self-effort and by strictly adhering to religious works of the law and performing ceremonial rites and keeping holy days, Sabbath and religious customs and traditions etc., in contrast to the heavenly Jerusalem which symbolizes righteousness by faith in Christ and by God's grace.
- That there are an innumerable number of angels in festal gathering, meaning happily celebrating in triumphant cheerful joy. This clearly shines a spotlight on the truth that there is a literal heaven in which the Lord Jesus Christ and all the heavenly angels dwell in the light and holiness of God and that there is great and joyful rejoicing amongst the angels in the triumphant victory of Christ before the throne of God. Added to this glory it highlights the truth that the angels with joy are serving God and carrying out His work to bring about the eternal plan for mankind that He purposed in His divine and eternal mind before the foundation of the world. Notice the dominant Spirit in heaven is happiness all who inherit eternal life will inherit eternal happiness is there any other religion on earth that promises such eternal glory? (I think not).
- The assembly of the firstborn are enrolled in heaven. The firstborn in this context refers to the firstborn to eternal life, it means Jesus was the firstborn to be resurrected to eternal life and in this sense, he is the first to be born to eternal life. Others were resurrected from the dead, but they rose with a mortal body whereas Christ rose immortal, indestructible and eternal. This is why the family of Christ are referred to as the assembly of the firstborn. The glorious words, "He is the beginning the firstborn from the dead" (Col 1:18) shows us that God views death as a birth and a new beginning. Unfortunately some religious teachers use this verse to support the mistaken theory that certain faithful Old Testament fathers were raised to heaven when they died, but that would contradict what Paul is saying here, (i.e., Jesus was the first to be resurrected from the dead to eternal life, meaning he was the first to be resurrected to heaven, if the Old Testament fathers had been raised to Heaven Paul would not be able to make this statement. For further information regarding this, see the title: "Heaven" and "Death (what happens when we die)" both titles are in, Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- Before the beginning of time God in His eternal mind planned and purposed that Jesus would be first to be raised from the dead to eternal life and everlasting glory so that he would be the pre-eminent head of the church (Col 1:18), meaning he would be the most high-ranking authority in God's Kingdom and stand out in majestic and royal glory amongst all others in all things regarding eternal salvation, dominion and rule.
- The statement, "the assembly of the firstborn are enrolled in heaven" (v23) shows that the names of all those who belong to Jesus are recorded in heaven, meaning they are kept in the eternal mind of God. Some people find it difficult to comprehend God raising the dead, but think of it this way: we have super computers today that have in their

memories literally trillions of bits of information and at the touch of a key any one of those bits is resurrected to us on a brightly coloured screen (soon it is most likely they will simply appear in the air), then with another touch of the key it all vanishes into the super memory and is gone, until we resurrect it again. Knowing that God has given his creation a mortal mind and finite memory to be able to build such amazing computers should make it very easy to understand how God keeps us all in His immortal mind and eternal memory waiting for the right time to touch the supernatural keyboard of heaven and raise us once again to life. Added to this very few Christians have any trouble believing God created the universe that we live in so raising the dead in comparison is not such a difficult task for such an awesome, powerful and majestic God (Heb. 11:3).

God is judge of all. Amongst believers there has been a certain amount of confusion between whether God is the judge or the Lord Jesus Christ is the judge, the following verses will help us solve this confusion.

- **John 5:30:** “Jesus said, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.
- **Acts 10:42:** Jesus is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.
- **Acts 17:31:** God has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”
- **Romans 2:3:** Do you suppose you will escape the judgment of God?
- **Romans 3:6:** By no means! For then how could God judge the world?
- **2 Timothy 4:1:** I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead.
- **2 Timothy 4:8:** the Lord, the righteous judge, will award all who have loved his appearing.
- **Hebrews 12:23:** God, the judge of all.
- **Revelation 6:10:** “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge those who dwell on the earth?”

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From these verses we learn the following two things, firstly, God is the supreme judge, but he has given the authority and power to judge to the Lord Jesus Christ and secondly, Jesus will judge according to God's will, therefore it is pointless to argue between who is the judge since the will of God and the will of Christ at judgment is exactly the same. Added to this John in his majestic vision on the Isle of Patmos, wrote, “I saw those who had remained faithful came to life and seated on thrones and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years, but the ‘rest of the dead’ did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.

This is the *first resurrection*, blessed are the one who shares in the *first resurrection*! Over such the *second death* has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years” (Rev 20:4-6). The *second death* of course refers to that awe-inspiring and breathtaking day when God Himself descends on a great white throne and the sea the grave and death give up the dead and they appear before God's throne. Books are opened and they are judged according to what is written in the books, according to what they had done. Then Death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire (a symbol of eternal death i.e., total extinction). This is the *second death* (i.e., the final death) (Revelation 20:11-15).

For further information on the second death see the title: The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgement In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The Gospel proclaims:

- The spirits of the righteous are made perfect (v23) this carries the following two ideas, firstly, those who belong to the family of Christ are made perfect by faith and God's grace. This is because whoever is in Christ are counted righteous not because of their own righteousness (which is forever lacking), but because of Christ righteousness. This is the glory of the Christian faith God crowns and clothes whoever is in Christ with the royal and priestly robes of Christ's righteousness. Secondly, every brother and sister in Christ will be made righteous and perfect when their natural body is raised a spiritual body in glory and in power (1 Cor15:41-44) and when we are all changed in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet and raised incorruptible, and our corruptible body puts on incorruption, and our mortal body puts on immortality and death is swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:50-54) then the spirits of the righteous will be made literally and eternally perfect (v23).
- Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant (v24), the word mediator; means go-between, intermediary, arbitrator and intercessor. Throughout this letter the author has been brilliantly using the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place of Moses tabernacle and Old Testament Scriptures to prove to Hebrews who still placed value on the Jewish priesthood that, Jesus has replaced the Old Testament high priest and made redundant the Levitical priesthood and is now the only High Priest and mediator anyone needs. Anyone who is trusting in a human priest today, no matter how great or how religious that priest maybe or how successful their religious empire they are not only being robbed of the glory of being in fellowship with Christ and union with God, but are denying everything Jesus died for. This is not to say that we should not listen to ministers and religious teachers of all sorts, but once we exalt them in our hearts and minds as our spiritual priest we are not only denying the Lord Jesus Christ, but insulting God who gave His only beloved Son that we could be free of looking to the services of mortal imperfect human high priests for forgiveness of sins.
- Those in Christ have come to, "The sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (v24) The words sprinkled blood is used because it is language the Hebrews understood since their high priest would take the blood of the sacrificial bull or goat and sprinkle it on the object or person to be cleansed, thus the word sprinkled shows that the blood the author has in focus is sacrificial blood offered for cleansing and especially for cleansing sins. Here is the wonder and splendour of the Gospel and the love the grace and glory of Christ's Spirit: all Hebrews would know the story of Abel and Cain, here the author tells them that they have come to, "The sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (v24).

In Genesis it is recorded that the LORD asked Cain, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground, you are cursed you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth and Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear (Gen 4:10-26). The blood of Abel cried out from the grave for justice, revenge and punishment. In contrast to this Jesus said of those crucifying him and casting lots for his garments, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). The blood of Jesus in sharp contrast to the blood of Abel cries to his heavenly Father for forgiveness and mercy for all sinners.

This shines a brilliant spotlight of the truth of Pauls' words, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). Here is comfort for even the greatest of sinners; no-matter how loud the condemning voice of the mind speaks or how gross the sin, whoever approaches God in honest humble repentance and accepts Christ as their Saviour will be forgiven, why? Because the cleansing power of Christ's blood cries for mercy and forgiveness. Sceptics reading this will no-doubt will say, "Yes, but what about those who are not genuine?" Clearly people

can fool us, but no-one can fool God, since His eternal eyes cut straight past our flesh and penetrate into the deepest and most hidden areas of our hearts, God sees the motives, intents and thoughts of our inner most being and He will respond to these accordingly.

- **Hebrews 12:28-29:** Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

The Gospel proclaims: all those who embrace the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ are entering into a Kingdom that cannot be destroyed. Here the author is contrasting the old covenant which the Jews followed for over four-thousand years, but now discover that what they valued is shaken, destroyed and brought to ruin (by the death and resurrection of Christ), everything they held dear to their hearts, their lives and the identity of their nation now counts for nothing. This is why the author is telling all those who belong to Christ's Kingdom to be grateful for the faith they have, it will never change not only is there is no-other Gospel to come, but there will never be another high priest for all eternity other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Anyone who has been born into and raised in a false religion or spent most of their life in a religion of works and traditions who have discovered the glory of God's grace in the Gospel will understand how these Hebrews feel and the tremendous difficulty they have in forsaking what they have been indoctrinated in and valued since childhood.

Every brother and sister in Christ should offer acceptable worship to God. Many today think that acceptable worship to God is standing in a congregation with raised hands singing songs of praises to his name and his glory. There is no-doubt God delights in this type of worship, but only if those who are standing there in that moment have a desire in their hearts to live their life to honour God and the Lord Jesus Christ on every other day of the week and endeavour to do so. True worship is desiring to live a life that honours God and the Lord Jesus Christ, it is doing-good to others and showing kindness, grace, mercy and forgiveness not only to those who are our brothers and sisters in the Lord, but also to those who are outside God's Kingdom, these are the things that God accepts as acceptable and true worship.

JAMES 1

- **James 1:12:** Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

The Gospel proclaims: the faith of brothers and sisters in Christ will be tested for its genuineness and that those who endure and remain faithful through the troubles and hardships they face in this fallen world God will give a crown of life. Enduring in faith through life's sorrows and hardships proves the sincerity of the love of those who confess to believe in Christ have for God. Jesus himself said of those who endure hardships for his name's sake:

- Will eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God (Rev. 2:7).
- Will be granted the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).
- Will not be hurt by the second death (Rev. 2:11).
- Will rule over the nations (Rev. 2:26-27).
- **James 1:13-15:** Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

The Gospel proclaims: no-one is tempted by God. Certainly, it is true that the Bible says that God tempted Abraham, the Israelites (in the wilderness), Job and tempts all His faithful and righteous ones, but not one of these temptations were temptations to sin. These temptations were:

- To Abraham to try his faith, his love and his obedience.
- To the Israelite in the wilderness to humble them and prove what was in their hearts.
- To Job to try his faith and patience and prove that a person with true faith will not curse God even under great suffering.
- To all God's faithful and righteous ones, to test the genuineness of their faith which is more precious than gold.

Clearly the word temptation can refer to trials and hardships of life and difficult circumstances God uses to test the genuineness of our love and faith and to the idea of being enticed to sin. It appears in this letter of James that he felt there may be a danger that some might consider the word temptation as used in the previous verses to mean that God arranged trials to influence the mind to temptations of sin so to guard the meaning of what he has said regarding trials, hardships and troubles of life and to make sure that the word temptation is not confused or misapplied James says, "Let no-one say God is tempting them to sin" (v13). Clearly showing that God would never induce or allure anyone to sin and that God places nothing before any human being with a view to induce them to do wrong. This statement of James is one of the most positive and unambiguous of all the declarations in the Bible, and one of the most important teachings of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is because the Bible very clearly teaches that God is not only Holy and that there is no darkness in Him and that He does not delight in sin, but hates and abhors it, but also teaches that sin is totally contrary to his nature.

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The Gospel proclaims: every man and woman carry in their own bodies' sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that forever seek opportunity to stir up sin within the mind and the heart which if allowed to take root and grow flows through sinful passions and on outward to corrupt behaviour it is through the passions of self, ego pride, lust and greed etc., and the desire for self-gratification that we are tempted toward sin. The heart is carried by self-gratification from that which is good and enticed to sin to satisfy whatever sensual or worldly thing self-lusts or craves after.

The path of sin: sin in embryo form exists in the mind and heart and is brought forth outwardly if allowed to grow to its full size inwardly, to stop sins complete expression of outward sin it should be killed in its embryo form. If not, it is strengthened in the mind and then by frequent acts which eventually settle into a habit. Clearly the lusts of our own hearts' and the craving of our minds are our tempters and if we allow them by degrees to carry us away from our faith and away from Christ then we prove ourselves our own destroyers. It is certainly true that in in other Scriptures the devil is called the tempter, the apostle Peter wrote, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8) and in Genesis we read a similar statement, "Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it" (Gen. 4:7). Putting these two verses together shows us that the devil and sin are the same entity it is that entity within us that is prone toward sin and entice us away from God. No-one can blame their sin on the devil since the devil is simply a personification of that within our own hearts that draws us to sin and act against God's will. Neither the devil nor any other person or thing is to be blamed or used to excuse ourselves of sinning because the true origin of sin and temptation is in our own hearts. For further information concerning the devil, see the title: "Devil" in, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The following is a brief overview of sins progression; a sinful temptation that appeals to human desire entices, seduces and lures its victim, the mind is captured and possessed by the sinful temptation and its victim chooses to act and the sinful desire is conceived. The desire then becomes an outward action and is given birth and begins to grow, when fully grown it brings forth death. It leads to death for two reasons, firstly, a lifestyle of sin leads away from God and secondly, it is impossible to live a lifestyle of deliberate sinful behaviour and abide in Christ at the same time (Jas 1:13-5).

Most of us think of sin as murder, stealing, adultery, rape and such like things, but these are only the obvious sins some might be surprised to ponder the following list of sins James mentions throughout his letter:

- Being double minded (i.e., hypocritical and living a life of pretence especially religious pretence), boasting and, anger
- Being a hearer of the word and not a doer of it.
- Showing partiality and favouritism in regards to judgment of others.
- Not fulfilling the royal law, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."
- Not showing people grace mercy and love (especially those in Christ).
- Not helping the poor and the less fortunate when able.
- Bad language and speaking evil against another brother or sister in Christ.
- Causing disorder, strife, contention quarrels and fights.
- Being full of pride, bitter jealousy and selfish-ambition and coveting.
- Boasting of what we will achieve in the future without any sense of God.
- Setting our affections on the world rather than on God.
- Setting our love on riches and storing up abundant treasures for the last days.
- Cheating workers from their wages and oppressing others for one's own gain.
- Living in excessive luxury and self-indulgence.
- Condemning those who are faithful and stand for justice and what is right.
- **James 1:23-25:** For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror (glass in KJV). ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

Liberty: means freedom it carries the idea of being a free citizen (i.e., freedom from slavery and bondage). In the context of these verses it means being free from the obligation of strictly adhering to Moses laws of purification and ceremonial rites and Jewish religious customs and practices.

This is because the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ made the entire Levitical priesthood with its ceremonial laws and religious practices obsolete and the perfect law of liberty states that there is no law for those who walk in the Spirit, meaning for those who walk in the fruits of the Spirit (i.e., love of which there is no law against).

The Gospel proclaims:

- In love there is total liberty because love does no harm, love protects and is kind, compassionate forgiving and shows grace and mercy, thus the reason it is called the perfect law of liberty meaning freedom from all religious acts to earn righteousness that leads to eternal life and freedom from the law because nothing done in love breaks any laws and therefore whatever is done in love will bring reward and not judgment.
- Those who belong to the family of Christ should be doers of the word, and not hearers only. This does not refer to adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions, but to love. It means show compassion, kindness, mercy grace and forgiveness to others, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ, being doers of the word is not about the practice of outward religious acts, but about walking in the fruits of the Spirit.
- There are many who confess to believe in Christ that are like a person looking into a mirror, but then forgetting what they look like. This means that they do not retain a distinct impression of themselves after they have looked in a mirror. The idea here is that while looking in the mirror, we see all our features, the defects and blemishes, they are distinctly before the mind; but when we turn away, they are out of sight and out of mind the image and the impression both vanish.
- Likewise, when a person hears the word of God it is like having a spiritual mirror held up before them; they see the perfect precepts of the law and the perfect requirements of the Gospel and see their own short-comings and defects and perhaps think that they will correct them. But when they turn away, they are immediately forgotten it is in this sense they are like a person who looks intently at their face in a mirror and immediately go away and forget what they looked like.
- Pure religion is not about being counted worthy simply because a believer may have their theology and doctrines perfectly correct, they must also be a doer of the word otherwise all their theology will be counted worthless. For our religion to be considered pure before God we must not only desire to remove the blemishes and defects in our own character that the word of God reveals to us, but also do-good to others.

NOTE: though no-one is saved by works or self-effort, true faith will always produce some form of outward evidence of inward faith. James in this letter is saying if a person says they believe in God, but has no outward actions to evidence their inward faith they are deceiving themselves. He is not teaching that we are saved by self-effort or outward works (as some think), but that a truly saved person will not only be recognized by their speech because of the absence of gossip, criticism, swearing, cussing and blaspheming etc., and because of their testimony, but will also be recognized by their love, grace, mercy, kindness and willingness to forgive etc., in contrast to being critical, resentful, bitter, angry, unforgiving and such like things. In this manner actions reveal a person's true faith or the lack of it.

JAMES 2

- **James 2:18:** But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Faith apart from works is dead. James is writing to the Jews who have been scattered into foreign countries and Gentile nations so it is certain that they were still practicing Moses laws of purification and adhering

to ceremonial rites, holy days and their Jewish religious customs and traditions, James is saying that true faith is not manifested in strictly adhering to ceremonial rites or adhering to holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions, but through love mercy and grace. James was the brother of Jesus, clearly, he understood that the life his brother lived was not about keeping religious laws, rules, customs and traditions, but about showing others love kindness, compassion and forgiveness and being willing to help whenever one is able. James is shining a brilliant spotlight on how true inward faith manifests itself outwardly (i.e., not in religious customs and traditions, but in love and compassion toward others).

- A man or woman who say they believe in God, but never read the Bible, never have any fellowship with other Christians and never talk about the Lord Jesus Christ, and show no evidence of the fruits of the Spirit (i.e., mercy, grace, kindness, compassion, forgiveness and love etc.), working in their lives and flowing out toward others are deceiving themselves, because there is no outward behavior or actions that evidences their faith.
- **James 2:20:** Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

The Gospel proclaims:

- Proof of inward faith and love is manifested in outward works true inward faith cannot be hidden, but will always be evidenced by some form of outward action. Outward actions evidence inward faith. Without outward works, how would anyone know a person has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Genuine faith is evidenced by outward works. God calls those in Christ who have outward works that evidence their inward faith his friend and counts them righteous. James in this chapter is saying, "All who confess to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and whose faith is outwardly evidenced by love, the fruits of the Spirit and helping others when able will be counted as righteous, justified and a friend of God."
- Christian faith is not a dead faith, but a living one meaning it is manifested outwardly in some form. True Christian faith cannot be hidden or kept secret. Outward works of love, grace, kindness and mercy do not save, but they do evidence that a believer has true Christian faith dwelling within.

Jesus is, God's gift of grace: the following words of Paul show the enormous importance of trusting in God's grace in Christ and that James is not teaching that we are saved by works. Paul in his letters wrote, "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law (or any form of religious self-effort), then Christ died for no purpose" (Gal. 2:21). This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begin to justify themselves through the law and self-effort, they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ's death was of no value. Equally as horrific as this Paul states, "When we forsake grace, we separate ourselves from Christ because it was only by grace that God made us alive in Christ" (Gal. 5:4) (Eph. 2:5). Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that, "It is only by grace that any brother or sister has been saved" (Eph. 2:8). Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by *grace* and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God". This means that without *grace* no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life. Thus; in regards to eternal salvation, Christ, God, grace and faith, are all on an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to eternal life without any one of them.

These verses (there are many others like them) clearly show that James is not teaching that we are saved by works (as many believe), but rather that true faith will be evidenced by good outward behaviour and actions.

- **James 4:4:** You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

The Gospel proclaims: friendship with the world is enmity with God. This verse has been grossly misunderstood by some religious teachers to mean that those who belong to the family of Christ should never have friendships with people of the world, but this is not what James is saying. Consider the following:

- How are the lost going to be saved if we do not show friendship to them?
- Many Christians live in isolation the only people they have contact with are secular men and woman.
- Most Christian children go to school with secular children.
- Nearly all of us work with unsaved people.
- Many who do not know Christ have kind and generous hearts.
- Statistics show that the greatest percentage of people who come to Christ come not because of a church outreach program, but through the testimony of a Christian friend.

Added to these are the words of Jesus, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). In a natural family there is a love and bond that unites its members together in a love that no-other relationship outside that family does, but that does not mean that the members of the family have no friendship apart from those in their own household. Likewise, those in the family of Christ are united in a love with their spiritual brothers and sisters in a manner that they cannot have with those outside of Christ, but this does not mean they cannot have friendships apart from those in the body of Christ (unless they are corrupt and a bad influence). James is not saying it is wrong to have friendships with people outside the Kingdom of God (who have good values), rather the phrase friendship with the world refers to coveting after the things of the world (i.e., an opulent lifestyle, luxurious living and craving after wealth, riches and possessions to puff up pride and ego which hunger and crave after peoples admiration, exaltation and praise).

Adulterers and adulteresses: adulterers in the context of this verse refer to men while adulteresses obviously refer to woman. The literal meaning of adulterers refers to a man or woman being sexually unfaithful to their married partner. James in this verse is telling those he is writing to that by their gross affections to the things of the world they are being unfaithful to God since it is to worldly wealth, indulgences and luxury they are setting their hearts and affections upon and not to God. This does not mean that it is wrong for a Christian to be rich and wealthy, certain Christians may have been blessed by God with a large portion of things of this world, and yet be kept in the love of God, because they are generous with their abundance of wealth and use it to help others and to extend the Kingdom of God; but should they set their heart upon the world and conform to its ways rather than lose its friendship referring to the love of its luxuries, indulgences and fame they will then become and enemy to God as do all who set God aside to chase after the things of the world. Brothers and sisters in Christ should abandon their friendship with the world (meaning its pleasures, indulgences and luxuries) so that they will be always willing submit and subject themselves fully to God, His will and His Kingdom. It is not being rich that is wrong or sinful since money in the right hands can be used to support those proclaiming the Gospel

and help others suffering hardships, it only becomes sinful when our hearts and affections are set upon money. The Bible teaches that it is the love of money that is the root of all evil, not money itself. There is nothing wrong with money that is earned by honest work, but should anyone set their heart and mind on satisfying self, ego, pride and greed etc., and craves after riches, importance, fame and the praise and exaltation of others for self-glory or uses God's blessings or gifts (whether they be material or spiritual) for selfish ambition and their own gain and indulgent self-gratification they are making themselves enemies of God.

JAMES 5

- **James 5:7-8:** Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

The Gospel proclaims:

- The Lord will return in glory. This refers to Jesus returning in glory as, King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace during his glorious millennial reign on earth (Rev 19:11-16). For further information see the notes following Matthew 23:39 (above).
- That those who belong to the family of Christ should wait patiently until Christ returns in glory. Here is the beauty and glory of the Christian hope just like God has hidden the day of our death from us, in his eternal wisdom He has also hidden the glorious day of the Lord's return, but has inspired the prophets to speak in such a manner that each generation is able to live with the hope of the Lord's return in their hearts and in their generation this is the wonder of God and of the Christian faith. Thousands of years ago:
- Abraham in *faith* went out to live in the land of promise with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise all looking forward to the city whose designer and builder is God. From Abraham and Sarah were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and all died in *faith*, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth, because they were seeking a homeland a better country, a heavenly city that God has prepared for them (Heb. 11:8-16).

These verses shine a brilliant spotlight on the truth that patiently waiting for the Lord is not a new thing and that the faithful from Genesis to now have been establishing their hearts in love and devotion while patiently waiting for their Messiah the Christ to appear in glory.

The Gospel proclaims: every brother and sister in Christ should wait for things to develop themselves in their proper season (as the farmer does), and should not be impatient before that season arrives, but wait with patience as the farmer has to wait for the precious fruit of the earth. No farmer on earth can hasten the harvest since it requires time for the grain to grow and the crop to mature, nor can he control the rain, the sun or the season and therefore he patiently waits until the regular course of events bring the harvest at the proper time. Likewise, we cannot control and hasten the events which are in God's own keeping and therefore like the farmer we should patiently wait for the developments of God's plan to come to its glorious climax.

The early and the later rains: in the climate of Palestine there are two rainy seasons, on which the harvest essentially depends - the autumnal and the spring rains - called here and elsewhere in the Scriptures the early and the latter rains (Deut. 11:14) (Job 29:23) (Jer. 5:24).

Perhaps it could be said that the early rain of the Christian faith began with Jesus being baptized by John and God calling the Lord into his ministry. The seed was sown, the grain is growing and the crop is maturing as the harvest approaches. The latter rain could be seen as the glorious return of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth. For further information see the notes following Matthew 23:39 (above).

The Prayer of Faith will Save; And the Lord will Raise them Up.

- **James 5:15:** And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

The Gospel proclaims: the prayer of faith has the power to save a sick person to eternal life. Some religious teachers connect this verse with the previous verse, but it makes far more sense to see verse fourteen as instruction for dealing with natural sickness and verse fifteen as a prayer for salvation especially since the following verses are focused on brothers and sisters who have wandered from their faith being brought back to the Lord and of sinners being forgiven and raised up (referring to the resurrection). It should be kept in mind during the era of the apostles and James there were no hospitals, very few doctors, and certainly no ambulances. This meant that many of the sickness that we are healed from today they died off; the death rate of illnesses was tremendously high and mostly expected. Added to this it should be carefully observed and noted that the saving of the sick in this verse is not ascribed to the anointing with oil, but to the prayer of faith that will not only save the sick, but result in their sins being forgiven and them being raised up.

Clearly this prayer must proceed from and be accompanied with a lively faith. There must be faith both in the person praying and in the person being prayed for. The great thing we should ask of God in faith in the time of sickness that could lead to death is the pardon of sin, but no-one should mistake this prayer of faith for the mistaken fancy that it applies to a religious priests absolution through a cold prayer of confession or of some type of religious rite or ceremony upon their death-bed as some religious institutions have their priests practice when a person is dying. Rather in absolute contrast to this type of cold prayer, the prayer of faith refers to the humble condition of the heart and honest repentance before God. When a person prays this kind of prayer with the right heart attitude God will forgive all their sins and raise them up to eternal life (i.e., at the resurrection).

The Gospel proclaims: there is not one priest or minister on earth no-matter how religious or how big their church or the religious institution or empire that they belong to is no-one has the power to perform some type of religious ritual over a dying man or woman that will set the heart of a person right who has disregarded God and ignored His will throughout their lives without honest and genuine heartfelt repentance before God and accepting by faith Christ as their Lord and Saviour this is why leading a sinner to eternal life is called, the prayer of faith without faith it is simply empty words of vanity, a vapour in the wind.

NOTE: since this group of Scriptures has been grossly misunderstood in some religious circles the following is a brief overview of what James is teaching concerning, the prayer of faith and what the Gospel proclaims. The words, the prayer of faith will save, deliver, protect and make a sick person whole in this context is not proclaiming that it will heal the sick person, rather it is a prayer of salvation.

The prayer of faith in this context is about hearing the Gospel, repenting and asking or praying for God's forgiveness. James is shining a brilliant spotlight on the truth that it matters not whether a brother or sister in Christ is an elder or a lay person we are all able to pray for whoever asks us to pray for their salvation regardless of what position we hold in a church and regardless of how grossly the sick person has sinned or how much their mind convicts and condemns them. No brother or sister should

ever feel that they are too lowly to pray for a sinner to be saved, because it is the prayer of faith and the response of the sinners' hearts that saves them and not us. If their heart is right before God and this prayer of faith is prayed God will forgive no-matter what gross sin their mind might condemn them of. When there is honest repentance and faith God will deliver whoever comes to Him through Christ from the domain of darkness and transfer them to the Kingdom of his beloved Son (Col 1:13). James is basically saying, when a person is so sick that they think they may die and while facing death want to seek God then call for brothers and sisters who know the Good News of the Gospel so that they can share it with the sick or dying person and if they accept the salvation message, pray with them to accept the Lord and the prayer of faith will save them, their sins will be forgiven and God will resurrected them when Christ returns. It is in this sense they will be made totally whole.

1 PETER 1

- **1 Peter 1:3-5:** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

The Gospel proclaims:

- That no-one can boast that they have earned their salvation by self-effort or are worthy of it, any boasting of our salvation can only be directed to God our heavenly Father since it is only by His mercy and His grace in the Lord Jesus Christ that we are saved to eternal life. Paul wrote the following glorious and majestic words, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8) showing that God set His love upon us long before we did anything to earn such love.
- Those in Christ have been born again in this context the expression born again refers to sinners being "Delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into to the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col. 1:13) to live a new life in Christ. It means a complete change of mind, thoughts, passions and lifestyle. It means that they have been born again to a living hope. It should be noted that when salvation to eternal life is spoken of as the hope of the faithful in Christ, it is not called hope because it might or might not happen, but because it is unseen and yet future. The hope itself is guaranteed because it is based on God's promise and he cannot lie. The apostle Paul wrote; "In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began" (Titus 1:2).

Every Christian hopes to be resurrected from the grave to be raised up to eternal life and everlasting glory to be made perfectly free from sin; to be everlastingly happy, but it is faith that gives these things a mental reality in the mind and it is under this influence of faith that those in Christ allow these unseen and yet future events to control their mind as if they were a reality now.

The Gospel proclaims:

- That those in Christ are saved through the death of Jesus, and that their HOPE is set upon the resurrection since God's resurrection of Jesus to eternal glory is testimony to every brother and sister in Christ that they also will be resurrected from the grave to eternal life and everlasting glory as Jesus was.
- The faithful in Christ have an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for them (v4). This refers to the promise God made to Abraham of which Paul when being tried said to his accusers, "I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers," (Acts26:6) referring to God's

promise that He would make Abraham a great nation; that he would be the father of a multitude of nations; that He would make Abrahams name great and bless him; that nations and kings would come from him; that He would give to him and to his offspring after him all the land of Canaan/Israel for an everlasting possession and that Abrahams' offspring would be as the dust of the earth and the stars of heaven so that they cannot be numbered and God will be their God. The LORD confirmed this promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their offspring after them throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant promising Abraham that in his offspring all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

(Gen. 12:1-3) (Gen. 13:14-17) (Gen. 15:4-7) (Gen. 17:1-8)
(Gen. 22:15-18) (Deut. 9:5).

The Gospel proclaims: that God by His power is guarding those who belong to Christ through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (v5), these are some of the most comforting words of the Bible since they clearly show that it is not by our own self-effort, works or strict adherence to ceremonial rites, holy days or by keeping religious customs or traditions that are keeping us, but our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. All the promises God made to Abraham and eternal life are in Christ, whoever is in Christ belongs to the family of Abraham by faith and is a brother and sister of Christ and therefore a child of God. Every child of an earthly family is legally entitled to the inheritance likewise every child of God will receive the promised eternal inheritance not because of their own righteousness which falls far short of God perfect Holiness, but because they are by faith brothers and sisters of God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's promise to Abraham: the majestic wonder and beauty of the Gospel and God's promise to Abraham is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. The promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. This is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all Abrahams offspring—not only to the adherents of the law (referring to the Jews) but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham (referring to the Gentiles), who is the father of us all (Jews and Gentiles), as it is written, "I have made you (Abraham) the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (creation and the resurrection) (Rom. 4:17).

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In hope Abraham believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." Paul tells us that "The twelve tribes of Israel earnestly worshipped night and day hoping to attain to this promise (Acts 26:7). And then gloriously points out that the Scripture does not say, "And to offspring's," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

Some may think the promises made to Abraham was for the Jews only, but Paul magnificently explains in the book of Ephesians that the promises of God have been extended to all nations through being baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ and clearly shows that the promises made to Abraham and to his offspring the Lord Jesus Christ are not limited to the Jews only but embraces whoever will come to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. For further information see the title: "Commonwealth of Israel" (at the end of this chapter).

(Rom. 4:13) (Rom. 4:16-18) (Gal. 3:16) (Gal. 3:27).

The inheritance is not in heaven, but being kept in heaven it refers to that breath-taking day when Jesus returns in glory as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy city Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace during his glorious millennial reign on earth. This is the promised eternal inheritance God made to Abraham and that all who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ will receive when the dead

in Christ and the faithful, who are alive are gathered together to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God (Rev. 1:5-7) (Rev. 5:9-10). For further information see the notes following Matthew 23:39 (above).

The Tested Genuineness of your Faith is more Precious than Gold.

- **1 Peter 1:6-7:** In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel proclaims:

- While we are on this side of eternity we will all suffer various trials, hardships and troubles, which God will use to test the genuineness and reality of our faith, it is easy to praise and worship God when life is charmed even many people of the secular world thank God when something good comes into their lives. The real test is when struggle, hardship and troubles come. When our love and faith toward God is not destroyed during these seasons, we are storing up treasure in heaven. It is like a natural family, children do not turn against their parents simply because they suffer some kind of crisis (i.e., sickness, fire, floods, lack of income etc.), when a family is bonded by true love nothing separates its members from that love, likewise those who know the love of God do not turn against Him simply because of hardships and troubles. They understand that God's love toward them is not dependent on the circumstance of life (good or bad), but is manifested through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ's brutal and cruel death on the cross of Calvary. Jesus himself said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).
- That tested faith is more precious than gold, this is because if it endures the test it leads to eternal life and everlasting glory. If our world's top scientist and medical practitioners could invent a pill that would give people eternal life the billionaires of this world would write out a cheque no-matter what the cost to buy as many as they could for their family and friends, and almost all the world would sell everything they had to purchase one. This is the high value Peter and the apostles placed on the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. To Peter and the faithful brothers and sisters who supported him there was nothing in this world more valuable for any man or woman to possess than God's gift of eternal life. How sad it is that in some modern churches today this high value of eternal life has been lost and replaced by a Gospel that focuses on a blessed, prosperous and successful life now in this mortal and corrupt world and messages that appeal to self, ego and pride. Especially when one considers what it cost God the Father and the high price his Son paid to purchase this gift of eternal life for all who would humbly accept by faith the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **1 Peter 1:18-19:** knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

The Gospel proclaims: every brother and sister in Christ is saved by the precious and spotless blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The futile ways inherited from their forefathers refers to all the Jewish laws, ceremonial rites, religious customs and traditions and especially to the hundreds of trivial laws and rules the legalistic Jewish religious rulers had added to Moses laws. The reference of silver and gold can apply to the following two things, firstly to money, meaning that no-one can buy their way into God's Kingdom no-matter how rich. It is certainly true that the wealthy may gain the special favour and attention of a religious minister and earn themselves a better pew in the church, but money has absolutely no power to save anyone to eternal life no-matter how rich. The words silver and gold can be seen as an allusion to the Temple of God since it was an

absolute majestic wonder of beauty, almost all things were made of solid gold or covered in gold, silver was used in abundance and the richest of materials were used on the veils that divided the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place and the craftsmanship and sculpture was the best in the land. To walk inside the temple was a stunning wonder of beauty and glory for the eyes to behold.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Those in Christ are not ransomed by the practice of their religious works or by money, no matter how much they gave or by the temple even if they attended it every Sabbath.
- All who are ransomed to God and eternal life are solely ransomed, because of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peters glorious and majestic words, "Like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (v19) would immediately transcend the mind of the exiled and scattered Jews to the blood of the Old Testament lamb without blemish that their fathers had to sacrifice prior to their deliverance from Egypt (called the house of bondage) and whose blood protected and saved their firstborn from the death angel and to the blood of the lamb without blemish that the high priest took into the Most Holy Place once every year to make atonement for the sins of the nation of Israel.
- No matter how glorious the church building is it matters not! Nor how strictly we adhere to ceremonial rites, holy days and keep religious laws, customs and traditions it all counts for nothing if we are trusting in them for our righteousness and to be counted worthy before God of eternal life. The only thing that makes us worthy before God and of eternal life is our faith in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You have been Born Again.

- **1 Peter 1:23:** since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

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The Gospel proclaims:

- Every brother and sister in Christ have been born again. In in the Jewish culture the expression born again means taking on a new view of life and new responsibilities. The concept of being born again meant a conversion of life from what one had lived to another way of living and another way of thinking. When the term born again is used in Christian circles it refers to that moment when a sinner humbles themselves in honest repentance before God and by faith accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. When a person comes to God with an open and sincere heart in this manner God delivers them from the domain of darkness and transfers them to the Kingdom of his beloved Son (Col. 1:13). This is what it means to be born again the mind and desires of the heart are transformed from the passions of the old life to live a new life with God.
- We are born again by the living and abiding word of God. The word of God in this context refers to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ it is called living and imperishable seed because it is the word of the Lord Jesus Christ who is not only living, but eternal. The Scriptures are written to unite us through faith and love to the Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever is in Christ's family becomes an adopted child of God and like children of an earthly father are the rightful heirs to their father's inheritance likewise the children of God become the heirs of their heavenly Father's inheritance which of course is eternal life and everlasting glory.

NOTE: though many are spiritually born again by responding to a church altar call and having the minister and elders of the church pray for them it should be mentioned that no one needs a church to pray this prayer or be born again since it is a spiritual experience between the one praying

before God in repentance and asking His forgiveness although it might be nice to have a valued Christian friend share the moment and certainly will be of valuable help and encouragement as the new born begins their new spiritual life in Christ.

1 PETER 2

- **1 Peter 2:4-5:** As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus is a living stone rejected by men, but in God's sight chosen and precious. The words, living stone are an allusion to the following words of Isaiah, "Thus says the LORD God, 'Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste' (Isaiah 28:16). There is also an allusion to the following words of David, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone" (Psalm 118:22). The reference is to Christ as the foundation on which the church is being raised upon. Jesus occupies the same place in regard to the church which a foundation-stone does to the structure that it is built upon. The phrase living stone refers to Jesus being alive from the dead, to become the spiritual foundation stone with believers as the building being erected upon it and to a spiritual temple made up of living materials (i.e., redeemed brothers and sisters precious in God's sight and in who God now resides). Christ, as a living stone sustains all who are joined to him with his living power and bonds them together with himself and with each other in love. The expression the living stone is in contrast to the temple made up of precious gold and costly stones at Jerusalem that the Jews accounted their highest glory. They not only left Jesus out of the building, but laid their own foundation of works and self-righteousness. It was on this sandy foundation they built themselves, and taught others to do the same teaching that it was not in the living stone they would find life, but in the killing letter of the law and among their dead works (i.e., strictly adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and religious customs and traditions etc., to earn righteousness that leads to eternal life).

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The Gospel proclaims: Jesus was rejected as the Messiah the Christ by the Jewish builders (the high priests, scribes, and Pharisees) and the majority of the population of Israel refused to accept him as the foundation stone of God's Kingdom. Even in this present age Christ is rejected, not only by the Jews, the Turks, and the majority of the Western world, but by all who confess to be Christians, but hope to be saved by their own works. The following verses shine a light on the wonder, beauty and glory of the Bible: thousands of years ago the prophets proclaimed:

- **Isaiah 53:3:** He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
- **Psalm 118:22:** The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.
- **Acts 4:11:** This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.
- **Matthew 21:42** ⁴² The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?

The Gospel proclaims: The Lord Jesus Christ the Son of the living God is the rock God is building the church upon and not Peter. Based upon the following words of Jesus "I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18). Based on this verse the Roman Catholic Church has claimed that

Christ is building his church upon Peter. This is another perfect example of how false doctrine is established when a verse is isolated and lifted out of context. In the two verses prior to this Jesus asked Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" Then Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" and Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Peter because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 16:15-17) then Jesus told Peter that upon this rock he will build his church. Peter's revelation that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God" is the rock that the church is being built upon. Peter's following words show that there was no-doubt in his mind that he understood what Jesus was saying and who the rock was, since Peter himself says that Jesus is "A living stone in the sight of God chosen and precious" (v4). And in the book of Acts when Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit he said "This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you (the rulers and elders of Israel) the builders, which has become the cornerstone and there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:11-12). This clearly shows us the following two things:

1. Peter never for a moment considered that he was the stone Jesus was building his church upon.
 2. Peter knew without any doubt the foundation stone upon which the church was to be built upon and upon which every believer is laid was God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **1 Peter 2:6-8:** For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."⁷ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"⁸ and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

ZION: is the hill the city of Jerusalem sits upon. The name Zion came to signify the Holy Hill of God (Psalms 2:6). Over time it came to be used for the whole of Jerusalem (Isaiah 1:27) and after the fall of Judea became the symbol of the hope that the Jewish homeland in Palestine would eventually be restored. In the New Testament, Zion denotes the heavenly city (Heb. 12:22) (Rev. 14:1). In biblical times Zion was symbolic of the house and the household of God and by extension it later became representative of the Jews and their religion. In Christian belief Zion was symbolic of the place where God lives and is worshipped on earth or in heaven.

The Gospel proclaims:

- God is laying in Zion a Stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame" (1 Pet 2:6). These are some of the most beautiful words of Scripture since they not only proclaim the foundation and revelation of all Scripture, but the eternal plan that God purposed in His divine and eternal mind before the foundation of the world began. Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ the cornerstone that God laid will not be put to shame (v6). This means that no matter whether a person is born a descendant of Abraham, a Hebrew or Jew, or of any Gentile nation, or whether a person is noble or lowly, rich or poor, whoever you are if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you will not be put to shame, meaning that you will be accepted to eternal life and everlasting glory when Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice joy and peace on earth.
- The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The builders in this context refer to the chief priests, the Pharisees and scribes' they had the temple, the religious authority, the priesthood and the Scriptures and with these they were to build the Kingdom of God, but instead they rejected the cornerstone that the entire structure of God is built upon and without a solid and sure cornerstone even an

earthly building will eventually crumble as did the chief priests, the Pharisees and scribes religious kingdom when the armies of Rome brought to ruin the city of Jerusalem and destroyed the Jewish temple of God in 70 A.D.

- The honour is to those who believe (v7). This means that God's favour is toward all who build their lives on the cornerstone of God's Kingdom and not on those who trust in the temple and adhering to religious ceremonial rites or the keeping of religious customs and traditions. It is interesting to consider that the faith of the many Jews who had accepted Christ and saw the Jewish temple of God being destroyed would not have been spiritually affected since their faith was in a cornerstone that cannot be destroyed. This is the glory and beauty of building our lives on the Christ the perfect and sure cornerstone he is immortal and eternal and his Kingdom will never be destroyed.
- The builders of God's house (the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes) were destined to reject Christ (v8). This statement is simply stunning, since it shows that God in his eternal foreknowledge knew that this is exactly what those who rose up to be the religious rulers over the nation, He had chosen to be a treasured people would do. Even prior to Moses death the LORD told Moses, "I know what they (the Jews) are inclined to do even today, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give them. They will despise and forsake the LORD their God and break the covenant that they have made" (Deut. 31:16-22). God was so confident of Israel's rebellion that he had Moses write a Song for all the following generations of Israel to sing to remind them of the covenant and of the LORD their God. (The Song of Moses is in Deut. 32). Moses even said to the people of Israel: "Even today while I am yet alive you have been rebellious against the LORD, how much more after my death! I know that after my death you will turn aside from the way that I have commanded you and provoke the LORD through the work of your hands" (Deut. 31:27-3029). This is the wisdom and sovereignty of God that our mortal and finite minds cannot fully grasp, man's free will works within God's sovereign and eternal plan. This is why all those who belong to the Kingdom of Christ can confidently and joyfully sing the song, "He's got the whole world in his hands."

NOTE: the words, "They stumble because they disobey the word" (1 Peter 2:8) primarily refer to religious leaders during Christ's generation (the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes), but by extension it applies to anyone who refuses to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They stumbled for two reasons, firstly, because Jesus proclaimed, he is the Son of God, the promised Messiah, the Christ and Saviour that all the prophets spoke of and prophesied was to come.

Secondly, they were driven by pride, ego and greed and not from a heart filled with grace and mercy toward the Lord's people. They were more interested in expanding their own religious empire than they were in following God's will and His ways and because of this Jesus was a threat to their control, their power, and their kingdom. This is the reason they had him murdered. These are the two reasons why they stumbled and refused to accept their promised Messiah the Christ the Son of God the sure and perfect cornerstone of God's Kingdom.

- **1 Peter 2:9:** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

The Gospel proclaims: those who belong to Christ's Kingdom are a chosen race, a royal priesthood and a holy nation. These glorious and majestic words do not apply to the nation of Israel, but to all (Jews and Gentiles) who are by faith trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for their righteousness and building their lives on the cornerstone of God's Kingdom. This means that the race, nation and Kingdom of Christ, is the race of people that God has chosen in contrast to all other races, nations or Kingdoms on earth.

NOTE: the words, "We are chosen" (v9) does not mean that God has predestined before the foundations of the world that certain people would be chosen and predestined that others would be rejected and condemned. If this was the case no-one would have free will concerning being saved to eternal life. The words, "We are chosen" in this context means that God in his eternal and divine mind predestined that His Son the Lord Jesus Christ would be the Saviour of mankind and that whoever from their own free will chooses to believe in Christ would be accepted by God (i.e., chosen by God). No-one is predestined to be chosen or rejected, we all choose our own destiny and if we chose Christ God chooses us; it is in this sense that we are chosen.

2 PETER 1

- **2 Peter 1:16-18:** For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,"¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

The Gospel proclaims: that the apostles did not follow cleverly devised myths. Certain men who were claiming that the Christian faith especially the return of the Lord is simply a story of cleverly devised myths and fables in the same way as many of the surrounding religions were. So, Peter to strength the faith of those who might be influenced by such rumours reminds them that not one of the apostles learned the Gospel from man's clever imagination, but actually saw the majestic glory of Christ. This majestic glory of Christ refers to the following awe-inspiring and breathtaking moment when Peter, James and John were standing on a high mountain and Jesus was transfigured (changed) before their eyes, his face shone like the sun, his clothes became white as light, a bright cloud overshadowed them and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matt. 17:1-5). Peter to comfort those who might have been thinking that Christ was just another man tells them that even before his death and resurrection God revealed to the apostles that Jesus was the Son of God and who he claimed to be not only by transforming Jesus in brilliant light, glory and majesty that no mortal mind can conceive but also by speaking from heaven telling Peter, James and John that Christ is God's beloved Son.

- **2 Peter 1:19:** And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed (more sure in KJV), to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,

The Gospel proclaims: every brother and sister in Christ has something more-sure than the majestic vision that Peter, James and John had of Christ being glorified and that is the prophetic word. Though Peter (in the previous verses) has just finished saying that that Peter, James and John were eyewitnesses of Christ's glory and majesty on the mountain of transfiguration, he is no-doubt fully aware that certain men (especially the Jews) might cast doubt on the apostles testimony by making trivial and unreasonable objections about unimportant points so he now tells everyone that is seeking God that there is an even greater proof of Christ's majesty and glory than the testimony of Peter, James and John and that is "The prophetic word" (v19). Since Peter in the following verses says, "No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" there can be no doubt that the more-sure word of prophecy refers to the numerous majestic prophecies contained in the Old Testament concerning Christ. Peter is saying should anyone be in doubt regarding the testimony of Peter, James and John these prophecies will furnish an even stronger proof of Christ glory and majesty than the testimony of the apostles. This is because they were written over hundreds of years by different prophets from different periods of history and different countries and all this long before Christ

appeared which means there could be no collusion between the different prophets and writers yet not only is there one beautiful theme that flows from Genesis through to revelations, but many have come to pass in stunning detail and many are still to come to pass in glorious wonder and breathtaking awe.

Fulfilled prophecy: is not only proof that the Christian faith is not built on cleverly devised myths, but is also proof of inspiration because throughout the Old Testament there are Scripture predictions of future events that were uttered long before the events transpired that no mere human wisdom, intelligence or foresight could have anticipated especially in such minute and specific detail as the prophets proclaimed and psalmist sang. No mortal man no matter how brilliant or clairvoyant could without the inspiration of God possibly predict, guess or anticipate the hundreds of predictions concerning Israel, the land of Canaan, Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, and numerous other prophecies that have been fulfilled throughout history, especially those prophecies which were fulfilled by men who struggled with frantic desperation to avoid their fulfilment and by others who utterly disbelieved in God, because of these fulfilments it is certain that no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but by men who spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2Pet 1:21). For those who understand the wonder, beauty and glory of Bible prophecy there is no-doubt that Scripture is the revelation of the mind and will of God.

The Gospel proclaims: prophecy is like a lamp shining in a dark place (v19). This means that Bible prophecies resemble a lamp shining in a dark room, the lamp makes the objects in the room distinct which were before unseen and things which would be otherwise invisible, but there is still much that is only dimly revealed and much in the room we are not able to see. The idea here is that as majestic and awe-inspiring as prophecies are they do not give a perfect light or remove all obscurity, but that they shed some light on objects which would otherwise be entirely dark, and that the light which they do give is so valuable that we should make every effort to seek out for ourselves the priceless riches and treasures the light of the prophecies do shine upon. In Contrast the words, "Until the day dawns" (v19) refers to the morning light as compared to the lamp. Clearly the morning sun brings far more light than a single lamp. This shows that the idea is that we should attend to the light given us by the prophecies until the obscurity of prophecy is revealed in much clearer and far more distinct light by the clearness of events when they actually occur and dispel those things that remain shadowed and obscured by the dimness of light. The difference between the light of the lamp and the light of the sun is the difference between seeing an event by faith and prophecy and between seeing the actual reality of it shining all around us. Peter in these verses is directing the mind of all believers to that glorious period of time when all prophecy will shine in absolute clearness when our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ returns to receive his brothers and sisters to himself and to everlasting glory where all will be pure light.

The Gospel proclaims: there is a morning star rising in the hearts of those who belong to the family of Christ (v19). This literally refers to the bright star that at certain periods of the year begins the day in the most magnificent brilliance. Figuratively the star is Christ and the reference is to that glorious day when Christ returns in the full revelation of his glory and the splendour of his Kingdom and his light shines its beams deep into our hearts and that hidden but glorious light and love that dwells within the heart of every brother and sister in Christ rises in breathtaking and uncontrollable excitement and joy at the sight of seeing their risen Saviour. Then all will be clear, clearer and brighter than any other time that has yet occurred on our world. Bible prophecies are as the morning star that shines brighter than the dawning sun as it heralds in the new day

John in the book of Revelation wrote: "The holy city, New Jerusalem has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it and its gates will never be

shut by day—and there will be no night there (Rev. 21:23-25) and that “Night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever (Rev. 22:5). Is there any other religion on planet earth that has such awe-inspiring majestic and glorious prophecies, visions and promises for its followers? (This author has not found one). While we patiently wait for this glorious and eternal new age to come, Peter is encouraging us to walk in the light that we have and diligently study the prophecies of the Old Testament (especially those still unfulfilled) and of those in the New Testament which direct our mind onward to brighter and more glorious scenes than this world has yet witnessed. Bible prophecies are a cheering lamp to guide our feet through the darkness until that illustrious and glorious day shall dawn.

- **2 Peter 1:20-21:** knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel proclaims: men spoke from God by the Holy Spirit. Not one of God's prophets spoke from their own mind, no Bible messages or prophecies are birthed from human thinking or human imagination. The Holy Spirit influenced and inspired the prophets of the Old and New Testament to speak the messages of God and it is these messages that are now written down and recorded in the cannon of the Bible. The Holy Spirit enabled the prophets to speak of Christ’s birth, suffering, ministry and his death and resurrection and of Christ’s spiritual Kingdom his literal Kingdom and his eternal Kingdom.

NOTE: God is the source of the Holy Spirit and spoke his messages by the inspiration and influence of the Holy Spirit though men he chose. When the Holy Spirit testifies of Christ through the prophets it is spoken of as Christ (or the Spirit of Christ) being in the prophets. This is because they are by the Holy Spirit speaking of Christ and the things concerning him.

NOTES CONCERNING THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD

Some religious teachers proclaim that the King James Bible is the only Bible that contains the inspired word of God, but this is foolish for many reasons. The obvious one is that it is very difficult for people of our generation to read since we do not speak in the manner the King James Bible is written in. Certainly, it was the common language of that generation and is a great Bible and beautifully written, but it is not the only Bible that contains the inspired word of God. This is because it is not every individual word of the Bible that is inspired, if this was the case only those who could read the original manuscripts would be able to read the inspired word of God. Added to this if the King James Bible is the only Bible that contains the inspired word of God the Chinese, Mexicans, the French and people from all other foreign languages would never be able to read the inspired word of God since all their Bibles are translated into a totally different language to the English language even worse than this unless we speak Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek none of us would be able to read the inspired word of God since the original Manuscripts are written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. But here is the beauty of Scripture, it is the messages the Bible that contains that is the inspired word of God, not the language or the individual words, but the messages the individual words joined together as complete sentences and paragraphs proclaim.

For those who have difficulty reading the King James Bible here is the good news all well recognized modern Bibles contain the same messages as the King James Bible does. Whichever of these Bibles a person seeking God chooses to read there is no doubt if their heart is right before God, they will not only find the way to eternal life, but also the love and grace of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A personal note: should a new seeker of God be reading this I would suggest spending time in the New Testament until the love and grace of God is discovered and the truth that Jesus accepts with open arms all who come to him with an honest and humble heart despite what the mind may be convicting or condemning those seeking him of. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

2 PETER 3

- **2 Peter 3:9:** The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

The Gospel proclaims:

- God is longsuffering in delaying the Day of Judgment' giving mankind a space of time for repentance, this present age we live in is called the age of grace this is not simply because we are saved by grace, but also because it is by God's grace that the Lord is patiently delaying judgment and the day of wrath upon the wickedness of earth-dwellers.
- The Lord does not desire that mankind would perish, but that all should reach repentance. This is one of the reasons God through much longsuffering is withholding judgment since it will come unexpectedly, suddenly and with fury as it did in the Days of Noah and of Sodom and Gomorrah. To have a heart like God is to have a heart that is patient toward those in Christ and a desire that those outside of Christ will come to repentance.

2 PETER 3

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- **2 Peter 3:10-12:** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

The Gospel proclaims: The Day of the Lord will come like a thief (v10). This not only shows that it will come unexpectedly, suddenly, but also that the householders were totally taken by surprise. This carries the idea the Day of the Lord will take the world by surprise as it did in the days of Noah when there was little faith in the earth. It is certain it will be a time when the foolish virgins are slumbering and sleeping and when the claims of scoffers and mockers that the Lord's return is a clever myth and fable invented by the mind of men is greatly multiplying amongst the populations of the world. The following comforting words Paul wrote to the Thessalonian brothers and sisters show that the Day of the Lord should not overtake those in Christ as a thief in the night, Paul said, "You yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape, but you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.

For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness" (1 Thess. 5:2-5). Just as Noah and his family and Lot and his family were delivered from certain destruction these verses show us that the faithful who are watching and waiting with heartfelt excitement for the Lord's return will not be taken by surprise when that glorious, breathtaking and majestic day comes. Another majestic and glorious wonder contained in the words, "The day of the Lord

will come like a thief (v10) that is sometimes overlooked is this, consider for a moment what, does a thief come to steal? But the most valuable treasure hidden in the house he has entered to plunder. If Christ is coming as a thief, what are the treasures of the world that he is coming to plunder, but all those who by faith and God's grace belong to his eternal Kingdom.

The Gospel proclaims: the heavenly bodies will pass away; dissolve; be set on fire and melt as they burn and the works that are on the earth will be exposed. Amongst religious teachers there have always been various understandings of what Peter had in mind when he wrote the words, "The heavens will pass away, the heavenly bodies will be burned up and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed" (v10). The following are the two most common teachings, firstly that the sky, stars, sun, moon, the earth and everything upon it will be totally destroyed and secondly, the expression the heavens symbolize those who hold high religious positions of authority and who have great influence over a multitude of people, while the earth symbolizes the secular world; based on this idea, the heavens passing away would refer to the ruin of the city of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Jewish temple. The heavenly bodies being burned up would refer to the total removal of the Levitical priesthood and the Jewish religious system with all its ceremonial rites, religious customs and traditions and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed would refer not only to the corruptions of the people within the city of Jerusalem but also of those in the land of Judah and the surrounding nations.

It is certainly true that these events did occur. In 70 A.D. the mighty and brutal armies of Rome brought the city of Jerusalem to ruin, slaughtered the inhabitants, destroyed the temple and invaded the land of Judea. Moses at the foot of Mount Sinai had warned the people of Israel that their land would be, "Burned with brimstone and salt, nothing sown and nothing growing, where no plant can sprout, an overthrow like that of Sodom and Gomorrah which the LORD overthrew in his anger and wrath (Deut. 29:23-29) if they abandoned the covenant they entered into with the LORD and turned to other gods and gross wickedness, which they had done at the time of Rome.

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Though history records Rome's destruction of Jerusalem, the temple and the land of Judah, the ultimate sense of Peter's words are focused on the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the effect that glorious and majestic event will have on the global world. So for this reason God's judgment on Israel and Jerusalem should be seen as a prelude of similar events that will affect the entire world and not simply Israel and its surrounding nations.

With this global view in mind the following would apply:

- The heavens passing away would not only refer to the ruin of all false religious temples such as the Vatican City, Moslem Mosques and other similar religious buildings but also carry the idea that all that is destructive in nature (i.e., storms, floods, earthquakes and such like things) would also pass away.
- The heavenly bodies being burned up would not only refer to the total removal of the world's false religious teachers and leaders, but also to all man-made ceremonial rites, religious customs and traditions being made obsolete.
- The earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed, means that everything corrupt in the world will be clearly exposed for all to see. This would include deceitful governments, corrupt leaders of nations, the domination of the banking system, the oppression of global credit (especially amongst nations), the evil and greed of the stock exchange and global trading. The rich taking advantage of the poor for their own selfish gain and to increase their profits, the wickedness of war, all that is corrupt in our justice system and self-serving religious leaders.

There will be a far more suitable climate when Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth. It is certain there will be no earthquakes, storms, tornadoes; tidal waves or extremes in hot and cold temperatures which means that the climate as we know it has to change and for this to happen the heavenly bodies will need to change also.

NOTE: to discuss the Lord's return in an atmosphere of spiritual adventure and peace can be enormously exciting and is spiritually healthy, but to dogmatically and aggressively argue over the exact detail and every aspect of Christ's return, results in spiritual sickness because it causes strife, contention and worse still division. Though it is exciting to have a reasonable understanding (howbeit limited) of Christ's return and it does add strength to our faith, it is not important to know or understand every detail of the Lord's return to be saved to eternal life.

It is interesting to notice that after the resurrection of Christ most New Testament Bible writers simply say that we will be gathered together to be with Christ in eternal glory. Every faithful brother and sister in Christ who looks forward to the Lord's return with heartfelt excitement can be confident Christ will receive them with joy. Christ's return will be very dramatic and awesomely spectacular and as the events draw nearer become very clear to those who know him. The following comforting words of Jesus shine a spotlight on why no faithful brother or sister will miss the Lord's call simply because they do not have a full understanding of their Saviour's return. Jesus said: -

- He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out (John 10:3).
- He goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice (John 10:4).
- The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11).
- I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me (John 10:14).
- My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me (John 10:27).

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It should be comforting to all faithful Christians that though Noah and Lot knew destruction was coming neither of them knew the exact moment when it would come. This shines a spotlight on the truth that providing we are always ready, meaning we always remain in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, trust in God's grace, endeavour to live faithfully before the Lord Jesus Christ and have a heartfelt excitement of his return we can be confident we will be gathered together (whether we are dead or alive) to be with the Lord in everlasting glory. Since it is an undoubted truth that the heavens and the earth are going to be dramatically changed when the Lord returns all those who belong to Christ's family should endeavour to live, speak and behave in a manner that honours God and brings a good testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith (v11) with a sense that nothing is permanent on the earth and an awareness that our citizenship is not of this world.

- **2 Peter 3:13-14:** But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

The Gospel proclaims: there will be new heavens and a new earth, the allusion here seems to be to the following prophetic words of Isaiah, "For behold, I create *new heavens* and a *new earth* and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, no more shall the sound of weeping and the cry of distress shall be heard in it. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

They shall not labour in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD. The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, says the LORD (Isaiah 65:17-25). And in the following chapter Isaiah said, "For as the *new heavens* and the *new earth* that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain, from new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD (Isaiah 66:22-23). Some teach that these verses of Isaiah refer to the glory of this present Gospel age that we live in, but this idea leaves much lacking, added to this is the fact that Peter is referring to them so they must have a far more extended meaning. In this present world we live by faith looking for an entire new state of things as Abraham did when God called him out of the world that he was familiar with and went out, not knowing where he was going, but by faith went to live in the land of promise, looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God (Heb. 11:8-10).

The present state and order of things as we know them will be dramatically changed, but not to be blotted out, but renewed, purified, refined and purged from all moral and natural imperfection and made better for the home of the redeemed who are raised out of the ashes of the old. After the earth has given-birth to the sons and daughters of God in the resurrection the earth will be renovated and restored to the paradise condition it was created with in the Garden of Eden and suited for the home of us all. As the flood was the baptism of the earth bringing about a partial renovation of the earth and Noah's world, likewise the fire of God's judgment and the return of Christ will bring about a change in creation, the sun, moon, stars, the climate and nature will all be altered to bring about paradise conditions on earth. Our world's governments, trading and our banking systems as we know them will all be changed to systems that will be fair and just for all. Clearly when these changes come about it will be perfectly proper and right to refer to the earth and the heavens as a new earth and new heavens especially when Christ is ruling as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:11-16) from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to establish God's Kingdom on earth during this glorious new age. For further information see the notes following Matthew 23:39 (above)

1 JOHN 1

- **1 John 1:1-4:** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

The Gospel proclaims: that which was from the beginning, the apostles heard, saw and touched. Some use these words to support the mistaken theory that Jesus was with God from the beginning of creation, but the focus of John is, "The eternal life which was with the Father" (v2). Certainly, Jesus was in the eternal mind of God from before the foundations of the world and the center of God's eternal plans, purposes and promises to be the Saviour of all mankind.

Much like an architect long before a building is constructed plans the entire structure in his mind, he sees every detail of it in vivid clarity long before the builders begin to construct it and long before the workers even set foot on the site where it is to be built. An excited expectant mother plans in her mind her baby's room long before the baby is born, she not only sees in her mind the design and colours of that room, but also the lighting, furniture and clothing long before the child is born. In the same manner God planned and purposed in his timeless mind that Christ would

be the central focus of His sovereign plan for mankind's eternal salvation long before Jesus came into the world. The words, "That which was from the beginning" refer to eternal life it was eternal life that was with God at the beginning not Jesus as many teach. Jesus was resurrected to eternal life from the dead and John and the apostles heard him talk, saw him with their own eyes, touched him with their own hands, and even ate with him. They saw the promised eternal life in Christ's resurrected immortal and eternal body. The words, "Concerning the word of life" (v1) refers to God's promise of eternal life from the beginning which Peter and the apostles have seen in Jesus resurrected body. It is this eternal life that Peter says was made manifest to him and the apostles and it this eternal life that was with God from the beginning that they have seen and testify of.

Consider for a moment: the entire glory of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the promise of eternal life which was with God from before the foundations of the world. The message Jesus, the apostles, Paul and Peter proclaim to us is that we through faith and God's grace can be partakers in the eternal life which was with the Father from the beginning and was made manifest in Christ to Peter and the apostles in the resurrected body of the Lord Jesus Christ. John's statement, "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you" (v3), refers to the resurrected eternal life of the Lord Jesus Christ. This eternal life is the Spirit of God and clearly was with God from the beginning. God the Father is the source of all life he is eternal life and gave that life to the Lord Jesus Christ who gives it to all who belong to his family.

Peter, the apostles and Paul proclaim the message of eternal life that was with God in the beginning and that was manifested to them in the resurrected body of the Lord Jesus Christ so that whoever believes in Christ may also have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. The words; "We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete" (v4) show us two things, firstly, Peter and the apostles joy was not produced by the things of this world, but by their fellowship with God the Father and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ and secondly, as great as their joy was in being in a devotional relationship with God the Father and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ their joy is made fully complete when people who do not know the love and grace of God discover it through their ministry. One of the greatest joys in this fallen world that any faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ can experience is the joy, of seeing another person find eternal life in Christ and being united to his heavenly Father because of their testimony.

NOTE: many who believe Jesus pre-existed also believe Jesus is God, yet there is not one verse in the entire Bible that states people must believe that Jesus is God to be saved, but there are literally multitudes of verses that state, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Son of God will be saved." Added to this there is not one verse that says, "Whoever believes that Jesus is God will be saved." Surely if it was important to believe that Jesus was actually God, Christ would have told the apostles at least once in his discourses with them and in his messages of salvation, but all we find in the Scriptures is Jesus, the apostles and Paul proclaiming that people must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved.

Even Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3) and never once claimed to be God. Added to this the Scriptures tell us Jesus at this present time is seated at the right-hand side of his Father in heaven.

For further information see the title:

Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity)" in Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

- **1 John 1:5-7:** This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

The Gospel proclaims: God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (v5) so the 'he' in the following verse, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light" (V7) refers to God, it is God who is John's focus, the light of God of course is Holiness God's pure Holiness is pure light. If a brother or sister in Christ walk in the light as God is in light, they will have fellowship with one another. Throughout religious teaching there has been a certain amount of confusion concerning what this statement means. The following are the two most common theories regarding what the words, "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another mean, firstly, we have fellowship with God and God with us and secondly we have fellowship with others who have faith in Christ. There is no need to debate or enter into a lengthy study to prove which of these two thoughts John had in mind since both statements are true and both can apply. The Holiness of God; not only embraces all the fruits of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, mercy, grace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, forgiveness and justice in absolute perfection, but also has an absolute lack of any form of malice, resentment, bitterness and such like things. To sum God's Holiness up in three words it would be pure perfect love.

Walking in the light therefore includes the following three things, living our lives in the Spirit, meaning in kindness, grace, mercy, compassion and forgiveness etc.), wholly embracing Christ and the Gospel and fully enjoying the joy of our faith and our eternal hope. Walking in the light is walking in the same kind of light that God dwells in which is Holiness though the measure of light which we may have is clearly not the same in degree that God dwells in, nevertheless it is of the same kind. The word 'as' in the following verse, "Walk in the light, 'as' he is in the light" does not denote equality, but likeness (i.e., as he is in the light). This is why the true character of a brother and sister in Christ should reflect God's character of Holiness.

The Gospel proclaims: the presence of God brings the consciousness of sin in our fallen and corrupted nature and of the outward sins, in our life. The blood of Christ is the divine provision for cleansing both. This means to walk in the light also means to live by faith in fellowship with the Father and the Son. Whereas sin interrupts our fellowship, confession restores it and immediate confession keeps the fellowship unbroken. All who walk near to God, as a reflection of his light and his Holiness, are fully aware that even on their best days of duties and service they are mixed with sin. God by providing his own beloved Son as a sufficient and effectual sacrifice for sin needed in all ages has shown that he is not only fully aware of the sinfulness of the world, but also by requiring believers to continually confess their sins and to apply by faith the blood of Christ to them has shown that he is also fully aware of the sinfulness of those in Christ. Every brother and sister in Christ should always be humble and willing to acknowledge honestly even the worst of their sin before God and confess them to the full extent relying wholly on His mercy, His Grace and His truth and being fully assured that by their faith in Christ they are counted righteousness and by God's grace given a free pardon, full forgiveness and free deliverance from sin because of the sacrificial blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel proclaims: the blood of Jesus God's Son cleanses us from all sin." This glorious statement can mean two things, firstly, it is through Christ's blood that all past, present and future sin is forgiven and secondly, Christ's blood will ultimately purify us from all transgression, and make us perfectly holy when the Lord returns. The general meaning is plain, that in regard to any and every sin of which we may be conscious, there is efficacy in Christ's blood to remove it, and to make us wholly pure. There is no stain made by sin so deep that the blood of Christ cannot entirely cleanse the mind and heart. God has made provision for cleansing the mind and heart of every brother and sister in Christ from sin so that by faith they can share in his light and his holiness. No system of religion intended for mankind could be adapted to our human fallen condition that did not contain this provision since not even the world's most skilful surgeon can with his scalpel cut sin out of our nature; it is engrained into

every cell of our body and like a cancerous virus infects our thoughts, motives and passions. If Christ blood did not cleanse from all sin past, present and future not one of us could fellowship with God or enter with boldness into his presence. Of course, this entry is made available in the same manner as our entry was into the Kingdom of God and the family of Christ, (i.e., through faith in Christ, humble confession of our sin and heartfelt repentance). Whoever comes to God through these will receive a welcome through Christ and into the Most Holy Place of God.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Because of faith, God's word and the fact He cannot lie every faithful brother and sister in Christ can have full confidence that they will be counted righteous despite the sinful dysfunction and aberrations that dwell within their fallen corrupted body. It is because of this righteousness that comes by faith that they should have the assurance that when Christ returns, he will meet them with joy. Here is the glory wonder and beauty of Christ he is not a partial Saviour, but saves and cleanses from all sin to the uttermost, if he did not we would all be rejected from entering into his eternal Kingdom at the judgment seat of Christ.
- There is a pollution within human nature, which is original, natural, universal, and internal, and is such that nothing can cleanse it, but the blood of Christ; not ceremonial rites, sacrifices, moral duties, evangelical performances or the practice of religious ordinances, none of these have any power to cleanse from sin or purge the conscience and cleanse the mind and the heart. The faith of those who dwell in the Most Holy Place is such that they know that as fast as the corruption of nature rises or sins appear the blood of Christ cleanses them as a rubber removes a mistake on paper. They know that the cleansing power of Christ's blood reaches to all the following sins, original and actual, secret and open sins; sins of heart, of our thoughts, of our mouths and of our lives; sins of omission and sins against God's statutes and commands; greater or lesser sins, committed against light and knowledge, grace and mercy and sins against the law, the Gospel and the Holy Spirit.

Those who dwell in the Most Holy Place (i.e., the presence of God) know that the scape-goat for sin was the, foreshadow of Christ and his shed blood. The blood of Christ has been always cleansing from sin even before it was actually shed. The book of Revelations states; "The Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). This means in the eternal mind of God the blood shed has the same power and effectiveness now as when first shed and will have to the return of Christ. There is no stain made by sin so deep that the blood of Christ cannot entirely cleanse it from the mind and the heart.

NOTE: the blood of Christ does not stop cleansing us at salvation, but continues to cleanse us, (i.e., it continues to keep clean what it has made clean) and will continue to cleanse us until Christ returns, nevertheless it should always be remembered that it requires the same faith to preserve our righteous standing before God as the faith needed to enter the Kingdom of God. The faith required to enter Christ's family is not a different faith to the faith needed to remain in the Lord's Kingdom. The faith we entered Christ's household with is the same faith that will carry us through to his return. Faith in Christ not only justifies and cleanses the sinner, but continues to justify and cleanse those who are redeemed in the same way and by the same means.

- **1 John 1:8-10:** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

The Gospel proclaims: every earthly baby born is born as a child of Adam the earthly father of all mankind and therefore we are all born in a fallen and corrupted body with sinful dysfunctions and aberrations which

limit and hinder us all whether Christian or not from attaining to the perfect perfection the law demands and the pure Holiness of God. If anyone of us could attain to this glorious standard of Holiness and live a life free of sin Christ died for no purpose. This is why John says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (v8) and the reason he states, "The truth is not in us if we say we have no sin" because if the truth was in us we would clearly see our fallenness not only in our outward behaviour, but also within our minds, our thoughts, our imaginations and our hearts before God's Holiness and never for a moment think we were without sin. All of us have within our human nature a natural focus on self and inherited indwelling pride, ego, anger, jealousy, lustful thoughts, envy and such like things which prevent us from being sinless. Christ did not lay his life down for us because we could attain to God's Holiness and a sin free life, but because we couldn't. This is why John says, "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in" (v10).

The Gospel proclaims: if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (v9), confess; in this context carries the idea of acknowledging what is secret in the heart and that it won't be secret anymore. The idea is that of perceiving, recognizing and acknowledging our sin. This verse carries the following two ideas:

1. We are to acknowledge our sin before God, this does not only mean when we sin, but realizing before the law and God's Holiness we are always sinners no matter how good we may appear before mankind, we are always in a state that falls far short of God's Glory and His Holiness and therefore we are not only always in a state that desperately needs God's grace and God's forgiveness but also always in a state that is in need of a Saviour who can rescue us from our fallenness. There is no moment in our lives that we do not need saving from our sin and our fallenness and in need of Christ's righteousness.
2. The words, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (v9) also carry the idea of confessing our faults to our brothers and sisters in Christ, but this does not mean we are to confess to everyone who belongs to the Lord's family, but to those who we have trusting relationships with and especially to those who we have offended.

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John in the next chapter says, "My little children if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). All Christians are called to live a life of doing-good, treating people whether in Christ or outside of God's Kingdom with decency and respect and in a manner that brings honour to God and a good testimony to Christ and the Christian faith, but should they fall short they have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous meaning they have a supporter and a loving and compassionate activist campaigning for them. Confessing our sins is not just about confessing individual wrongdoing, but living every moment before God with our minds and hearts always having an underlying awareness that even in our good moments we still fall far short of God's Holiness and therefore have an ongoing permanent mindful consciousness that we are always in faith and always in prayer in thought having a conscious awareness that sin dwells within and confessing and acknowledging it when it breaks out and manifest in wrongdoing. When God looks upon us, He does not see our torn, ripped, patched and ragged clothing, but, sees us dressed in the royal robes of Christ's righteousness and it is by these royal robes of Christ's without blemish that God counts us worthy of eternal salvation.

1 JOHN 4

- **1 John 4:2-3:** By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus came in the flesh. The word spirit in the following verse, "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and every spirit that denies this truth" refers to the human spirit of true believers and the human spirit of antichrists and false teachers. Those who are of the Spirit of God; believe that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (1 John 4:2) meaning he came into the world through the birth of a woman and was born a human man. Jesus is not God nor did he pre-exist with God from the foundations of the world as a Spirit Son and then become a foetus in the womb of Mary as many believe. Certainly, Jesus was in the eternal mind of God from the beginning in that he was the central focus of God's eternal plan of salvation for mankind. Christ was with God from the beginning in the same way as a woman who begins to plan having a baby sees the baby in her mind long before it is even conceived. The baby is not only very real in the mother's mind long before the baby is born, but she will prepare a room and make plans for its arrival, its well-being and its future. It is in this same sense that Jesus was with God from the beginning; he was the central focus of God's eternal mind and of His eternal plans, purposes and promises for mankind's eternal salvation. Much like an architect who designs a majestic building fit for a royal family, the entire structure and all its beauty and glory is fully completed in his mind long before the builders are even on the site upon which the structure is to be built. This is why the prophets of the Old Testament were able to speak of the coming of Israel's Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world long before he appeared, because God by his Spirit imparted to their minds the eternal plan he had purposed in his eternal mind from the beginning and inspired them to impart this eternal plan to the people of Israel.

It is interesting to notice that there is not one verse in the entire Bible that states we must believe that Jesus is God to be saved whereas in contrast to this silence there are literally multitudes of Scriptures that clearly state, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Son of God will be saved," whereas there is not one verse that says, "whoever believes that Jesus is God will be saved." Surely if it was important to believe that Jesus was actually God, Christ would have told the apostles at least once in his discourses with them and in his messages of salvation, but all we find in the Scriptures is Jesus, the apostles and Paul proclaiming that people must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved. Even Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:3). For further information see the title: "Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity)" in Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The Gospel proclaims:

- Those who are not of the Spirit of God deny that Christ came into the world through a natural birth, this applies to two types of people, firstly, the Jews (but not all Jews since many received him) who never accepted that their promised Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God was Jesus. They said of Jesus, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" (John 6:42) these Jews believed Jesus was born of Mary by Joseph and certainly did not believe he was their promised Messiah the Christ. Added to this the following words, "We were not born of sexual immorality, we have one Father even God" (John 8:41) show that these Jews (mostly those in religious authority) are accusing Jesus of being born a bastard child (i.e., born out of marriage). Secondly to pagan faiths, the mystics and to the new age teachers of today, since many teach the coming of the Spirit of the Christ into the world, but deny that Christ was a real man who came into the world through the birth of a woman.
- Those who deny that Christ came through the birth of a woman and deny that he was a man have the spirit of the antichrist" (v3), this is why John says, "Which you heard was coming and now is in the world already." The spirit of the antichrist (i.e. that spirit that denies Christ was born of a woman) could not possibly come until the promise Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world was born

of a woman and appeared as a man. Only then could the antichrist spirit come which it did in great fury from the Jews against Christ for proclaiming to be the Messiah, the Christ and Saviour sent by his heavenly Father the God of Israel.

NOTICE: in (v3) John says "the antichrist" (singular) then in (v4-5) says "they are in the world" John uses the word antichrist singular to begin with because it is the same singular spirit in all antichrists that deny Jesus came in the flesh. Since there has been much confusion over the word antichrist it might be helpful for some to pause here for a moment and consider the following, the word antichrists only occur in John's letters and he is the only biblical writer who uses the singular word antichrist. No other New Testament writer uses this term so the surest method of discovering what the word antichrist means is not to look in dictionaries or at the reasoning's of religious leaders, but explore the four other verses in which John uses the word antichrist.

John wrote:

- Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that *antichrist* is coming, so now many *antichrists* have come. Therefore, we know that it is the last hour (1 John 2:18).
- Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the *antichrist*, he who denies the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22).
- Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the *antichrist* which you heard was coming and now is in the world already (1 John 4:3).
- For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the *antichrist* (2 John 1:7).

From these verses we are told that because antichrists have appeared, we are in the last hour (i.e., the final age) and that there is still a particular antichrist to appear. We learn that the spirit of the antichrist not only denies the Father and the Son, but also denies Jesus is the Christ and that from the beginning (primarily the beginning of the New Covenant of grace those in Christ have been warned that antichrists will arise and that whoever denies Jesus came from God is an antichrist which also means that anyone who denies Jesus was born of a woman are deceivers and antichrists.

NOTICE: John does not use the word antichrist in the sense of one who set themselves up as rival claim to Christ, or who came in the place of Christ, but in the sense of those who were opposed to him by denying essential doctrines in regard to his birth, nature and his return in majestic glory. Jesus said, "Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray (Matt. 24:11) and that "False Christ's and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect see, I have told you beforehand (Matt. 24:24-25). John's states that the spirit and characteristic of an antichrist is denying the truth that Jesus is the Christ and came by the birth of a woman and denying that God is his heavenly Father.

John earlier wrote, "No one who denies the Son has the Father" (1 John 2:23) clearly showing that denying Christ automatically means denying the Father, this is because by denying Jesus we are denying God of his only begotten Son, it's the same as saying, "God I'll believe in you, but not your most beloved Son." What natural earthly father would accept the love of a friend who refuses to acknowledge his children? It is a most repugnant love indeed and certainly I have never met an earthy father who loves his children accepting the friendship of someone who does not acknowledge his children exist. The term antichrist can apply to a great apostasy under one head or to an individual or a succession of individuals.

Throughout history it has been claimed that the antichrist was: -

- The Emperor Domitian, the Gnostics and the Nicolaitans.
- The Nazareans, the Cerinthians or the Romish pontiffs, etc., etc.

But it is foolish to speculate since any person, doctrine, system of religion, polity, etc., which is opposed to Christ, and to the spirit and spread of his message of salvation is an antichrist. Everyone who opposes the spirit of the Gospel and every teacher and writer, who endeavours to lower the Gospel standard to the spirit and taste of the world, is a genuine antichrist no-matter where or among whom they are found. The heresies which sprang up in the days of John were the antichrist of that time. As there has been a succession of oppositions to Christianity in its spirit and spread through every age since its spread throughout the world, so there has been a succession of antichrists. The answer to the question, "Who is the antichrist?" Can be made even simpler; every individual person, group, community, government who deliberately opposes Christ's reign in the world and in others is an enemy of Christ and therefore can be given the title antichrist. John tells us that "Antichrists have gone out from among the Christian church (1 John 2:19). At the time of John it most likely refers to the Jews (though not limited to them) who at some level accepted Christ, but then turned back to Moses law, ceremonial rites and religious Jewish customs and traditions to earn righteousness rather than trust in grace and then began enticing other believers in the church at Jerusalem and in the land of Judea to do the same.

When people confessing to believe in Christ turn from the Good News of the Gospel of grace it shows that they were not inwardly transformed as true brothers and sisters in Christ and that they had not surrendered their lives to the love of Christ or made him the King of their heart and mind. Had they done so they could not turn against the LORD with such hostility and aggression, it shows they were hypocrites and pretenders of their faith since had they been rooted in the heart by Christ's love and God's grace, they would not have turned antichrists.

- **1 John 4:7-8:** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

The Gospel proclaims:

- The Spirit of God is love this means anything that is contrary to love is contrary to the will and Spirit of God and anything done in love is not only pleasing to God, but also in perfect harmony with the Spirit of God. Jesus said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16) and said, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31). James in his letter wrote, "If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing well (James 2:8). These verses shine a brilliant spotlight on the truth that God's love should not only be shown to our brothers and sisters in Christ, but also toward those who do not yet know God's love and that whoever walks in love and speaks from love will radiate the Spirit of God and of Christ to everyone they come in contact with.
- Anyone who does not love does not know God. We cannot know that a person has the indwelling Spirit of God, by gifted oratory and speech making, by tremendous Scriptural knowledge, by special gifts or exceptional talents and such like things. This is because even antichrists and false teachers can have these qualities, the only true way to know if someone has God's Spirit dwelling within is by the love they show toward others. This does not mean we are always going to feel emotional love toward everyone, but it does mean that we should show compassion, kindness, grace forgiveness toward others and help when we are able.
- Gossiping, slandering, degrading, demeaning and harbouring resentments, anger and any form of hatred and malice or considering others to be lessor and such like things are not acts of love and

therefore not from the Spirit of God, this is the way we can tell if we have God's Spirit dwelling in us; simply measure what we do and say against love.

NOTE: not one of us has the perfect love of God, our love is tainted by self, ego, pride jealousy, envy, and such like things, but if we desire to grow spiritually, we must grow in love. Paul when speaking to the Corinthian brothers and sisters said, "He could not address them as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ and therefore fed them with milk, not solid food because they were still of the flesh, because there was jealousy and strife among them since they were behaving only in a merely human way (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

Milk in this context is not doctrine, but putting away all attitudes that are contrary to love. It is about growing up in the fruits of the Spirit (i.e., compassion, kindness, mercy, grace and forgiving one another etc.). Milk is a perfect picture of those who lack love since the opposite spirit to love is, "me first" and the screams and cries of all babies until they get the milk, they crave clearly show that they have a "me first" attitude. If they never grow out of this attitude as they grow in age and height, they remain immature humans as we remain infants in Christ if we do not grow past behaving in a human manner and needing to be feed on milk.

- **1 John 4:9-10:** In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

The Gospel proclaims:

- The love of God was made manifest among us. Sadly, some religious teachers use this statement to support the mistaken theory that Jesus is God. This is a perfect example of lifting a verse out of context and forcing it to fit a preconceived mindset. When the words of John are put into the context of what John is saying it is clear that God's love was made manifest to us all through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus perfectly manifest God's word, God's character God's nature, God's power and God's love in the same manner as a twin brother manifest wherever he goes the character and nature of his brother. This is what Paul means when he wrote, "Christ is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4) Jesus is not God, but he is certainly the perfect mirror image of God his heavenly Father in every manner. For further information see the notes following (v2-3) (above).
- The glory, majesty and wonder of God's love. God loved us long before we loved him, John states, "God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him" (v9) whoever places their trust and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness that leads to eternal life is crowned and clothed in the royal robes of Christ's righteousness. Everyone who belongs to the family of Christ is made righteous not because they are, but because they have faith in God's beloved Son and are therefore clothed in his eternal garments of righteousness. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Jesus not only laid down his life for us while we were sinners, but also calls us his friends. This is the heart of the Christian faith God gave his Son for us and His Son willing laid down his life not for himself, but that we might have eternal life, can any greater love be manifested on earth? Many false prophets and teachers have gone out into the world with all sorts of spiritual messages and many of them offer some form of mental or spiritual benefit, but there are none that proclaim such great love toward sinners or that have the power to save to eternal life.
- **1 John 4:11-15:** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

The Gospel proclaims: God loves those in the family of Christ with an unconditional love they should love one another with the same love. Here is a key to having God's Spirit dwell in us; simply love each other. When we show compassion, kindness, grace, forgiveness and help we can be certain of two things firstly, that God abides in us and secondly that God's love is being perfected in us. Here is the glory the splendour and wonder of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not only spiritual, eternal and reconciles a believer to the very heart of God, but is also very practical in that it calls us to love not only those in the family of Christ, but also those outside of it.

Sadly, instead of turning a brilliant floodlight on love certain religions throughout the history have turned the floodlight in the opposite direction so that instead of its light shining on love it has shone upon dogmatic and legalistic doctrines or the strict adherence to pompous ceremonial rites, religious customs and traditions. In pointing the light in this direction those sitting under their ministry have been robbed from the majestic beauty and glorious Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love and grace of God. Added to this sadness those who have turned the floodlight upon legalistic doctrines and pompous ceremonial rites and traditions have instilled in those who sat under their ministry and many of those outside of God's Kingdom a mindset that Christianity is all about going to a majestically built cathedral every week and adhering to religious rules, customs and traditions rather than about love (i.e. loving God and his Son, loving each other and loving our neighbour as ourselves).

The Gospel proclaims: loving our neighbour as ourselves means that we do not deliberately do harm to other humans. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself. The thing God hates the most is when we do harm to another person, physically, financially, sexually, verbally, mentally, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do-good to others. It is interesting to notice that the major crime that God points out in Noah's time and one of the main reasons for the flood was because of all the violence in the land.

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Micah says, "What the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God" (Micah 6:5-10). Isaiah tells us, "The LORD loves justice and hates robbery and wrong doing" (Isaiah 61:8) and Jeremiah says, "Those who know God practice steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights" (Jer. 9:24). The great prophets Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah clearly show us that the people the LORD loves are not only those who acknowledge God, but who also uphold justice, do not lie, deceive or make promises they do not intend to keep, but speak the truth, do what is right, show respect and give help to others when able and make choices that lead to peace. These are the things the LORD delights in and that bring His favour.

The constant theme throughout Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount is doing what is right before God by seeking the way of peace in all situations. Jesus calls Christians to treat people fairly and with respect, dignity, decency grace compassion, kindness, mercy and to be quick to forgive. This means living a life that honours God and the Lord Jesus Christ is about doing all we can do to protect people from harm and being dominated by the thought, "What action can I take or do that will help and encourage this person." It is all about doing right to others. This is the reason the message Jesus spoke on the mountain is referred to as, "The Famous Sermon" because the principals if followed not only by Christians but all humanity are the only way to peace (Matt 5). A wicked person is primarily one who deliberately and consciously denies the existence of God and does harm to other humans. Once again, when we endeavour to fulfil the royal law of love we can be certain of two things, firstly that God abides in us and secondly that God's love is being perfected in us.

For further information on Jesus Famous Sermon see:

- Matthew 5 in Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The Gospel shines a brilliant spotlight on the following three glorious truths:

1. We abide in God and God abides in us,
2. We can know we abide in God and God in us, because God has given us His Spirit.
3. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God and they dwell in God. God has given us of His Spirit means God has given us His love. It is by love that we abide in God and it is by love that God abides in us.

John is giving us tremendous insight into God. This is the Almighty, Most Holy God who is not only the creator of the entire universe we live in and under, but also the source of all life, and for us to have Him abiding in our hearts all we have to learn to do is love and keep increasing and growing in love.

The Gospel proclaims: The Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world (v14). Sadly, some Bible teachers use this verse to support the claim that Jesus is God. They mistakenly reason that since God the Father and Jesus are both referred to in Scripture as the Saviour they must be the same person. The following will show the foolishness of such reasoning. God the Father is the author of salvation, because it was His foreordained plan before time began to send His Son as the ultimate sacrifice for our sin. Christ became the way to salvation, because it is only through faith in the Son of God that believers are made right with the Father, so in this sense Jesus is the Saviour of the world, because there is no other way a person can stand righteous and saved before God the Father. Before the foundations of the world began God planned and purposed in his eternal mind mankind's salvation and Christ fulfilled God's eternal plan. Without Christ God's eternal plan would be left bankrupt, but without God's eternal plan Christ would not have come into being therefore both God the Father and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ can both be given the title the Saviour without having to be the same person.

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The Gospel proclaims: whoever confesses Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him. Notice John does not say, "Whoever believes Jesus is God, God abides in him," yet a great majority of Christianity today believe that Jesus is God, how can these majestic and glorious words of John "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him" (v15) be harmonized with such a mistaken theory? To make this theory that Jesus is God even more confusing are the following words of John, "No one has ever seen God" (v12) this statement must surely make one wonder how a certain group of Christians can not only aggressively claim that Jesus is God, but also condemn those Christians who claim Jesus is God's beloved Son and not God the Father, since it is clear a generation not only saw Jesus they touched him and ate with him, yet John says "No-one has seen God."

Words of comfort and encouragement: since the teaching that Jesus is God has such a strong hold on much of traditional Christianity the following will encourage and comfort faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who maybe in some doubt and unsure of what to believe concerning the Father and the Son. The Bible very clearly shows that even if Jesus was God no one has to know this to be saved to eternal life since there is not one verse in the entire Bible that states, "We must believe that Jesus is God to be saved" nor is there one verse from Genesis to Revelations that says, "Whoever believes that Jesus is God the Son will be saved." In total contrast to this silence there are literally multitudes of Scriptures throughout the pages of the New Testament that very clearly proclaim, "We must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved," and that say, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Son of God will be saved."

Surely if it was important to believe that Jesus was actually God to be saved to eternal life Jesus, the apostles and Paul would have told us at least once in all their teaching concerning salvation, but all we hear from Paul, the apostles and Jesus himself is them saying that we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved to eternal life. Jesus himself said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

For further information see the title: "Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity)" in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU.

- **1 John 4:16-18:** So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷ By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

The Gospel proclaims:

- God's love is toward those who belong to the family of Christ, but we must believe this or we will not experience such great unconditional and heavenly love. Whoever belongs to the family of Christ and does not experience God's love in their heart should know that it is not because God does not love them, but because they don't believe it. God's love is always over-flowing as a river toward those who love His Son, it is only disbelief that dams this river of God's glory flowing into the heart of those who belong to the one who willingly laid his life down for them. Every faithful brother and sister in Christ should arrive at a place of heartfelt assurance and confidence in their faith that God loves them. God's love for them is so great that He gave his only Son so that they should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). What more can the heavenly Father do to show how much He loves those who love His Son? But! Here is the breathtaking majesty of God's love it is not limited to Christians, but longs to dwell in the hearts of those who don't yet know God's forgiveness and the grace He so abundantly lavishes on those who come to Him.
- According to God's riches and glory every family member of Christ should comprehend the breadth, the length, the height and the depth of God's love and grace so that they would know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge and be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephes. 3:14-19). The Gospel shines a brilliant floodlight upon the truth that to be filled with all the fullness of God means to be filled; with love. To magnify this glorious truth Paul wrote, "If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2). This is the heart of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ's message concerning behaviour and shows that if love is lacking in faith so too is God.
- There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear and by this love is perfected" (v17). This could be stated, "By this God is perfected in us" since God is love and love is God. When we understand and fully comprehend with our hearts and minds that God is love and also show the same love toward others especially our brothers and sisters in Christ then the love of God is being perfected in us.

There is no fear in perfect love means two things, firstly, there is no law against love whatever is done in love harmonizes with God's will and therefore whoever has lived their life with love toward others need have no-fear at the judgment seat of Christ since whatever is done in love stores up treasure in heaven not judgment. Secondly, only those who act outside of love need fear judgment, (i.e. those who use others for their own gain (especially religious leaders) those who deliberately hurt or harm others physically, financially, verbally, emotionally or spiritually should fear judgment since deliberately hurting and harming others are clearly not acts of love.

The Gospel proclaims: those in the Kingdom of Christ who have fear have not been perfected in love (v18). This means that they have not learned to live in love and that they are either still focused on self, ego, pride and greed and such like things or they harbour hatred, bitterness and resentment in their hearts toward others and in this manner they are grossly imperfect in love and therefore have every reason to fear judgment. This is because we will all be judged not by how perfectly we did or didn't adhere to ceremonial rites, holy days, religious customs and traditions etc., or even against religious intellectual knowledge, but against the law of love. John to highlight this truth wrote; "Whoever keeps love in their heart abide in God and God abides in them." Evidence of love in the heart is outwardly manifested by good-deeds and kind and compassionate actions toward others. This means that for any brother or sister in Christ to escape any fear toward judgment we should endeavour to let love be the supreme king of our heart, mind, thoughts, speech and actions. Loving others means we speak kindly of them, we encourage them, we do-good toward them and treat them with respect. It means we are not only prepared to be patient with them but also that we do not envy the success of others, but rather rejoice with them in it and that we do not arrogantly put our own interest before others by insisting on our own way, but honestly consider with an open heart their desire, goals and dreams.

The Gospel proclaims: the royal and eternal majesty of love which is expressed in the following words of Paul, "At the moment faith, hope, and love remain, but the greatest of these three is love (1 Cor. 13:4-7) (1 Cor. 13:13). The glory of love is not only that it is eternal, but that against it there is no law, judgment or punishment, because if we live by love we can only bring life and good to others. The entire heart of the Gospel message concerning behaviour is love in that those who do-good to others and show love toward their brothers and sisters in Christ need have no fear on the Day of Judgment, because there is no law against love neither is there any punishment for those who walk in love. Paul wrote, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).

- **1 John 4:19-21:** We love because he first loved us.²⁰ If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.²¹ And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

The Gospel proclaims: we love because God first loved us." Here is the glory the majesty the wonder the splendour of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, "We love because he first loved us" (v19). Can there be any more glorious and comforting words than these? Ponder for a moment: God loved you long before you loved him, so how much more will He now love you, now that you love Him. Many Christians as they grow spiritually in God's love begin to perceive the enormity of sin dwelling within and the ugliness dwelling in the utter most depth of their own heart, mind and thoughts and upon perceiving this ugliness dwelling within begin to feel that God cannot possibly love them, but this ugliness has nothing to do with God's love toward us.

Paul said, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). These words of Paul shine a brilliant spotlight on the truth God not only accepts us with a loving heart full of grace and mercy, but Christ his beloved Son willing laid down his life for us even though he and his heavenly Father clearly understood all our ugly sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that dwell within long before we came to the heavenly Father in love through our faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Perceiving the ugliness and depth of indwelling sin (i.e., selfishness, pride, ego, lustful thoughts, jealousies, envy and such like things) is not only a sign of spiritual growth, but also a sign that we are spiritually moving toward God, since the further we enter into His pure and Holy light the clearer we will see the ugliness that we have been saved from. These verses shine a glorious spotlight on the following truths:

- Mature inward faith will be outwardly evidence by behaviour of love.
- The dominant spirit of those who have been born again should be love.
- Whoever does not love those in the family of Christ, do not know God.
- God is manifested in the lives of Christians by works, deeds and acts of love.
- God abides in brothers and sisters in Christ who love one another.

Paul said of himself, "If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2). From these words of Paul and of John it is clear that there is one thing all Christians can do that will guarantee they need have no fear of Judgment and that one thing is to show love toward others. This will guarantee freedom from any form of loss or shame at judgment for the simple reason God is love therefore whatever is done in love gloriously and majestically harmonizes with God, His will, His commands and His Spirit.

1 JOHN 5

- **1 John 5:1-3:** Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

The Gospel proclaims: that everyone who believes Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. Notice, Gospel does not say, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is God has been born of God" (v1) yet a great majority of Christianity today believe that Jesus is God, how can these majestic and glorious words of John, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God" be harmonized with such a mistaken theory? It is interesting to notice that there is not one verse in the entire Bible that states we MUST believe that Jesus is God to be saved whereas in contrast to this silence there are literally multitudes of Scriptures that clearly state, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Son of God will be saved," whereas there is not one verse that says, "whoever believes that Jesus is God will be saved." Surely if it was important to believe that Jesus was actually God, Christ would have told the apostles at least once in his discourses with them and in his messages of salvation, but all we find in the Scriptures is Jesus and the apostles proclaiming that people must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved. Even Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:3). For further information see the title: "Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity)" in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The Gospel proclaims: the heartfelt love toward God of those who have been born of God is outwardly manifested by obeying His commandments and by their love toward those who belong to His family. God's commandments regarding mankind are summed up in the words, "Love your neighbour as yourself." Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and strength and 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:30-31). Paul said the whole law is fulfilled in the words, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Gal 5:14) and James wrote, "If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing well (James 2:8). To love your neighbour as yourself means that we do not deliberately do harm to other humans. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself. The thing God hates the most is when we do

harm to another person, physically, financially, sexually, verbally, mentally, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do-good to others. It is interesting to notice that the major crime that God points out in Noah's time and one of the main reasons for the flood was because of all the violence in the land.

The Gospel proclaims: God's commandments are not burdensome this is because they are commandments to love in contrast to strictly adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions. Micah says, "What the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God" (Micah 6:5-10). Isaiah tells us, "The LORD loves justice and hates robbery and wrong doing" (Isaiah 61:8) and Jeremiah says, "Those who know God practise steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights" (Jer. 9:24). This is why John says "God's commandments are not burdensome" (v3), because they are not oppressive, grievous or difficult since they all stem from love. Keeping God's commandments manifests the love of God's dwelling in the heart of the brother or sister who is keeping them.

Jesus Famous Sermon on the Mount: the constant theme throughout Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount is doing what is right before God by seeking the way of peace in all situations. Jesus calls Christians to treat people fairly and with respect, dignity, decency grace compassion, kindness, mercy and to be quick to forgive. This means living a life that honours God and the Lord Jesus Christ is about doing all we can do to protect people from harm and being dominated by the thought, "What action can I take or do that will help and encourage this person." It is all about doing right to others. This is the reason the message Jesus spoke on the mountain is referred to as, "The Famous Sermon" because the principals if followed not only by Christians but all humanity are the only way to peace (Matt 5). A wicked person is primarily one who deliberately and consciously denies the existence of God and does harm to other humans. When we endeavour to fulfil the royal law of love we can be certain God abides in us and God's love is being perfected in us (1 John 4:16-17). For further information on Jesus Famous Sermon see: Matthew 5 in Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

- **1 John 5:4-5:** For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

The Gospel proclaims: everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. Overcoming the world does not mean overcoming everything in it or overcoming every sin and temptation nor does it mean we become perfect in righteousness. Christ did not lay down his life for us because we could conquer these things and attain a perfect state of sinlessness and righteousness, but because we couldn't. If we were able to attain to the perfect demands of the Law or attain to a state of sinlessness there would be no-need for Christ to have been crucified; his brutal, cruel and bloody death would have been pointless. This is why the Gospel proclaims; "It is by our faith we overcome the world meaning it is by God's grace in Christ and Christ's righteousness that is imputed to us that we overcome the world in contrast to works of self-effort and adhering to ceremonial rites or the keeping of religious customs and traditions to attain to righteousness that leads to eternal life. The victory the Gospel talks about is our salvation it is in our salvation that we have the victory over the world, because in Christian salvation we are saved by grace that comes by faith in Jesus Christ. This is the glory of our faith and the wonder and splendour of the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel proclaims: nothing in this world and no-one in the world have any power to destroy or rob the glorious eternal destination from those who have been born of God. Paul wrote, "If God is for us, who has any power to condemn us, if God who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with Christ graciously give us all things pertaining to eternal life? Christ Jesus is the one who died and was

raised to the right hand of God and intercedes for us so how can anyone of this world condemn God's elect to eternal death when it is God who justifies and not man (Rom. 8:31-34) Added to this majestic glory Paul said, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:35-39).

These glorious words of Paul shine a brilliant spotlight on the truth that the only power to separate us from the love of God and the love of Christ lies within ourselves we are the only ones who have the power to separate ourselves from the love of the heavenly Father and the love Lord Jesus Christ and even then we have to make a mindful conscious deliberate decision to turn against Christ and forsake him.

- **1 John 5:6-8:** This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus Christ came by water and by blood, the expression, came by water refers to Jesus water baptism, the phrase came by blood refers to Jesus death and resurrection and the words, the Spirit is the one who testifies refers to God speaking from heaven at Jesus water baptism and the Mount of Transfiguration saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17) (Matt. 17:5) (Mark 9:7) (Luke 9:35).

Peter when speaking of this voice they heard on the Mount of Jesus Transfiguration wrote, when Jesus received honour and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (2 Peter 1:17). These three agree means Jesus water baptism, his death and resurrection and the Majestic Glory from heaven declaring him to be the Son of God all agree that Jesus is who he claimed to be (i.e., the Son of God and Saviour of the world).

- **1 John 5:11-12:** And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life (eternal); whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

The Gospel proclaims:

- The following three truths, firstly, in God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ is eternal life, secondly, whoever by faith is in Christ has eternal life and thirdly, whoever does not have the Son of God does not have eternal life. Believing in God the Father alone is not enough to receive eternal life a person must believe in both the Father and the Son. Those who believe in God and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ have eternal life. This is the glorious message of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the wonder of God's eternal plan of salvation; eternal life is in God's Son and whoever has God's Son has eternal life.
- Every faithful brother and sister in Christ should be confident that they have eternal life not by their own self-effort, but by faith. No-one can be saved to eternal life by self-effort, works or by adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions, we all must believe in the Father and the Son to be saved to eternal life. Trusting in self-effort and religious works to be saved is one of the greatest dangers for all Christians. Going to a local church every Sunday, faithfully serving God, singing in a church choir, teaching Sunday school, preaching the word of God, being the head oversight of a global religious organisation and such like things though all good in themselves have absolutely no power to save anyone to eternal life.

Yet many worldwide consciously or unconsciously trust in these things, but there is only one path to eternal life and it is not by self-effort, works of the law or by adhering to ceremonial rites and religious works but by faith this is the message the Gospel proclaims, it shines a glorious spotlight on the eternal truth to be born again and saved to eternal life comes solely by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God and Saviour of the world.

NOTE: believing in the Son of God supposes the following truths, Jesus is God's Son and came in the flesh (meaning he was born of a woman) and he died and rose again. Jesus not only spoke the words of truth, but eternal life is in him. The teachings of the apostles are the messages of God and those who are born again love those in Christ's family and desire from the heart to live a lifestyle that honours God (howbeit no-one does this perfectly since we are all flawed with sin) (i.e., self, ego, pride, lustful thoughts, jealousies, greed, coveting and such like things) and that Christ will return in glory to gather the faithful to himself.

- **1 John 5:14-15:** And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

The Gospel proclaims: if we ask anything according to God's will He hears us. Whoever has been in the Christian faith for some-time soon learns that we do not receive everything that we ask for, so what did John have in mind when he wrote these words? To discover the answer, it helps to consider the following, Jesus when he was talking to his disciples about asking for things in prayer said, "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (John 14:13). The focus of John throughout this chapter has been set on, being born again; loving God; loving brothers and sisters in Christ; overcoming the world; believing Jesus is the Son of God and being confident whoever has the Son has eternal life. John; immediately after saying, "Whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him" (V15)? Then says, "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life (v16) and then John spends the rest of the chapter explaining what this statement means. There is no-doubt God does at certain times grant us our requests for certain comforts of this world and personal and heartfelt prayers of all kinds, but the primary focus of what John is saying in the context of this chapter is about being motivated to ask for things that would glorify his heavenly Father, concern salvation and eternal life and that aid and help our brothers and sisters in their faith. This means that the things that are according to God's will and that we should pray for are: -

- Praying for wisdom in counselling an erring brother or sister.
- Praying for all things in accordance with what God has promised.
- Praying for repentance for those who do not know the love of Christ.
- Praying that the faith of brothers and sisters in Christ would be enriched.
- Praying that the Lord would pardon and recover a fallen brother or sister.
- Praying for the victory of those being tempted.
- Praying for comfort and strength for ourselves and those who are suffering troubles, hardships and sorrows.
- Praying that those lost may be enlightened, converted, and saved.
- Praying that the sins of the backsliding may be pardoned and that they would be restored into Christ's fellowship.
- Praying for God's mercy, grace and love to be deepened in ourselves and those who belong to Christ's family.

- Praying that the faith of those in the Kingdom of God would be sincere.
- Praying for the forgiveness of sins and comfort in trial.
- Praying for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to magnify the glory of God's word to our minds and the love of God to our hearts and to others in the family of Christ.
- Praying for the needful supply of our needs and the needs of others.
- Praying for grace that we may do our duty and for God to direct and guide us with wisdom.
- Praying for deliverance from the evils which tempt us and others.
- Praying for boldness, wisdom and grace to testify of our faith and spread the Good News of the Gospel in the world.
- Praying that we and others will be kept in God's mercy and grace until Christ returns.

The Gospel proclaims: though there are sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that war against spiritual life in the heart and mind of every brother and sister of the Lord, God invites them to come to him in faith being confident that they are crowned and clothed in the royal robes of Christ's righteousness and covered in God's boundless grace. No matter what the circumstances all who are in Christ are invited into the Most Holy Place of God with their prayer and their requests and should not allow the sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that war within separate them from the love and grace of God that is in Christ Jesus. Our prayers must always be offered in submission to the will of God, meaning our minds and hearts are always ready to accept whatever the answer maybe. In some things they maybe speedily answered in the manner that we have desired, while in others though they have been heard in heaven what we have prayed for has not come to pass. Here is a test of true Christian faith (i.e., is our will surrendered to God's will in that we trust in His goodness and that in His divine mind God has His good reasons and eternal purposes for withholding our petition or do we turn bitter in resentment and forsake our faith as some do?). Prayer is the language of dependence to God and surrender to His will; there is neither peace of mind, union with God or eternal life where the mind and heart is without faith and trust in His love, His grace and His eternal will.

The Gospel proclaims: if we ask any thing according to God's will which he has promised in his word (the revelation of his will) concerning the things which pertain to eternal salvation we can have full confidence and assurance that our prayers will be heard in heaven and that all that God has promised concerning our security in Christ, our forgiveness of sin, our righteousness, our eternal future will be granted. Prayer is union with God whoever is born of God and filled with the love of God speaks this language of prayer. They call God "Abba, Father" in the true spirit of dependence upon Him and surrender to His will.

- **1 John 5:18:** We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

The Gospel proclaims: judgment to eternal life and eternal death is already set, those who accept God's most beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved to eternal life, while those who deny Christ are already condemned to death.

- **1 John 5:19:** We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

The Gospel proclaims: The whole world lies in the power of the evil one. In this context the title, the evil one embraces everything that would not only hinder those in the world coming to know the love and grace of God,

but also hinder a brother or sisters' faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. At the time of John, it would most likely refer to the Jewish chief Priests, the Pharisees and scribes and the Romans who aggressively set about to destroy the Christian faith. Today the title, the evil one would include religious teachers who lead people away from Christ and into ungodly behaviour; whoever is aggressively against Christ and his teachings; those who entice brothers and sisters in Christ to indulge in the sinful temptations of the world and its luxuries and pleasures and any person that acts against God, against His will and against the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **1 John 5:20:** And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

The Gospel proclaims: The Son of God the Lord Jesus Christ has come into the whole world which lies in sin to give us understanding of the true God and eternal life. The focus of these verses is that Jesus the Son of God came so that believers may know God the Father who is the one true God. Knowing God, the Father is the focus of these verses. John is saying that Jesus came so that those who believe in him would know the true God and have eternal life. To magnify this majestic and glorious truth John repeats his statement, "God the Father is the true God and eternal life." Verse twenty could read; "We know that the Son OF God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know God the Father who is true and we are in God the Father who is true, and in his Son Jesus Christ. God the Father is the true God and eternal life.

NOTE: John is not teaching (as many believe) that Jesus is God rather John is saying that by being in the Lord Jesus Christ God's Son believers are in the Father who is the true GOD and eternal life. The whole purpose of God the Father sending His Son was so that whoever believed in Christ would by faith and God's grace be united in love with God. It is only through faith in God's Son that believers are able to stand before God the Father and receive His divine favour.

It should be highlighted that John, in verse twenty shows that the theme of these Scriptures is not that believers may know that Jesus is the true God, but that the Son of God the Lord Jesus Christ came so that believers through faith in him may know God the Father who is the true God. This is not only in total harmony with the entire teaching of the Bible, but also in harmony with the following words of the Lord Jesus Christ who said, "This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (John 17:3). Jesus with these words shines a brilliant floodlight on the truth that Jesus is not God, but as the entire Bible teaches from Genesis to Revelation the most beloved Son of God the promised Messiah, the Christ and Saviour of the world. The whole purpose of God the Father sending His Son was that we once again would have a right standing before the immortal invisible Almighty Holy God the creator of all things and source of all life who is not only the heavenly Father of Jesus, but also our heavenly Father. It is only through faith in His Son that we are able to stand before God and receive His divine favour, love and grace. For further information see the title:

- Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity) in Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

2 JOHN 1

- **2 John 1:3:** Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love.

The Gospel proclaims: Jesus Christ is God the Father's Son." Here John shines a brilliant spotlight on the truth Jesus is God's Son. Sadly, there are many who are faithful and have a devoted heart toward the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father, but because of the mistaken teaching that has been established by traditional Christianity many centuries ago they are

under the confusing theory that Jesus is God. My question to this is, how does the following statement of John, "From God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son" (v4) harmonize with the theory that Jesus is God. Sadly, this concept of God robs from a vividly clear view of the most stunning, majestic and glorious message God planned and purposed from the beginning of the foundation of the world and that the Bible proclaims from Genesis to Revelation and the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider for a moment; surely if it was important to believe that Jesus was actually God, Christ would have told the apostles at least once in his discourses with them and in his messages of salvation, but all we find in the Scriptures is Jesus and the apostles proclaiming that people must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved. Even Jesus said, "Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:3). For further information see the title:

- Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity) in Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- **2 John 1:5-6:** And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another.
⁶ And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.

The Gospel proclaims: God gave the commandment, "To love one another" to Israel thousands of years before Jesus spoke it in the New Testament. God when giving the Levitical law to Moses said, "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself" I am the LORD (Lev 19:18). Not only was this command to love one another given in the beginning to the children of Israel, but it was also given to us at the beginning of the Gospel. Jesus said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12) and to magnify the importance of this command Jesus repeats it again saying, "These things I command you, so that you will love one another" (John 15:17). There should be among the brothers and sisters of Christ mutual love so that in all circumstances and relations they would show love toward each other. True Christianity never prevails anywhere without prompting the observance of this law. Christian love is the foundation of the Gospel and all should walk in this love. Every brother and sister should be on guard that this love of God dwelling in their hearts does not decay in its outward flow toward others, but consciously endeavour to allow its majestic kindness, compassion, grace, mercy and forgiveness more frequently and more earnestly flow out toward those they come in contact with in everyday life.

The following verses show that the Gospel is a Gospel of love.

- Paul said, "Hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5).
- Paul states, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).
- John wrote, "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).
- John said, "If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20).
- Paul said, "Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom 13:10).
- Moses, Paul and Jesus said, "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Gal 5:14).

The Gospel proclaims: anyone who confesses to believe in Christ and does not have love dwelling in their heart or show love toward their brothers and sisters in Christ and toward those outside of God's Kingdom is deceiving themselves. This is because God is love (1 John 4:8) and the greatest commandment regarding mankind is one of love. Added to these Jesus showed the greatest love toward us all in that he laid down his life down not for himself, but for the world. John who not only deeply loved Christ but also understood God's heart and the heart of Christ's message wrote the following awe-inspiring, majestic and glorious verses, "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us, because God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him (1 John 4:8) (1 John 4:16).

- **2 John 1:7-8:** For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.
⁸ Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.

Antichrist: means, an opponent of the Messiah the Lord Jesus Christ.

Flesh: in the context of these verses refers to being human and embraces human nature with its frailties and passions (self, ego, pride, greed, lustful thoughts, jealousies, envy, coveting and such like things).

The Gospel proclaims: from the time of the early church many deceivers and antichrists have gone out into the world. Notice the antichrist in this context is not one person, or a person who is impersonating to be Christ or claiming to be Christ, but refers to everyone who denies Jesus came by the birth of a woman. During John's era this would clearly apply to the Jewish scribes and the Pharisees who not only refused to believe that their promised Messiah the Christ the Son of God was born of Mary who they knew, but also accused Jesus of being born from of sexual immorality (John 8:41), but it is clearly not limited to John's era but applies to anyone who denies that Jesus was a man born of a woman by the creative power of God and the Holy Spirit. No matter how much a religious teacher might spiritually enhance a person's life through their teaching if they deny Jesus was a man born of a woman they are a deceiver and antichrist because no matter what they teach, say or write it has no power to connect a person to the God of creation, the God of the Bible and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ neither do their teachings have the power to give eternal life. This is why no-matter how good the messages they teach may sound they are deceivers and antichrists if their messages are proclaiming a path to God and eternal life other than the way of believing Christ was a human man born of a woman through the Holy Spirit of God. The key words, the best advice and the greatest wisdom regarding antichrists and deceivers are the following words of John, "Watch yourselves so that you may not lose what Christ achieved on the cross and the apostles worked for so that you may win a full reward" (v8).

The Gospel proclaims: God's truth, whoever is in Christ, loves Christ and believes the Gospel of Christ should have no fear of antichrists since John has made it very clear who they are. Everyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son (v9). John warns every brother and sister in Christ to be careful they do not turn from what the Gospel of Christ and the apostles proclaim and thereby lose their eternal reward and crown of everlasting glory by listening to antichrists worldwide and allowing them to deceive them by their enticing and seductive messages or their well written books. These books often contain many good principles, concepts, values, philosophies, ideologies and theories which can mentally benefit the life of people who practice their teachings (obviously if they didn't they would not have the global followings that many have), but if they deny that Jesus was a man who came through the birth of a woman their messages have no power to give eternal life and are therefore antichrists and deceivers if they are proclaiming to teach the path to eternal life.

- **2 John 1:9:** Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

The Gospel proclaims: whoever believes the teachings of Christ will have both the Son and the father dwelling in their heart. This is the glory, splendour and majestic wonder of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It means that God and the Lord by the Spirit of love will fill the heart of the faithful with their love, grace, mercy, joy and favour.

- **2 John 1:10-11:** If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting,¹¹ for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

The Gospel proclaims: that no brother or sister in Christ should allow those who deny the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ into their House. This warning does not apply to friends or acquaintances who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ or even who have belief contrary to our Christian faith. John is not saying that Christians should never invite a man or woman into their home simply because they do not believe in Jesus or hold fast to a different faith so what is John's saying to us in these verses? Before we consider what John's words mean to us, we need to look at what he was saying to the faithful Christian mother he is addressing this letter to. It is certain this lady was a generous woman and a hospitable receiver of travelling ministers and Christians. Since this elect lady was accustomed to entertain such teachers John in this letter is telling her not to give the same kindness or hospitality to those who teach their followers a message contrary to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles. John is saying do not support or entertain teachers who come under the guise and character of an apostle or evangelist who profess and preach a message that denies Jesus came in the flesh (the birth of a woman); do not respect and acknowledge Christ as the Son of God; denies salvation is by faith in Christ and God's grace and denies Jesus died for the redemption of the world.

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John is saying that the elect Lady should receive and show hospitality to any teacher or minister who teaches these doctrines, but should a teacher or minister deny any one of them or distort and twist these teachings she should not entertain them into her home or extend to them a brotherly welcome. The key thought of John in these verses is, "Do not give these deceiving evangelical teachers hospitality and do not let them preach or teach under your roof." John is not teaching that we should never extend hospitality, show acts of kindness or take those who have received a different Gospel into our homes.

The central focus is not on those who have been deceived by false teaching, but upon those who are aggressively distorting, twisting and teaching deceptive and false teachings. When Christians do have contact with such deceivers the true rule for Christians in regard to them is to treat them as neighbours, or strangers, (i.e., we are to be honest, true, kind, and just), but we are not to receive them into our house to teach us, nor teach others or do anything that will approve them as religious teachers or aid them in any manner to further their teachings.

The Gospel proclaims:

- No brother or sister in Christ is to commend antichrists and deceivers to others, by allowing them to use their homes to proclaim and teach their messages. No brother or sister in Christ is to give false teachers any reason to use their names to influence others and thereby entice the naive and innocent (especially new Christians and the vulnerable) to the distorted Gospel they are propagating and proclaiming. John is not saying as some religious ministers teach that we should not receive a family member, a friend, relative or even a stranger into our homes and show them kindness simply because they hold a different view of faith to ours, but rather that we should not welcome a professed teacher of religion into our home who teaches a message that is contrary to the Gospel of Christ.

- Those who belong to the family of Christ should not welcome a false teacher of religion with a greeting or bid them god speed. Since this, carries two thoughts (i.e., greetings and bidding farewell) we will look at them separately.

Do not give him any greeting: means we should not welcome or treat religious teachers who distort the Gospel of Christ with the same affection and friendly greeting as we would true friends and true brothers and sisters in Christ and act towards them so as to cause others to believe that we accept them as brothers or sisters in Christ and their teachings as being right and proper. Nor should we show them special favour simply because of their fame or give any encouragement or importance, but instead make it very clear to others (especially new Christians and the vulnerable) that they are deceivers so that they will not become a snare and stumbling-block to Christians whose faith has not yet grown full spiritual muscle.

Do not bid them God speed: means do not wish them a prosperous enterprise and success in their ministry as you would a true disciple of Christ. This does not mean that we should not help or show kindness should they be in need of the necessities of life or relief from illness, hunger and hardship, since as Christ's ambassadors on earth though we are called to speak against those who distort the majestic and glorious Gospel of Christ, we are not called to hate them, go to war against them or wish their destruction, but rather we are to follow the following example of love expressed in the following words of Jesus "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16) the following example of love expressed in the following words of Paul, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8)

The Gospel proclaims: all Christians are called to show love toward all people, but this does not mean that they should compromise their faith to manifest the love of God dwelling in them. Some people think being accepted is love, but this is a deception if a person has to compromise who they are (i.e., their authentic self) or compromise what they believe. Compromising who we are or what we believe to be accepted is not love, but simply responding to a desperate need in the heart to be accepted by those who will not accept us as we are which sadly results in conforming outwardly to the control and demand of others and an inward life of emotional and mental tension (this principal applies whether a person is a Christian or not).

NOTE: should any brother or sister feel this way they should not put themselves under condemnation since they can be certain they are not alone and God understands. One of the keys to overcome this is to continue in the faith and know that you are loved by Christ and that we are saved not because of our maturity and strength in the faith, but because of our faithfulness and devotion in Christ. As we grow in Christ's love and God's grace the overwhelming need to compromise our lives to be accepted by others will slowly diminish.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Whoever greets a false teacher takes part in their wicked works" (v11). This means whoever welcomes in their heart and mind a professional teacher who denies Christ, denies his Gospel and denies the apostles teachings as they would a true brother or sister in Christ are taking part in their wicked works. This is because they are by their acceptance encouraging them rather than shinning a light on the errors they are teaching. Though we must obey the law of love and show kindness and a good spirit toward those who differ from us in lesser matters, we must hold firmly to the all-important teachings concerning eternal salvation in Christ.
- Antichrists, deceivers and opposes of the Lord Jesus Christ, have existed since the days of the apostles and that they will abound in greater numbers as we near the return of the Lord. Antichrist's,

deceivers and false teachers serve their own way to feed their own bellies; are driven by ego, pride, selfish-ambition and greed for gain; distort and twist Scriptures to increase their religious empire; spread pernicious, malicious, wicked, destructive and fatal doctrines; delude people's minds and rob their hearts from the love and grace of God in Christ Jesus and undermine the glory and Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Though all Christian should expose such teachers and show that their teaching are not only a gross offence to God, but also rob those who follow them from eternal life any such teaching should be presented in a Spirit of righteous love toward those who are being deceived and not in anger or hatred toward those who are deceiving. This is because God's Spirit and the Spirit of Christ always flows from love and never hatred.

3 JOHN 1

- **3 John 1:3-5:** For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you (Gaius) are walking in the truth. ⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

The Gospel proclaims: that every brother and sister in Christ should testify to the truth. The word truth in this context embraces all things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostle's teachings such as Jesus was a man born of a woman and came from the Father and was sent by God. Jesus is the Christ the Son of God who was crucified and raised to heavenly and eternal glory at the right-hand side of God; eternal salvation is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace and the truth Jesus was born to be a King and that his Kingdom is not of this world. The Spirit that unites God the Father, Jesus and believers together is love and that throughout the New Testament the expression the truth refers to the message of the cross, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and to Christ himself. Obviously, the Bible is not the only truth everything that is true is truth whether it is biblical or secular, whatever is not a lie is truth, but the Bible contains the only truth that teaches about God, his eternal plans, purposes and promises and the way to eternal life. When a careful study is done through the New Testament to discover what biblical writers had in mind when they used the term the truth it becomes very clear that they did not have in mind all Old Testament history or every doctrine of the Bible, but rather only that truth that relates to the Lord Jesus Christ and right behaviour and doing-good. The truth as used by Christ and the apostles embraces everything pertaining to Jesus, the grace of God, the Gospel and teachings that lead to salvation, eternal life and right behaviour.

The Gospel proclaims: every brother and sister in Christ should walk in the truth. The word truth in this context embraces all things concerning character and behaviour (i.e., doing what is true, good and right); being sincere honest and our authentic self in contrast to hypocrisy and pretence; speaking and acting in love in contrast to jealousy, bitterness and malice; living a lifestyle that is in accordance with the teachings of Christ and the apostles and godly behaviour and fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ; endeavouring to live a lifestyle that honour God and keep His commandments and living in a manner that brings a good testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. Walking in the truth is about behaviour and lifestyle (a person does not walk in doctrine they believe them) it means living a lifestyle that brings honour to God, a good testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. It means showing love, compassion, kindness, mercy, grace and forgiveness not only to brothers and sisters in Christ, but also toward those who do not know the love of Christ. For further information see the title:

- Truth in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

NOTICE: John said that his greatest joy was to hear that those he had converted to Christ were walking in the truth (v4). This clearly shows the true heart of a minister of the Gospel and that it is not the things of this

world that gives the greatest joy, excitement and pleasure to those who know the love of Christ and God's grace, but seeing other faithful brothers and sisters (especially those they have personally shared the Gospel with following Christ with love, honesty and integrity and sharing the Good News of the Gospel to others.

- **3 John 1:11:** Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

The Gospel proclaims: the way to identify who is a faithful brother and sister in Christ and one who knows God and belongs to His family is by seeing if they are imitators and followers of whatever is good. In contrast to this the way to identify those who do not know the love and grace of God is by observing the wicked works they do. It is interesting to notice that this verse is in the context of Diotrephes and his wickedness. Diotrephes was a very powerful religious leader who had great authority and was greatly esteemed and exalted by his followers. The words, "Whoever does evil has not seen God" are in the context of religious leaders who either have a massive church empire and religious power and authority or are gifted orators and speech makers and esteemed as important and famous, but are not in the ministry to honestly and humbly serve God with integrity, but for fame, worldly riches and their own prideful selfish ambition and therefore deceitfully and faithlessly use their followers as merchandise to achieve their goals and build their religious empire.

While we are focused on (3 John 1:11) here is a fun moment, one Sunday many years ago as we were driving home from church, I ask my four-year son, "What did you learn in Sunday school?" He said, "That there were no good witches" (He had proudly taken his children's book titled Hansel and Gretel that his grandparents had given him for his birthday) one of the main characters is a witch, his teacher had obviously taught him there is no such thing as a good witch. Six weeks later as I was digging in the garden my son said, "Daddy there are good witches." Wondering how he came to that conclusion I asked, "How do you know that?" He replied, "The Bible says so." I thought this is interesting and asked, "Where?" He proceeds to quote his Sunday school memory verse that he had memorized for that week, saying, "Three John chapter one verse eleven says, 'follow not that which is evil, but follow that which is good' (3 John 1:11), see Daddy there are good witches."

JUDE 1

- **Jude 1:1:** Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:

The Gospel proclaims: everyone who is called beloved in God is "Being kept for Jesus Christ." They are being kept by their faith in Christ and by God's grace for the glorious day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to be gathered to him to rule and reign as kings and priests with Christ to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

The book of Revelation: states, "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth" (Rev. 1:5-7). And in Revelation chapter five we are told that, "Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10). At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and

those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory. For further information see the titles:

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU)
- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment" in, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- **Jude 1:3:** Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

The Gospel proclaims: that those who are in Christ should contend for the faith. It is interesting to notice that Jude had purposed to write about salvation and the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, but seeing that there were false teachers who were influencing believers away from the Lord Jesus Christ and away from God's grace (v4) he thought it more important to warn the beloved in God of these deceivers and encourage them to contend for the faith that they had received.

The common faith: means; Christian salvation is the same for all people regardless of whether they are a Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, noble or lowly whoever comes to Christ with a right heart attitude will be accepted no matter what their station in life is.

Contending for the faith: is not about contending and dividing over every Scriptural teaching from Genesis to Revelation, but about challenging and testing teachings that are contrary to the foundational and core teachings that pertain to the message of the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ, God's grace and eternal salvation and opposing those teachings concerning salvation by faith in Christ and God's grace that are found to be false and maintaining those that prove to be true.

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NOTE: the title, "Beloved of God" is in contrast to the deceivers and false teachers amongst those Jude is addressing this letter to.

- **Jude 1:4:** For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Sensuality: (pernicious in KJV) does not only refer to people who live a lifestyle of unlawful sex and such like things, but also embraces those who live to gratify self, ego and pride (the flesh) with excessive worldly wealth and riches and who indulge themselves in the opulent luxuries of this world.

Sensuality: carries the idea of self-indulgence the idea behind the word sensuality can be applied to any lifestyle that lives life simply to gratify the cravings of the flesh (self, ego, pride and greed etc.) for the things of this world or to sexual indulgences (i.e., selfishly using others to gratify one's own sensual passions).

The Gospel proclaims: certain people can be amongst the body of Christ who pervert the grace of God and thereby deny the Lord Jesus Christ. It seems unlikely the people Jude is referring to blatantly deny Christ since every faithful and true brother and sister in Christ would recognize them straight away as false teachers without the need for any warnings. It is more likely those who Jude refers to confess to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but are perverting God's grace and the Gospel in the following ways:

- By continuing to live a lifestyle solely to gratify the pleasures of the senses.
- By teaching that we are saved by self-effort and the strict adherence to ceremonial rites, religious customs and practices.

- By denying Jesus came in the flesh (meaning he was born of a woman).
- By denying Christ was the Son of God.
- By teaching that the way to eternal life is by legalistically and dogmatically believing in a particular set of doctrines (these will vary depending on what church one is in).
- By teaching doctrines that lead to ungodly lifestyles.
- By using their followers for their own gain and to achieve their own selfish ambition, goals and dreams.
- By denying we are saved by grace apart from works.
- By twisting and distorting the Scripture to appeal to self, ego and pride, for the purpose of adding more people to their religious empire.

By these they are denying the Lord Jesus Christ in two ways, firstly because they are distorting and twisting the Scriptures and the Gospel that leads to eternal life to suit and fit the lifestyle they desire to live and for their own gain and selfish ambition and secondly, by their ungodly and corrupt lifestyle and twisted and distorted teachings they cause those outside the Kingdom of God to speak against the Christian faith. The following words of Paul show the enormous importance of trusting in God's grace in Christ. Paul in his letters wrote, "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law (or any form of religious self-effort), then Christ died for no purpose" (Gal. 2:21). This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begin to justify themselves through the law and self-effort, they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ's death was of no value.

Equally as horrific as this Paul states, "When we forsake grace, we separate ourselves from Christ because it was only by grace that God made us alive in Christ" (Gal. 5:4) (Eph. 2:5). Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that, "It is only by grace that any brother or sister has been saved" (Eph. 2:8). Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by grace and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God". This means that without grace no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life. This means that in regards to eternal salvation, Christ, God, grace and faith are all on an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to eternal life without any one of them.

NOTE: the words, "Who long ago were designated for this condemnation" (v4) do not mean these ungodly people existed long ago, but that before time began God in his eternal mind planned and purposed that those who deny Christ and pervert God's grace would be condemned. It is the 'judgment of condemnation' that would fall on those who pervert God's grace and the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in any age of history that was long ago designated.

- **Jude 1:17-19:** But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." ¹⁹ It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.

The Gospel proclaims:

- Sensual people, false prophets and teachers who do not have the Spirit and who follow their own ungodly lusts meaning they live to gratify their own self-interest, will continue to arise in the midst of the worldwide global body of Christ especially as we draw nearer to the end of this age and the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are religious people and teachers who are motivated and driven by self,

ego and pride and not the Spirit of Christ (humbleness, love, mercy, grace, compassion and care). In contrast to the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ these people are motivated by their own desire for advantage and gain; their own passions and cravings for the things of the world that will gratify self, ego, pride and greed etc.; their own selfish ambition and greedy desires and their lust for fame, importance, power, money and material possessions.

- There have always been these types of religious people who are devoid of the Spirit and who have no conscience about using God's people as merchandise to gain their own goals amongst the church since the time of the apostles and that they will increase within the global Kingdom of God as we get closer to the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Jude 1:20-21:** But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

The Gospel proclaims:

- While those who are loved by God wait for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life, they should build themselves up in their faith, pray in the Holy Spirit and keep themselves in the love of God. Building yourselves up in your most holy faith means trust in the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostles and Paul as recorded in the Bible in contrast to trusting in religious teachers.
- Whoever has Christ not only becomes a brother and sister of the Lord but an adopted child of God and as in any natural family they become an heir of all God's promises to Abraham and heir to eternal life.

At this point the following truth should be highlighted, "No one has to be a walking Bible encyclopedia to be saved to eternal life. This is because not every doctrine or teaching in the Bible is necessary to know for a person to be saved to eternal life and in a devoted union with Christ and his heavenly Father. A large amount of Scripture simply explains Old Testament history some verses are about how Christians should live in the world or behave in the church. Much of the Bible tells us what happens when people die and a great deal of Scripture is plainly used to prove that Jesus is who he says he is. Some verses give signs of the end of the age and the return of Christ while a vast amount of the New Testament is about how we should live and treat other humans. God in his eternal wisdom has made salvation very simple by placing all the promises of Abraham and of eternal life in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus himself said to religious Jews who believed in God, daily read the Old Testament Scriptures and held fast to keeping every ceremonial rite, holy day, the religious laws of Moses and strictly adhered to their religious customs and traditions, "You do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life (John 5:38-40) clearly showing that the purpose of the Scriptures is to bring us to Christ.

David in prayer and in faith echoing Christ wrote, "Blessed are those who put their trust in the LORD and make the Lord their trust (v3-4) then speaking of himself, but echoing Christ says, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me (v7) and concludes his prayer with, "You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God! (v17) (Psalm 40) which clearly shows that the security David had for his salvation to eternal life was not in doctrine, but in his daily and faithful relationship to God the Father and the coming promised seed of Abraham, Israel's Messiah the Christ. Thousands of years later the author of Hebrews in his letter cites the following words of David, "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book'" (Heb. 10:7) to prove to the unbelieving Jews the following two things, firstly, salvation to eternal life is not in intellectual knowledge of the Scripture, but in a devoted living and faithful relationship with the Father

and with His Son the Lord Jesus Christ and secondly, the purpose of all Scripture is to deliver a sinner from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of light by bringing them into this fellowship with Christ and with his heavenly Father. When we all stand before the Lord's judgment seat Christ will not sit us down to do a written doctrinal exam, but he will examine our lives to see if our religious actions stemmed from a devoted and loving heart toward him and his Father or from selfish ambition, ego and pride and measure us against the royal law, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (James 2:8) meaning did we treat others with love, kindness, compassion, grace, mercy and forgiveness especially our brothers and sisters in Christ or use them for our own gain etc.

NOTE: this does not mean that studying the Scriptures is of no value, quite the contrary, since the more we understand the Bible the stronger our faith and our hope grows and the more we learn of the nature, character will and the heart of the one we love. To give a simple example: a young man may meet a girl that he is attracted to, so he takes her out on a few dates and finds she has a pleasant personality and caring nature, now, he knows this girl, no-one can say anything degradingly against her that he would believe, because he knows her nature and her character, but if he never takes her for another date, it won't be long before that relationship will dissipate and other things will take its place. So, it is with the Scriptures they are our date with Christ and through them we gain eternal and heavenly insights into treasures of God that change our lives and touch our hearts in a manner that nothing in this world can.

The key: to finding, eternal life; the grace of God and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, is to read the New Testament with a humble heart. Whoever reads the New Testament with the right heart attitude can be totally confident God will reveal the Good News of the Gospel that leads to eternal salvation to them without the help of any religious teacher. Certainly, Bible teachers can help us find many valuable truths, pearls and treasures contained in the Bible, but every seeker of God should be confident that as they read the New Testament with a humble and right heart attitude God will reveal Himself to them.

The Gospel proclaims: every brother and sister in Christ should pray in the Holy Spirit (v20). This means we should pray in love, kindness, compassion, grace and mercy; it means praying for ourselves and praying for the well-being others. The following is a good example of a prayer that was not prayed in the Holy Spirit. Years ago, on a T.V. program called, "The Amazing Race." Two religious women were behind the winning car. They knew if they could overtake the car in front of them, they would not only win the race, but also win a million dollars. They prayed, "Dear God help us win this race, please give the car in front a puncture or cause an accident, in Jesus name Amen." This is a prayer that wishes harm on others for selfish gain and clearly not only a prayer Christ will not hear (meaning he will not answer), but also a prayer that is not being prayed in the Holy Spirit.

- **Jude 1:24:** Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,

The Gospel proclaims: that Jesus with great joy is able to present all those who belong to his eternal family faultless before the presence of God's glory. These are some of the most majestic and glorious words of the Bible, because they mean that Christ will keep all those who trust in him and remain faithful not because of their own self-effort and good works or because they strictly adhere to ceremonial rites, holy days and legalistically keep religious customs and traditions, but because of their faith and God's grace.

This is why Christ is able to keep us and present us faultless before God the majestic glory. Here is the glory the wonder and splendour of the Christian faith we are saved not because of our righteousness, but because of Christ's. Notice Jesus will present us to his heavenly Father with exceeding joy how stunning, majestic, glorious and humbling is that.

- **Jude 1:25:** to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

The Gospel proclaims: the only wise God is our Saviour. Since every Christian knows the Lord Jesus Christ is their Saviour some religious teachers use these words of Jude "To the only wise God our Saviour" (v25) to support the mistaken theory that that Jesus is God. Sadly, this stems from ancient religious teaching, tradition and a lack of understanding Bible language and the relationship of love between the heavenly Father and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. God is the Saviour of us all since he is the source of all life. Before time began God in His eternal mind planned and purposed that salvation to eternal life would be in his Son, so Jesus is the fulfilment of God's foreordained plan of salvation for all mankind, without Christ no-one can be saved. This means that God and Christ are the Saviour, but in a different manner. God is the Saviour in that He is the source of all life and planned and purposed the eternal way of salvation, but Christ is our Saviour in that he is the fulfilment of God's eternal plan. Without God there would be no salvation, but God's eternal plan without Christ would be left bankrupt. This is the reason the Bible in various contexts can refer to God the Father or the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour.

It is interesting to notice: that there is not one verse in the entire Bible that states we must believe that Jesus is God to be saved whereas in contrast to this silence there are literally multitudes of Scriptures that clearly state, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Son of God will be saved," whereas there is not one verse that says, "whoever believes that Jesus is God will be saved." Surely if it was important to believe that Jesus was actually God, Christ would have told the apostles at least once in his discourses with them and in his messages of salvation, but all we find in the Scriptures is Jesus, the apostles and Paul proclaiming that people must believe that Jesus is the Son of God to be saved. Even Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent (John 17:3). For further information see the title: "Trinity (The Doctrine of the Trinity)" in Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

SUMMARY

The Gospel proclaims; "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) meaning whoever sins is already judged and condemned to death and since not one of us is without sin we all stand guilty before the Holiness of God. Whereas the Gospel states for all who trust in Christ have been granted the free gift of God which is, "Eternal life in the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 6:23), because, "The law of the Spirit of life has set them free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). This means that the Gospel proclaims that the law of sin and death has no power over those who believe in Christ and faithfully follow him they like Christ will be raised to eternal life and everlasting glory. The, core focus of the Gospel is salvation from death to eternal life by faith and grace it, is about believing in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, recognizing that one falls short of God's Glory and absolute Holiness. It is about repentance, baptism and abiding in the faith. Throughout the entire history of mankind there has only been one man who has ever been able to attain to God's perfect standard. The Gospel is about recognizing this reality, repenting before God and accepting His foreordained plan of salvation it is about trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for one's righteousness, looking forward to his return in glory and being raised to eternal glory. The majestic Good News of the Gospel states that whoever comes to God through repentance and faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ is not only approved of and accepted by God the Father, but all their sins are forgiven, not because they are deserving of it, by any self-effort or religious good works, but because through faith in Christ righteousness is imputed from God to them as a pure and free gift, but this is not the end of the Good News of the Gospel since God's promise

also states that the faithful in Christ will be resurrected to eternal glory and everlasting life. Can there be any better news than this? Clearly this is the reason the Gospel is called the Good News. Paul wrote, "Whoever confesses Jesus is Lord and believe in their heart that God raised him from the dead, will be saved because with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved (Rom. 10:9). The entire focus of the Gospel is the Lord Jesus Christ and the truth that salvation is not in intellectual head knowledge, but in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel proclaims salvation to eternal life comes by faith in Christ and by trusting in God's grace and faithfully following the Lord and enduring in faith until he returns in glory. The following eternal and majestic words of Paul, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8) shine a brilliant spotlight on the abundant beauty of God's eternal grace.

GOD'S PROMISED INHERITANCE TO ABRAHAM

Following is the stunning glory, wonder and splendour of God's eternal message kept for us in the Cannon of the Bible. The heavenly calling all those in Christ will share in eternity refers to the oath the LORD God made to Abraham thousands of years ago. God promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation and that he would be the father of a multitude of nations. God swore by an oath that Abraham's offspring would be as the dust of the earth and the stars of heaven so that they could not be numbered and that God Himself would be their God. The LORD God confirmed this promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their offspring after them throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant promising Abraham that in his offspring all the nations of the earth would be blessed and that his seed (being Christ) would inherit the world.

(Gen. 12:1-3) (Gen. 13:14-17) (Gen. 15:4-7) (Gen. 17:1-8)
(Gen. 22:15-18) (Deut. 9:5).

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Now the majestic wonder, glory and beauty of God's promise to Abraham, is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul wrote that the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith that is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all Abrahams offspring—not only to the adherents of the law (referring to the Jews) but also to the one who share the faith of Abraham (referring to the Gentiles), who is the father of us all (Jews and Gentiles), as it is written: -

- **Romans 4:17:** as it is written, "I have made you (Abraham) the father of many nations" (i.e., not just Jews)—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead (at the resurrection) and calls into existence the things that do not exist (creation and resurrected believers).

In hope Abraham believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." Paul tells us that "The twelve tribes of Israel earnestly worshipped night and day hoping to attain to this promise (Acts 26:7). And then gloriously points out that the Scripture does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to Abraham's offspring, who is Christ" (Gal. 3:16).

Some may think the promises made to Abraham was for the Jews only, but Paul magnificently explains in the book of Ephesians that the promises of God have been extended to all nations through being baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ and clearly shows that the promises made to Abraham and to his seed the Lord Jesus Christ are not limited to the Jews only, but embraces whoever will come to God through faith in Christ. (Rom. 4:13) (Rom. 4:16-18) (Gal. 3:16) (Gal. 3:27). For further information see the title: The Commonwealth of Israel (at the end of this chapter).

The beginning of this promise that God made to Abraham began to be fulfilled when Christ was born and continues to be fulfilled through Christ's death and resurrection and continues to flow like a river that cannot be stopped to an even greater climax when Christ returns in glory as, King of kings and Lord of lords to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to establish God's Kingdom on earth during his glorious millennial reign on earth. The dead in Christ and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, Joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth. Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth, or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce. All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God.

The book of Revelation states:

- **Revelation 1:5-7:** Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷ Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- **Revelation 5:9-10:** Christ was were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its majestic royal glory and fullness.

John wrote:

- I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more and I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of *God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.* He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new (Rev. 20:11) (Rev. 21:1-5).

This is the splendour, the glory the wonder and the climax of God's promise to Abraham made many thousands of years ago and the heavenly inheritance of all who are children of Abraham by faith and brothers and sisters of Christ. Is there any other religion on earth that proclaims such a glorious eternal hope? (This author has not found one). The Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in sharp

clearness proclaims that the stunning splendour of this glory is not dependent on our abilities and talents or our lack of them since God in His wisdom has made salvation to eternal life and everlasting glory available to all, not by our own self-effort, but through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace can there be any better news than this, "I think not" this is another reason the Gospel of Christ is called the Good News. For further information see the title:

- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment" in Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL

It is important to understand that the promised seed of Abraham and David is Christ, all the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore they are not limited to Israel only but extend and embrace all those who belong to Christ because God is now creating one new nation in Christ made up of both Jew and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew) this means that Jews and Gentiles become one new nation in Christ (also called, a new man, a new creation, the church, the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God).

The Apostle Paul said:

- **Ephesians 2:11-22:** Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (the Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands—¹² remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ.¹⁴ For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself one new man (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile us both (Jews and Gentiles), to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles).¹⁷ And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews).¹⁸ For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in one Spirit to the Father.¹⁹ So then you (Gentiles) are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints (the Jews) and members of the household of God,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together (Jews and Gentiles), grows into a holy temple in the Lord.²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world.

The practical application of what this means to you:

If you belong to Christ, all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to you. The book of Revelation states:

- **Revelation 1:7:** Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him (the Jews), and all tribes of the earth (the Gentiles) will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- **Revelation 5:9-10:** Christ was slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles), ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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