WHO IS GOD?
WHAT IS THE BIBLE AND ITS MESSAGE?

By
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Contributor
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PREFACE

The Bible is unique. It is the only book that has the answers to the basic questions of life and claims to be written by the true God. This book tells humanity who its Creator is, why it was created, and its ultimate destiny.

Although the Bible reveals the awesome purpose for human existence, it does so in a carefully coded message. The studies that we present reveal much of what is contained in these messages that has not been taught or understood since the demise and disappearance of the early church as a powerful spirit filled entity.

OUR GOALS

Our primary goal is to share our knowledge and understanding of the Sovereign God's plan and purpose for humanity with those who are interested in living their lives according to the law of God, not by the dictates and traditions of men. Our secondary goal is to proclaim the coming Kingdom of God as a warning and a witness to humanity before the Messiah returns to rule the earth.

We hope that you will find this study of God's word intellectually challenging and spiritually enlightening and beneficial.

If you want to know more about us, the work we are doing, or how you can participate in our biblically based educational and research projects, contact us at: www.BibleResearch.org or www.Bible-Prophecy.net

Sincerely,
B. L. Cocherell
# Table of Contents

## Chapter 1

**Who Is The God Of The Holy Bible?**

- In The Beginning 1
- The Mystery Of God 2
- The Privileged Few 2
- Who May Understand The Mystery? 3
- The Mystery Of Christ 3
- Who Is Jesus? 3
- Who Is The Father? 4
- A Mystery To Be Understood 4
- Hidden Wisdom 4
- The Identity Of God 5
- There Is A God Family 6
- The Gospel According To John 6
- The Word Was With God 7
- Heresies Of The Docetism And Gnostics 8
- A Father-Son Relationship 8
- John 5:18-26 KJV 8
- Two, Not Three In The God Family 9
- Two Separate Gods Doing Two Separate Works 9
- A Warning 10
- Jesus, God With Us 10
- Jesus The Son Of God 10
- The High Priest Zacharias 11
- John The Baptist 11
- Only God Can Forgive Sin 12
- A God Becomes Flesh And Blood 12
- Jesus The Creator God 13
- John 8:21-25 KJV 13
- 'I Am', The Creator God 13
- John 8:26-59 KJV 14
- Jesus Said He Existed Before Abraham 16
- Jesus The Creator, The Son, And The Savior 17
- John 1:4-5, 6-9 KJV 18
- John The Baptist 19
- Jesus Says He Is The Messiah 19
- Jesus, The Rock Of Israel 20
- Jesus The Rock And Redeemer Of Israel 21
- The Savior And Redeemer 22
- The Father, Christ, And The Book Of Revelation 23
- The Book Of Revelation 24
- The Alpha And Omega 25
Isaiah 48:12-13, 16-17, 20 KJV
Jesus Christ, The Alpha And Omega
Names And Titles And Their Meanings
The Alpha And Omega Was Dead And Now Lives
The Book Of Life
Jesus Rewards The Saints
At The Father's Throne
The Root Of David And Lamb Of God
Summary

Chapter 2

Jesus Reveals The Father
Authority From The Father
John 8:26-38 KJV
A Great Deception
Before Christ
No Human Has Seen God The Father
Adam And Eve Walked And Talked With God
Cain Spoke With The Creator
God Spoke To Noah
Conversations With Abraham
Jacob And The Creator
Moses, Aaron, And Israel
Moses And The Elders
Face To Face
The Creator's Glory
Jesus Sent To Reveal The Father
Christ Did Not Send Himself
Who Is The Father?
John 17:1-8 KJV
The Father Is In Heaven
What Is The Father Like?
The Father's Name
To Whom Did Jesus Pray?
Ask Of The Father In Jesus' Name
The Father's Message

Chapter 3

When Did Jesus Become The Son Of God?
The Conception Of Jesus
Matthew 1:18-23
Luke 1:30-35 KJV
## Chapter 7

**Bible Study Books And Reference Materials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bibles</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1611 King James Bible</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlinear Bible</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The NIV Bible</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The LBP Bible</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Study Aids</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong's Concordance</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological Word Book</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological Dictionary</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proof Of God And The Bible</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astronomy And The Bible</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics Of The Bible</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science In The Bible</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation Discrepancies And Omissions</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter 8

**What Is The Purpose Of Human Life?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did All That Exists Evolve Or Was It Created?</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You Can Know!</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolution As A Theory</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Creator And Science</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Is Life?</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matter</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbiosis</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Atom And Creation</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A World Full Of Proof</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions For Today And The Future</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Accuracy</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prophecy</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Numerics</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Unique Book</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mystery Of Human Existence</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 13:10-17 KJV</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mystery Revealed</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary Of God's Plan For Humanity</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Creation And Reconstruction</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A New Start After The Flood</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Plan Revealed</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 9

Salvation: The Secret To Eternal Life

The Reality Of Death

What Is Death?

Is Death The End?

The Hope Of Scientific Discovery

Humanity Needs Salvation From Eternal Death

Life After Death

Job

God Desires All To Be Saved

Sin—A Major Obstacle To Salvation

The First Lie

Under The Law

Under The Sentence Of Death

None Righteous

Romans 3:10-20 KJV

God Has Had A Plan From The Beginning

The Sacrifice

The Shedding Of Blood

The Ancient Israelites

The Prophets And Writers

Salvation Through Justification

The Word Justify

God Is Our Salvation

The Righteousness To Be Revealed

Romans 3:20-31 KJV

Jesus, The Only Way To Salvation

The God Who Became Man

John 1:1-5, 10-14 KJV

The God Who Died

Jesus Our Creator And Our Savior

Justified By His Blood—Saved By His Life

Colossians 1:13-22 KJV

Our High Priest
Death Through Sin
Under The Dominion Of The Law
Under The Sentence Of Death
None Righteous
Romans 3:10-20 KJV
What Is Sin?
The Standard For Perfection
Hope For The Hopeless

Chapter 13
The Gospel
Two Questions To Answer
The Beginning
John The Baptist
John's Mission
The Word And The Light
The Light Begins To Shine
Spiritual Darkness
I Am The Light
The Message
John's Question
Believe The Gospel
The Other Gospel
A Counterfeit Gospel
2.Cornithians 11:3-4; 13-15 KJV
The Way Of Truth Spoken Of As Evil
Can One Worship The God Of Truth With Lies?
Rejection Of Truth
A Gospel Parable
There Is Only One True Gospel

Chapter 14
The Good News Of Grace And Peace
Grace, Mercy, And Peace
The Good News Of Grace
What Is Grace?
Three Facts About Grace
The Father's Grace And Mercy
Divine Favor Through Christ
Paul Explains God's Grace
Ephesians 1:1-9 Paraphrased
Predestination
Grace Through Christ
Ephesians 2:1-9 Paraphrased
The Gift Of God's Grace
The Promise Of Grace 159
The Good News Of Peace 159
Two Great Opposites 159
The Natural Way Of Life 160
God's Way Of Life 160
Enemies Of God 160
Then And Now 160
The God Of Peace 161
Peace From The Father Through Christ 162
Isaiah 162
Ezekiel 163
David 163
Isaiah 163
Micah 4:1-4 Paraphrased 163
Reconciliation With The Father 164
The New Creation 165
National Israel And Other People 165
Ephesians 2:11-18 Paraphrased 165
Colossians 1:12-23 Paraphrased 166
Summary 167
2. Peter 1:2-10 KJV 167
Do Not Be Anxious 168

Chapter 15
The Good News About Jesus Christ 169
Romans 1:1-3, 8-9; 15-16 Paraphrased 169
Christ The Crucified 169
Who Was Jesus? 170
The God Who Became Man 170
John 1:1-5;10-14 KJV 170
The God Who Died 171
The Messenger Of The Covenant 172
The First Covenant 172
The Promise To Abraham 173
The Agreement With National Israel 173
A New Agreement Promised 174
Jesus Established The New Agreement 174
Hebrews 10:5-10 Paraphrased 174
The Blood Of Christ And The New Agreement 175
1. The New Testament 176
2. The Remission Of Sins 176
3. The New Agreement 177
Ratified And Sealed With Blood 177
A New And Better Agreement 177
Five Major Changes

1. A Perfect Sacrifice

2. A Perfect High Priest

Hebrews 7:11-16 KJV

3. The Forgiveness Of Sin

Righteousness And The Law

The Blood Of Christ

4. The Law Placed Within

5. The Holy Spirit

An Everlasting Agreement

Summary

Chapter 16

The Good News About Christ And Salvation

God Wants All To Be Saved

The Choice Is Ours

The Seriousness Of Sin

Death Sentence

A Way Of Escape

The Sacrifice

The Shedding Of Blood

The Ancient Israelites

Salvation Through Justification

The Word Justify

God Is Our Salvation

The Righteousness To Be Revealed

Jesus The Righteous

Romans 3:20-26 KJV

Jesus, The Only Way To Salvation

Salvation Is A Gift From The Father

Jesus The Giver Of Life

Jesus Christ Is The Hope Of The Dead

Summary

Escape The Death Sentence

The Means Of Forgiveness

Chapter 17

The Process Of Salvation

Become Immortal Through Repentance, Baptism, And Conversion

To Become An Immortal

An Awesome Opportunity

How To Obtain Salvation

The Call To Salvation
A Special Calling
Called And Chosen
Belief In The Father And In His Son
John 5:24-29 Paraphrased
Repentance, Baptism, And Conversion
The Redemptive Process
Repentance And Conversion
The Word Repent
Repent Of What?
Repent Of Sin
What Is Sin?
Keep The Commandments
A Change Of Heart
Lip Service
A Change In Lifestyle
Baptism
Dead To Sin
Sins Washed Away
Receive The Holy Spirit
The Continuing Process
Faith And Works
Doing And Believing
Summary

Chapter 18

The Gospel Of The Kingdom Of God
A New Governmental System
Centuries Of Struggle
Doomed To Failure
Religion—Past, Present, And Future
A One World Government
A Perfect Government
The Human Factor
The Kingdom Message
John The Baptist
Jesus Proclaimed The Kingdom
Others Also Proclaimed The Kingdom
What Is A Kingdom?
Is The Kingdom Of God Within?
After Christ's Death
The Apostle Paul
The Evangelist Philip
The Kingdom Of God
National Israel
Chapter 19
The Proclaiming Of The Gospel
The Great Commission 241
The Assignment 241
Who Will Receive The Gospel? 241
What Will Be Accomplished? 242
Who Is To Proclaim The Gospel Message? 243
What Is The Message? 243
The Gospel And The Early Church 244
Signs, Wonders And Miracles 244
Greater Power To Come 245
The Prophet Habakkuk 245
The Open Door 246
National Israel 246
Romans 10:11-21 Paraphrased 247
A Deceived World 248
Jesus Warned: 249
Salvation 250
The Gospel Today 250
Believe The Gospel 250
The End Shall Come 251
Death And Destruction 251
A Warning 252

Chapter 20
Persecution Of The Saints
An Unpopular Message 253
Four Important Questions 253
The Necessity To Change 254
Believe And Repent 254
Human Nature 255
Rebellion And Self-Will 256
Freedom Of Choice 256
The World Today 256
Prophecies Of Persecution 257
Not Of This World 258
Hated By The World 258
Evil Is Good And Good Is Evil 259
Then And Now 259
Beware Of Men 260
Brought Before Civil Authorities 260
Betrayal 261
Accusations 261
The Beginning Of Sorrows 262
Hated Because Of Jesus' Name 262
The One To Fear 263
Lack Of Conversion 264
False Prophets And Teachers 264
Those Who Endure 265
Hated By All People 265
Hated By Popular Christianity 265
Hated By Judaism 265
Christianity And Judaism 266
Hated By All Religions 267
Hated By Governments 267
Hated By All Israel 268
Isaiah 30:1-15 LBP 268
Summary 269
Jesus Gives The Answer 269

Chapter 21

The Woman Who Anointed Jesus And
The Gospel Message 270
Passover 30 A.D. 270
The Tenth Of Nisan 271
Six Days Before Passover 271
The Invitation 272
Washing And Anointing Jesus' Feet 273
Simon's Indignation 274
The Parable Of Forgiveness 274
Customs Of The Day 275
Transition Point 276
The Anointing Of Jesus' Head 276
Forgiveness Of Sin 276
Faith And Works 277
The Broken Vial 277
Judas, The Thief 278
300 Denarii 278
Jesus' Comments 279
The Bringing Of The Ointment 279
Summary 281
Common Textual References 282

Chapter 22

The Covenants And Salvation 283
Many Agreements And Promises 283
Blood Covenants 283
Many Agreements And Promises 283
The Four Ages Of Salvation 284
The First Age 284
The Second Age 284
The Third Age 285
The Fourth Age 285
Covenant Versus Testament 286
In The Beginning 286
From Creation God Had A Plan 287
The Shedding Of Blood 287

Chapter 23
The First Agreement With National Israel 289
Terms And Conditions Of The First Agreement 289
The First Condition 289
Benefits 289
Israel's Benefits 290
Deuteronomy 28:1-13 Paraphrased 290
Eternal And Immortal Life 290
Salvation Through The Law And Sacrifice 291
God's Benefits 292
Contract Review 292
Moses Speaks For God 293
Formal Ratification Of The Agreement 293
Back Up The Mountain 294
The Creator Keeps His Word 295
Was There Something Wrong With
The First Agreement With Israel? 295
Point Of Law 296
Breaking The Agreement 296
Jeremiah 11:1-10 KJV 297
A Curse 298

Chapter 24
The New Agreement With National Israel 299
The Facts 299
God Remembers His Promises 300
A New Agreement Promised 301
After Christ Returns 302
Why The First Agreement Failed 302
The First Agreement Canceled 303
Hebrews 10:5-10 Paraphrased 303
A New And Better Agreement 303
Five Major Changes 304
1. A Perfect Sacrifice 304
2. A Perfect High Priest 305
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 25</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Agreement With The Father's Elect During The Gospel Age Of Salvation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gentiles</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Agreement With The Elect Of God</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A New Agreement Through Christ</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Better Resurrection</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Call To Participate</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Responsibilities</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awesome Rewards</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inherit All Things</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How To Become An Heir</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romans 6:1-9 KJV</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dead To Sin</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sins Washed Away</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Temple</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Purify The Body</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism Of The Spirit</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Indwelling Of The Holy Spirit</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Father's And Christ's Spirit</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Law Placed Within</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spirit Of Adoption</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformation Into A Son Of God</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sealing The Agreement</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Personal Agreement</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Administrators</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.Corinthians 3:6-11 NIV</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Repentance And Baptism, What Does God Expect?</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Compliance</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrews 10:26-31 KJV</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 28

Where The Name And Presence Of God Resides On Earth

The Foundational Elements 337
Faith In God 339
Ancient Israel 340
The Blood Of Atonement 340
The Setting Aside Of Sin 341
Total Forgiveness 341
Sins Set Aside, Not Forgiven 341
The Gospel Age 342
A Perfect High Priest 344
A Spiritual High Priest 345
Holiness 345
Physical Defilement 345
Spiritual Defilement 346
The Perfect Sacrifice 346
The Sacrifices Past And Present 347
The Agreement With Ancient Israel 347
The Burnt Offering 347
The Meal Offering 347
The Peace Offering 348
Freewill Offerings 348
The Sin Offering 348
The Trespass Offering 349
Atonement Past And Present 349
Sacrifices During The Gospel Age 350
Summary 351

The Burning Bush 352
Fire And Smoke On Mount Sinai 353
Exodus 19:9-24 353
The Tabernacle 355
Preparation And Purification 355
A Fatal Mistake 355
The Holy Of Holies 356
The Place In The Promised Land 356
At Shiloh 357
The Temple At Jerusalem 357
Where Does God Dwell Today? 358
After The Advent Of Christ 358
Jesus Foretells A New Temple System 358
Spiritual Worship 359
The Festival Of Pentecost And The New Temple 359
Chapter 30

How To Recognize Those Who Truly Follow Christ

Love For God's People 385
The Law Of God 385
They Love God And His Law 386
The Sabbath And Annual Observances 386
A Perpetual Covenant 386
A Sign Of Obedience 387
Separate From False Religions 388
The Preaching Of The Kingdom 388
The Government Of God 388
To Become An Immortal Being 389
The Fruit Of The Spirit 389
Summary 390

Mission Statement

This Work 391
Our Goals 391
If You Want To Know More 391

Other Books BY B.L. Cocherell

Biblical Prophecies Past, Present, And Future 392
The Gift Of Immortality 392
Human Life Death And Beyond 392
The Commanded Observances And Holy Convocations Past, Present, And Future 393
Survive And Thrive As A Follower Of Christ 393
Biblical Law Past, Present, And Future 393
Our Place In The Spirit Realm, Gods-Angels-Demons 394
Synagogue Of Satan And Doctrines Of Demons 394
Book Orders And Donation Information 394
WHO IS THE GOD OF THE HOLY BIBLE?

The identity of God is one of the greatest mysteries of the entire Bible. Without understanding who God is, it is impossible to understand the Bible and the purpose for the existence of the human race.

Numerous books and papers that attempt to explain who God is have been written and published. And the explanations are as diverse as the people doing the writing. But, why is there such confusion about who God is, when the identity of God is the key that unlocks all spiritual knowledge and understanding about the salvation of humanity that is contained in the Bible?

Almost two thousand years ago Jesus asked his disciples,"Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matt.16:13). The scriptures show that many did not know who he was; however, the apostle Peter gives the correct answer when he says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt.16:16).

Today, people ask remarkably similar questions: Who was the one called Jesus? Was Jesus a prophet, a wise man, a mere human, an angel, half human and half divine, or God incarnate, and who is the Father that he came to reveal?

In the Beginning

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen.1:1).

The Bible clearly states that a being called 'God' created heaven and earth. But who is this 'God'? Is he God the Father; is he Jesus Christ; is he both?:

"And God said let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen.1:26-27 KJV).

Most Bible scholars and linguists will agree that the word God in Genesis 1:1, 26-27 is the Hebrew word Elohim, which is a plural word that can mean Mighty Ones. Therefore, some say that this one word defines two specific individuals. Although the word Elohim does allow for a plural meaning, understanding who God is does not entirely depend upon this one descriptive word for God, because there are many scriptures showing that, at the beginning of the physical creation, there were two God-beings in the God family—God the Father and the Creator God. See Eph.3:13-15.
If the Mighty One of ancient Israel is the One who created the Savior of the New Covenant, as some believe, we have a gigantic problem to deal with in reference to what the Savior and his apostles said about the personage called the Father. The solution to this problem of who the Father and Jesus Christ are is found in the scriptures that clearly speak of two separate beings—God the Father and Jesus Christ, who became the Son of God.

The following will show that Genesis 1:1 speaks of the Creator God who became Jesus Christ and Genesis 1:26-27 reveals that it was God the Father who gave the instructions to the Creator God for the creation of humanity.

The meaning of much of the Bible concerning the identity of God should become clear, when one understands that the Creator God of ancient Israel was the second member of the God family, he became our Savior (Jesus Christ), and he came to reveal God the Father who is the Sovereign of all that exists.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD

In the Books of Matthew and Mark, there are some very strange statements made by Jesus Christ concerning the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

The Privileged Few

"And the disciples came, and said to him, Why speak you to them in parables? He answered and said to them, because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not Perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt.13:10-15 KJV). See also Mk.4:11-12; Lk.8:9-10.

Only a select few were privileged to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. And in order to begin to understand these mysteries, one must first know what a kingdom is. There are four basic things to understand about a kingdom or government. A kingdom must have officials to govern it, territories to govern, people to govern, and laws with which to govern.

The mystery that Jesus spoke about pertained to the Kingdom of God; therefore, it seems logical that the mystery concerns the who, what, when, and where of this kingdom.
Who May Understand The Mystery?

Jesus says that the twelve apostles could understand the mystery of the Kingdom of God and the apostle Paul says that the ministers of Christ are stewards of the mysteries of God:

"And the disciples came, and said to him, Why do you speak to them in parables? He answered them and said, to them, Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matt.13:10-11 KJV).

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (1.Cor.4:1-2 KJV).

Paul was given special insight into the mysteries of God—"How that by revelation he made known to me the mystery; as I wrote before in few words" (Eph.3:3) and he states that the Ephesians also understand the mysteries of God. Since the elect of God at Ephesus understood, it can be assumed that all of the elect have the ability to understand the mysteries of God:

"Wherein he has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he has purposed in himself" (Eph.1:8-9 KJV).

The Mystery of Christ

"Whereby, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ. Which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the spirit; That the gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effectual working of his power. To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of [participation in] the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by [through] Jesus Christ" (Eph.3:4-9 KJV). See also Rom.16:25-27.

Paul says that the mystery concerning Christ was revealed and that Jesus is not only the Son of God, but is also the Creator God.

Who is Jesus?

One thing people always wanted to know about Christ was his identity. On many occasions, Jesus told the people who he was, but they would not believe that he was the actual Son of God:
"And Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. The Jews gathered around him, saying 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ tell us plainly' Jesus answered, 'I did tell you, but you do not believe..." (Jn.10:23-25 NIV).

Who is the Father?

After all the things that Jesus taught his disciples concerning the Father and his message of salvation to humanity, they still did not fully understand who the Father was nor did they understand the message that Jesus brought from the Father.

"Thomas said to him, Lord, we know not where you go; and how can we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you should have known my Father also: and from henceforth you know him, and have seen him. Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. Jesus said to him, Have I been so long a time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip? He that has seen me has seen the Father; and how say you then, Show us the Father?" (Jn.14:5-9 KJV).

A Mystery to be Understood

"For I would that you knew what great conflict [concern] I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ" (Col.2:1-2 KJV). See also Col.1:24-27; 4:1-3.

Here, we see there is a mystery involved in understanding who God is, who the Father is, and who Christ is. This mystery of the Kingdom and the Family of God is understood by those to whom Jesus will reveal it.

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he has declared to his servants the prophets" (Rev.10:7 KJV). See Matt.11:25-27; 13:10-15; Lk.10:21-22; 1.Cor.4:1-2; Eph.1:8-9.

Hidden Wisdom

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: Yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world to our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1.Cor.2:6-7 KJV).
It is apparent when we read the history of the Jews that, if they had truly understood in their innermost being that Jesus was God, the majority of them would have worshiped him. However, this did not fit the plan of God, so most were blinded to this fact. See Mk.4:11-12; Lk.8:9-10:

"But as it is written, eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him. But God has revealed them to us by his spirit: for the spirit searches all things, Yes, the deep things of God" (1.Cor.2:8-10 KJV).

"Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen" (Rom.16: 25-27 KJV).

"Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Dan.12:10 KJV).

Many of the mysteries surrounding prophetic events and the gospel message that Jesus brought are being revealed during this age. These mysteries are revealed to those whom God the Father has called and is calling to salvation. The understanding of these mysteries will remain hidden from everyone else until the Kingdom of God is established on earth.

The Identity of God

The major reason that it is so difficult for most people to understand the exact identity of God is that the information is hidden from those who do not need to know. However, those who do need to know are told that they must diligently study in order to come to an understanding of who God is. Moreover, all of the information that is given in the Bible about God is presented as fact, which presumes that the person reading the information already believes in God and that the Bible is his written word.

In the following pages I will attempt to provide enough information about God to help the reader who wants to study further solve some of the many mysteries surrounding the identity of God and the relationship between the Creator God, Jesus Christ, God the Father, and the holy spirit. Because there is so much interrelated information in the Bible concerning these individual subjects, this chapter will only explore the following topic areas in order to establish foundational information concerning the identity of God:
• There is a God family
• Jesus, God with us
• Jesus, the Creator God
• Jesus, the Creator, the Son, and the Savior
• Jesus, the Rock of ancient Israel
• The Father, Jesus Christ, and the Book of Revelation
• Jesus reveals the Father
• Who is the Father?
• Three popular beliefs about God
• When did Jesus become the son of God?

THERE IS A GOD FAMILY

One of the great mysteries of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the elect of God concerns the identity of the Family of God. Our Savior repeatedly called the Supreme Sovereign "Father" and he talked about their father-son relationship. But, why do the majority of professing Christians believe that there is only one God-being? The reason is quite simple: Satan has deceived the whole world into thinking the Family of God does not exist. See Rev.12:9; 18:23; 19:20; 20:10.

Until a person comes to understand that there are two individual and separate God-beings who comprise the God family and that the relationship between the Sovereign God (God the Father) and the Creator God (Jesus Christ) is a father-son relationship, almost none of the Bible, including the Father's good news message, can be clearly understood.

Notice what the apostle Paul plainly says about the sovereign Family of God:

"I do not want you to fail because of my trials, because it is for you that I suffer, and for this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph.3:13-15 Para.).

When we understand that the Father's plan for the salvation of humanity is centered around increasing his family and that presently there are only two spirit-beings in his family (himself and his firstborn, Jesus Christ), and that his elect children on earth also bear his name and are considered a part of this family, what Paul says about the Father's family in heaven and earth makes sense.

The Gospel According to John

Above all other books of the Bible, the Gospel according to John expounds the pre-existence of Christ and the father-son relationship between Christ and God the Father. If this book did not exist, it would be difficult to explain the concept of the God family and how it functions.

Because the Book of John exists, the mystery of the God family, the pre-existence of Christ, and his position in the God family can be clearly understood.
Most of the people Jesus spoke to did not have a problem understanding the things that he wanted them to understand, regardless of the language he used (e.g., Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek). Today, however, we do have a problem understanding the mystery of Christ and his heavenly Father because we are centuries removed from that time and these languages.

The New Testament was translated into English from Ancient Greek and no translation can be totally accurate in every detail. Although the King James translation is thought to be one of the most accurate translations of the holy scriptures, it does have its problems.

Today, many of the words used in the Early Modern English (1500-1700 A.D.) convey very different meanings and concepts. This situation makes it necessary for us to return many times to the original Ancient Greek language in order to gain a more clear understanding of the scriptures, especially when trying to understand a subject as complex as who and what Christ is in relationship to God the Father. Therefore, to discover who Christ is, we will examine the original Ancient Greek language and the context in which key concepts and words are used.

**The Word was with God**

In the first chapter of John, we find some very difficult scriptures that cannot be understood without correctly understanding who and what the Family of God is:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn.1:1 KJV).

John says that, in the beginning, the Word (Greek, Logos) existed. In the context of verse one, the word logos does not mean a part of speech or a language. John uses the word logos as many of the prophets did when they referred to being given information from the Creator God whom they described as The Word of The Lord (See Psa.107:20; 147:15, Jer.2:1,31, Ezk.1:1-3; 6:1-3).

John speaks of Jesus as being the word of God who is a separate being from God the Father. This is substantiated by the statements in the rest of John, chapter one.

At the beginning of creation, there was one called the Word (Greek, Logos), this Word was with God (Greek, Theos. English, Deity), and the Word (Logos) was also God (a Deity).

When John says, "This One was in the beginning with God" (Jn.1:2), he makes a further distinction between these two beings—The Logos and The Theos. Why would John emphasize this distinction if there is only one God-being?

"All things were made by him [the Word, the Logos]; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (Jn.1:3 KJV). See Gen.1:1, 26-27.
John says that all things that exist were made by this Logos who was with the Theos. Why did John have to explain this? We know that he was writing to Christians and Israelites who should have known who God was. So why was he explaining this fundamental principle?

Heresies of the Docetism and Gnostics

During the period in which John wrote, two major heresies were being taught—‘Docetism’ and ‘Gnosticism’. ‘Docetism’ is the belief that Jesus only ‘seemed’ to be a man, but he was actually too divine to be a human. ‘Gnosticism' teaches that the material world is basically evil, the spirit is basically good, and good could not touch evil; therefore, God could not have created the world.

Countering these heretical teachings could have been one of the reasons John went into such detail when he explained the relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Christ. Whatever his reason, John does give us a very detailed narrative of this relationship, which makes it possible for people today to know the identity of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

A Father-Son Relationship

John 5:18-26 KJV

"Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do: for what things soever he does, these also do the Son likewise. For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all things that he does: and he will show him greater works than these, that you may marvel" (vs.18-20).

Over and over again Jesus said that he was the Creator God, the Son of God, and the Redeemer and Savior of humanity. However, most did not believe him because they were looking for a release from their physical problems instead of their spiritual problems.

"For as the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them; even so the son quickens whom he will. For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son: That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son honors not the Father which has sent him. Verily, verily, I say to you, he that hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father has life in himself; so has he given to the Son to have life in himself" (vs.21-26).
In order to understand what Jesus said here, it is important to remember that the Israelites historically held a monotheistic view of God. The God who the Israelites worshiped was a single entity; they believed in one God who was the supreme ruler (Deut.32:39; Mal.2:10). It is easy to understand why the Jews and even Jesus' disciples had a problem with what he taught concerning the concept of the God family. Here was a person who said he was God and also said that he was sent by his Father. This was a strange and repugnant doctrine to the vast majority of the Jews, most of whom could not accept this new teaching and felt it was blasphemous to even consider such a thing. See Jn.10:29-38.

Note:

Please read the entire sixteenth chapter of John for a detailed explanation of the father-son relationship between these two Supreme beings.

Two, Not Three in the God Family

There are a number of scriptures that record Jesus saying, "I and my Father." Three persons are never mentioned in this phrase; it is always "I and my Father." See Jn.10:30; 17:11, 22.

"If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him" (Jn.14:23 KJV).

"To him that overcomes, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev.3:21 KJV). Again, two individuals are mentioned, not three.

Two Separate Gods Doing Two Separate Works

The Father does a work and Christ does a work. Here, we find two separate God-beings working harmoniously while doing two separate works:

"But Jesus answered them, my Father works hitherto, and I work" (Jn.5:17 KJV).

Again, we see individual beings spoken of—the Father and Christ. Clearly Jesus' own words should be proof that the Father and Jesus are two separate individual beings in the Family of God, and each of them performs a separate work in order to accomplish a common goal:

"But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father has given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father has sent me. And the Father himself, which has sent me, has borne witness of me. You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And you have not his word abiding in you: for whom he has sent, him you believe not. . . . I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. How can
you believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuses you, even Moses, in whom you trust” (Jn.5:36-45 KJV).

A WARNING

"Who is a liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father" (1.Jn.2:22-23 KJV).

Here John states very clearly that those who deny that Jesus is the Christ and deny the individuality of the Father and the Son are liars. See Isa.43:11; 44:24-25; 45:21; 48:12-20; 60:16; Psa.78:20-35.

JESUS, GOD WITH US

Some people say that Jesus was not really God with us, but that he was merely a representation of God's divine nature. However, this is not what the Bible says. Notice what Matthew and Isaiah say about the reason for Mary's child being called Emmanuel:

"And she [Mary] shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord, by the prophet saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt.1:21-23 Para.). See also Lk.1:28-35.

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa.7:14 KJV). Immanuel means 'God with us'. See also Isa.8:8-10.

There are two very important things to learn from the above scriptures:

1. The conception and birth of Jesus to a virgin was to be a sign of his divine origin.
2. The prophet Isaiah was inspired to reveal the Savior would be named Immanuel—God with us. (Isa.7:14; 8:8-10).

The Hebrew and the Greek words that are used in the above two texts clearly state that the being who would be the Savior would be GOD WITH US. There is absolutely no way that both the Hebrew and the Greek words used in these two texts can be translated to say anything other than what is clearly stated, without purposefully mistranslating the original language. Truly, Jesus was God with us.

Jesus the Son of God

After the angel told Mary that she would give birth to the Savior, she asked how this could happen because she was a virgin:
"And the angel answered and said to her, The holy spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: Therefore also the holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God" (Lk.1:35 KJV).

Luke says that it was the power (i.e., the holy spirit) that came from the HIGHEST which impregnated Mary and performed the process of conception. We are not told how this was accomplished, we are only told that it happened.

The Greek word used for Highest is Hupsistos and, in this case, it denotes the Sovereign of the universe—the most high, the highest, the supreme (God). Whoever this being is, he is the Supreme Sovereign above all others, whether they are spirit or physical, and this Supreme Being is the Father of our Savior.

The High Priest Zacharias

After the birth of John the Baptist, John's father, Zacharias, was inspired to foretell the coming of the God of Israel as the Messiah as if it had already taken place. If Jesus was the Messiah, it follows that he was also the Creator God who came to redeem humanity.

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he has visited and redeemed his people" (Lk.1:68 KJV). See also verses 57-80.

John the Baptist

"As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, which shall prepare your way before you" (Mk.1:2 KJV). Mark quotes Malachi 3:1, but with a significant alteration. Malachi 1:3 reads: "Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." Mark is simply affirming that Jesus, who was God, prepared for his own coming.

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea. And saying, Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare you the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matt.3:1-3 KJV).

Here, John fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah by preparing the way of the Lord (Isa.40:3). Isaiah said the One whose way was to be prepared was Yehovaw, the Self Existent One, the Eternal. Likewise, John says he was preparing the way for the Kurios, the Supreme Authority. Both Isaiah and John say that God is the One for which the way was being prepared.
Only God Can Forgive Sins

"When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the sick of palsy, Son, your sins be forgiven you. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why does this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" (Mk.2:5-7 KJV).

These scribes were correct in their knowledge of who could forgive sins (See Psa.32:5 and Isa.43:25). However, they did not know that Jesus was the incarnation of the only God they had known, and that he had the right and authority to forgive sins. See Mk.2:8-10.

A GOD BECOMES FLESH AND BLOOD

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (Jn.1:14 KJV). See also Rom.8:3; Heb.2:9; 1.Jn.1:5-9; Jude 25.

Here, John adds a new dimension of understanding, when he speaks of a being called 'the Father'. There is no doubt from the context that this spirit-being is distinctly different from our Savior. He is the One whom John says the Word was with and he is the One whom Paul says created all things through Christ (1.Cor.8:6; Col.1:15-18):

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached to the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1.Tim.3:16 KJV).

Here, the English word manifest is the Greek word phaneroo, which means appear, declare, or show. Paul says that God appeared in the flesh. However, when did God manifest himself in the flesh? The only place in the Bible where we find conditions that fit all of the descriptive terms used in 1.Timothy 3:16 is the New Testament. And the only person who claims to represent and come from the Father is Jesus. Therefore, the God who was manifested had to be the Creator God, Jesus Christ.

This powerful spirit-being came to earth to perform a mission of great importance, and the majority of the people he came into contact with did not even know who he was:

"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (Jn.1:10 KJV).

One of the most profound mysteries of the New Testament is the incarnation of the immortal Creator God. In his incarnation, he was still God, but in the human form in human flesh. Moreover, he was without immortality and subject to eternal death.
Some teach that Jesus was not God incarnate, but that he was only a normal human being with the spirit of God dwelling within him. If Jesus was not God incarnate, then Jewish history is correct and humanity is still in need of a Savior.

**JESUS THE CREATOR GOD**

The eighth chapter of the gospel according to John is full of details that show that Jesus came from heaven and was the Creator God before his physical existence.

**John 8:21-25 KJV**

"Then said Jesus again to them, I go my way, and you shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, you cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? Because he says, Whither I go, you cannot come. And he said to them, You are of this world [Greek, cosmos]; I am not of this world [cosmos]'" (vs.21-23).

Jesus spoke very plainly here; he told them he was not of the physical earth, but that his origin was spiritual.

**'I AM', THE CREATOR GOD**

"I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins: for if you believe not that I AM he, you shall die in your sins. Then said they to him, Who are you? and Jesus said to them, Even the same that I said to you from the beginning" (vs.24-25).

A very interesting thing to note in verse 24 is the English phrase *I Am he*. In the original Greek text, it is *ego imee*, which means *I AM*. The word *he* was added by the translators. Most interlinear translations capitalize the phrase *I AM* and set it apart from other words. The important point here is that *I AM* is one of the names of the Creator God.

If the words *I AM* mean *God* and Jesus was telling these people that he was the Creator God, it should be easy to understand why the Jews were so frightened when they came to arrest him and he told them *I AM*:

"They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said to them, I AM. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said to them, I AM, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek you? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I AM: if therefore you seek me, let these go their way" (Jn.18:5-8 KJV).

**Note:**

The word *he*, which follows *I Am*, is omitted for clarity of meaning, since it is not in the original Greek text.
John 8:26-59 KJV

"I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of [from] him. They understood not that he spoke to them of the Father" (vs.26-27).

Jesus heard these things directly from the Father. John adds that, at that time, the apostles did not understand that Jesus was speaking about the supreme sovereign—God the Father:

"Then said Jesus to them, When you have lifted up the son of man, then shall you know that I AM he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father has taught me. I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father has not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. As he spoke these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free' (vs.28-32).

"They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how say you, You shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abides not in the house for ever: but the son abides ever' (vs.33-35).

"If the son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. I know that you are Abraham's seed; but you seek to kill me, because my word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and you do that which you have seen with your Father" (vs.36-38).

If Jesus saw these things with the Father, he must have been there to see them. Either Jesus was telling the truth, or he was lying. If he lied, he is not our Savior.

"They answered and said to him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said to them, If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham' (v39).

"But now you seek to kill me, a man that has told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham" (v40).

The Interlinear Bible translates verse 40 as follows:

"And you seek me to kill, a man who the truth to you has spoken which I heard beside God, this, Abraham did not do."

Here, the English word beside is translated from the Greek word para, which means beside, next to, near, in the sight of, and close proximity to. By using this word, Christ affirms that he had been with God the Father in heaven.
"You do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said to them, If God were your Father, you would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me" (vs.41-42).

The religious leaders of the Jews had great difficulty with what Jesus said about his heavenly Father because they did not understand the prophecies concerning the Messiah and what he would teach.

"Why do you not understand my speech? even because you cannot hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, you believe me not. Which of you convinces me of [censures] me of [because of] sin? and if I say the truth, why do you not believe me? He that is of God hears God's words: you therefore hear them not, because you are not of God" (vs. 43-47).

Although these religious leaders had an academic understanding of the scriptures, they could not perceive the spiritual intent of what Jesus was saying because they were not living or teaching the truth of God.

"Then answered the Jews, and said to him, Say we not well that you are a Samaritan, and have a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor my Father, and you do dishonor me. And I seek not my own glory: there is one that seeks and judges. Truly, truly, I say to you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" (vs.48-51).

Jesus could make this promise because he was the Creator God and the Savior of humanity.

"Then said the Jews to him, Now we know that you have a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and you say, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Are you greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom make you yourself?" (vs.52-53).

We must remember that the Jews were looking for the Messiah to come and deliver them from physical bondage. If Jesus had said he was the Christ and had come to deliver them from their physical bondage, their reaction would not have been the same—but Jesus said something very different!
"Jesus answered, If I honor myself, my honor is nothing: it is my Father that honors me; of whom you say, that he is your God: Yet you have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like to you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews to him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" (vs.54-57).

To what day was Jesus referring that Abraham was happy to see? Without more information we can only assume that Jesus was speaking of the day when Abraham entertained God prior to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, because we know Abraham is not in heaven. See Jn.3:13; Acts 2:34.

**Jesus Said He Existed Before Abraham**

Even though many scriptures speak of Jesus being a member of the God family, many people feel that he was only a human being and did not pre-exist. Notice what Jesus himself and others were inspired to say of his pre-existence.

In verse 58, Jesus makes a statement that was more than the Jews could bear or comprehend:

"Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

Jesus had just bluntly told them that he had pre-dated and existed prior to Abraham. In other words, he told them that he was the Creator God of Abraham. This so angered the Jews that they immediately tried to kill him for speaking what they considered to be blasphemy.

"Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by" (v59).

Jesus explains that he is the way to eternal life:

"Then said they to him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life: he that comes to me shall never hunger: and he that believes on me shall never thirst" (Jn.6:34-35 KJV).

"Jesus answered and said to them, Do not murmur with one another. No one is able to come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up in the last day. It has been written in the prophets, "they shall be all taught of God." So then everyone who hears and learns from the Father, comes to me" (Jn.6:43-45 Para.). See also Jn.6:47.
JESUS THE CREATOR, THE SON, AND THE SAVIOR

This section will examine many of the scriptures which show, without a doubt, that Jesus is the Creator God, the Son of the Sovereign Father of all that exists, and the Savior of humanity.

The apostle Paul clearly taught that Jesus was the Creator God who became the Savior and that he was the Son of God the Father:

"But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (1.Cor.8:6 KJV). See also Col.1:1-3.

Here, we have an extremely clear statement that shows that God the Father is the supreme power and ruler over all things and that all things exist through Jesus Christ, including the Father's sons of the New Creation.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin. Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth . . . all things were created by him and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead . . ." (Col.1:14-18 KJV).

Some people believe that this scripture speaks of the Father as the Creator; however, it does not. How can this belief be true, when the One spoken of here was the one who shed his blood for humanity? Clearly, these scriptures refer to the Savior as the Creator of all that exists.

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. To the intent now to the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal wisdom which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph.3:9-11 KJV).

In his letters to the Corinthians, the Colossians, and the Ephesians the apostle Paul makes the same distinction that John did regarding these two distinct and individual God-beings and their relationship to each other. Paul also substantiates the writings of John in showing that God the Father is the supreme sovereign, who directed Christ to create all that is. Notice what the writer to the Hebrews clearly says about God the Father and Jesus Christ the Creator God:
"Long ago God spoke in many different ways to our fathers through the prophets [in visions, dreams, and even face to face], telling them little by little about his plans. But now in these days he has spoken to us through his Son to whom he has given everything, and through whom he made the world and everything there is. God's Son shines out with God's glory, and all that God's Son is and does marks him as God. He regulates [Greek, phero. English, to uphold or to rule] the universe by the mighty power of his command. He is the one who died to cleanse us and to clear our record of all sin, and then sat down in highest honor beside the great God of heaven" (Heb.1:1-3 LBP). See also verses 7-10 and Job 26:12-13; Psa.65:6; Rom.16:25.

The fourth and fifth chapters of the Book of Revelation give further details, which confirm that Jesus Christ is the Creator God and that all things were made for the Father. Please carefully study both chapters for a clear understanding of the relationship between God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Clearly the WORD or the LOGOS, spoken of by John is none other than Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, which John speaks about in the fourth and fifth chapters of the Book of Revelation.

"And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said to me, see you do it not: I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren that have the testimony of Jesus; worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war. His eyes were a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name was The Word of God" (Rev.19:9-13 KJV).

John 1:4-5, 6-9 KJV

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shined in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (vs. 4-5).

Simply put, the vast majority of the people who saw and heard the Savior did not know or understand who he was or why he came to earth. The same can be said for the generation we live in today; very few people really know who Jesus was, why he came then, and why he will come again.
John the Baptist

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That Light was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world" (vs.6-9).

The apostle John clearly says that John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for the coming of the Light (i.e., the Creator God/Jesus Christ) who would be the Messiah. Even Jesus said he was the Light from God:

"Then spoke Jesus again to them saying, I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (Jn.8:12 KJV). See also Isa.42:1-7; Mal.4:2; Acts 26:13-18.

Jesus Says he is the Messiah

On a number of occasions Jesus said he was the Messiah. If Jesus was telling the truth, he had to be the Creator God, because the Creator God said that he was the only Redeemer and Savior. See Isa.43:11.

A Samaritan woman said to Jesus:

"I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus said to her, I that speak to you am he..." (Jn.4:25-26 KJV).

"And Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. The Jews gathered around him, saying 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ tell us plainly'. Jesus answered, 'I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep' (Jn.10:24-26 NIV)

Paul and Peter say that Jesus is the Savior:

"But has in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior. To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior" (Tit.1:3-4 KJV). See also Lk.1:47; 2:11; Acts 5:31; 13:23; 2.Pet.1:1-11; 2:20; 3:2-18; and Jude 25.

"For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men especially of those that believe" (1.Tim.4:10 KJV).
"Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ . . ." (Tit.2:10-13KJV).

"Be it known to you all, 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, even by him does this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:10-12 KJV).

Salvation can only come through Jesus, not only because he is our Savior today but also because he was the Creator God who made covenants and promises with the patriarchs and national Israel concerning salvation. This is why the patriarchs (e.g., Noah, Abraham, Moses, David) will have salvation along with anyone else who remains in Christ.

Another reason that there is no salvation in any other name (authority) but Jesus is that he became the supreme sacrifice by giving up his life for humanity. The scriptures plainly state that Jesus is the only name (authority) under heaven by which we can be saved. Because the Mighty One of Israel said he was the only Redeemer and Savior, it makes sense that he (Jesus) is still the only name or authority by which we can be saved. Once we understand that the Creator God was the One who became Jesus Christ the Savior, it becomes much easier to understand and determine who is being spoken of when the word 'God' is used in the scriptures—(e.g., God the Father, Jesus Christ, or both).

JESUS, THE ROCK OF ISRAEL

One of the major misconceptions people have about Jesus is their assumption that he did not exist before his physical birth. The mystery of who and what Jesus was before his physical birth must be solved before one can understand who and what God the Father is. Therefore, the following scriptures should prove beyond a doubt that Jesus was the God of ancient Israel who was known as the Rock and Israel's deliverer, Redeemer, and Savior:

"Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe you greatness to our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deut.32:3-4 KJV).

"There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside you: neither is there any rock like our God" (1.Sam.2:2 KJV).
The word *rock* in Hebrew is *sur*, which means *boulders, formations of stone, or material of which mountains are composed*. This word appears about seventy-five times in the Old Testament and it is used many times to describe the Creator God and his characteristics.

The word *sur* also appears in names such as: Zurishaddai—my Rock is Shaddai (Num. 1:6), and Zuriel—my Rock is El (God). See Num.3:35.

"But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: you are waxen fat, you are grown thick, you are covered with fainess; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation" (Deut.32:15 KJV).

"And he said, The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer. The God of my rock; in him will I trust: He is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my Savior; you save me from violence" (2.Sam.22:2-3 KJV).

"He shall cry to me, you are my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation" (Psa.89:26 KJV).

"Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; . . . he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven . . . . He sent them meat to the full. . . . He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: . . . for all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works . . .. When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the High God their Redeemer" (Psa.78:20-35 KJV).

**Jesus the Rock and Redeemer of Israel**

In the following scriptures, Paul leaves no doubt that he believed that Jesus Christ was the Rock and Redeemer of Israel:

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: AND THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST" (1.Cor.10:1-4 KJV). See also 1.Pet.1:10-11.

"Israel, that pursued the law of righteousness, has not succeeded in their attempt to conform to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not pursue it through faith, but attempted to conform by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offense: and whosoever believes on him shall not be ashamed" (Rom.9:31-33 Para.).
"For there is one God [supreme sovereign], and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"(1.Tim.2:5 KJV).

The apostle Peter confirmed Paul's analysis that Christ is the prophetie ROCK:

"Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believes on him shall not be confounded. To you therefore which believe he is precious: But to them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereto also they were appointed"(1.Pet.2:6-8 KJV). See also Psa.118:22-23; Matt.21:42; Acts 4:11-12; Eph.2:20.

While being questioned by the high priest and elders about his authority to heal a lame man, Peter explained that it was through the authority of Jesus Christ that he healed. Moreover he explained that Jesus was the Savior of humanity:

"Be it known to you all, and to all people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 10:10-12 KJV).

Because the Creator God of Israel and Jesus Christ are both called the only Redeemer and Savior, they must be the same being. If they are not the same being, there is a problem that cannot be solved using the Bible, because, the Creator God of Israel and Jesus Christ are both the same being according to the Bible.

The Savior and Redeemer

Because both the apostles Paul and Peter say that Jesus was the Rock (God) of ancient Israel, the prophetie scriptures that speak of the rock of offence and the only Savior and Redeemer can only be referring to Jesus Christ:

"And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Isa.8:14 Para.).

"I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no Savior" (Isa.43:11 KJV).

"Thus says the Lord your Redeemer, and he that formed you from the womb, I am the Lord that makes all things; that stretches forth the heavens alone; that spreads abroad the earth by Myself" (Isa.44:24 KJV).
"Tell you, and bring them near; Yes, let them take counsel together: who have declared this from ancient time? who have told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside me" (Isa.45:21 KJV).

"I the Lord am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob" (Isa.60:16 KJV).

"Yet I am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt, and you shall know no God but me: for there is no Savior beside me" (Hos.13:4 KJV).

The Biblical record leaves no doubt that the Creator of humanity is its only Redeemer and Savior. Furthermore, there is no contradiction with Jesus Christ being the only Redeemer and Savior, because they are one in the same person:

- The Creator was in absolute authority over the earth.
- Salvation could only be gained before the gospel age through the keeping of the laws, precepts, and principles of God.
- Only after the Creator became the Savior could humans gain access to the Father who is the immortal sovereign. See Heb.4:15-16.

THE FATHER, CHRIST, AND THE BOOK OF REVELATION

In order to even begin to understand what is said in the first four chapters of the Book of Revelation concerning God the Father and Jesus Christ, it is necessary to review what Jesus says about the fact that he came from the Father and would return to him:

"I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" (Jn.16:28 KJV). See also Jn.3:13.

Jesus says that he came forth from the Father into the world and he leaves the world again. If we understand that Christ was the Creator, this statement will not be a mystery.

Here, the English word again is translated from the Greek word palin, which means once more, repetition, or again. As the Creator God, he came to this planet many times. Remember, Adam, Eve, Cain, Abraham, Jacob, Moses and many others saw, ate, and communicated face-to-face with the Creator.

The next few verses are very important because they show us when the disciples began to understand who Jesus and the Father are:
"A little while, and you shall not see me: and again, a little while, and you shall see me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he says to us, A little while, and you shall not see me: and again, a little while, and you shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?" (Jn.16:16-17 KJV).

The disciples did not quite understand what Jesus was telling them because they did not yet fully grasp the concept of the God family. In the verses that follow, Jesus further explains that he came from the Father and he had to return to heaven. After this explanation, the disciples began to truly believe the things that Jesus had been telling them about the Father and himself.

"I came forth from the Father and am come into the world: Again I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said to him, Lo, now speak you plainly, and speak no proverb. Now we are sure that you know all things, and need not that any man should ask you: by this we believe that you came forth from God" (Jn.16:28-30 KJV).

The Book of Revelation

One of the first things we notice as we begin to read the Book of Revelation, is that this revelation was given by God (Greek: Theos—the Supreme Sovereign of all that exists) to Jesus Christ to give to the saints.

"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him, to show to his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw" (Rev.1:1-2 KJV).

Here, John is inspired to record the distinction between Jesus Christ and God the Father and he continues to make this distinction throughout the entire Book of Revelation.

"John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be to you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. . . ." (Rev.1:4-5 KJV).

Some Bible scholars point out that the and in the phrase and from Jesus Christ is the Greek exegetic and, which can mean even. If even is the correct translation it would mean that the One referred to as the One who was and is coming is Jesus Christ. If not, then we could assume that the One spoken of is God the Father, because the Father is eventually coming to the earth (1.Cor.15:24-28; Rev.21:1-7).

There is no need to guess who this being is that sits upon the throne, because the seven spirits are also shown to be before the throne of God the Father along with Jesus Christ and the 24 elders. See Rev.4:1-11 (especially verse 5); 5:1-9; 6:16; 7:9-17.
The Alpha and Omega

In a prophecy of the future the Creator God speaks of himself as the first and the last (the Alpha and Omega) and says that he is sent by the spirit of God to redeem humanity. This prophecy can only be understood with the understanding that Jesus is the Creator God who was sent to redeem humanity.

Isaiah 48:12-13, 16-17, 20 KJV

"Hearken to me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. My hand also has laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand has spanned the heavens: when I call to them, they stand up together (vs.12-13). . .Come you near to me, hear you this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; From the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and his spirit, has sent me. This says the Lord, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord your God which teaches you to profit, which leads you by the way that you should go (vs.16-17). . . The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob" (v20).

The following are some of the things that can be learned from these verses about the One who calls himself the first and the last:

• He is the One who has created the physical existence.
• He has revealed who he was from the beginning of Creation.
• He has been sent by his Lord and his Lord's spirit.
• He is Israel's Holy One and Redeemer.
• He is the Lord God.

Jesus Christ, the Alpha and Omega

"To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And has made us kings and priests to God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he comes with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, says the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What you see, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia. . ." (Rev.1:5-11 KJV).
We are freed from our sins by the sacrifice of the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and Ending, who is Jesus Christ our Savior and Redeemer. From this evidence, it is easy to see that Jesus is the Creator God, because the God of the ancient Israel also claimed these same titles.

The One *"who was and is coming"* refers to Jesus. However, even if it did refer to God the Father, there would be no contradiction in the phrase *"who was and is coming"* because both are God-beings and both will be in the heavenly Jerusalem when it is brought to earth. See Rev.21:10-27.

Remember that John was told to write these things to the elect of God through Jesus Christ who says that it was his God (i.e., God the Father) who instructed him to reveal these prophecies to John and the churches.

**NAMES AND TITLES AND THEIR MEANINGS**

'Alpha' is the first letter in the Greek alphabet and it is often used to signify the number one or the first of something.

- The Beginning, *arche*, means *commencement*.
- The First, *protos*, means *foremost in time, place or order*.
- Omega, the last letter in the Greek alphabet, means *finality*.
- The Ending, *eschatos*, means *final in time and place, and the last*.
- The Almighty, *pantokrator*, means *the all ruling*.

Jesus is all of these things and more. He is the author and finisher of our faith; he is the Creator of all things; he is the first and last Savior of humanity; and he is the second in command in the Kingdom of God sitting at the right hand of God the Father.

**The Alpha and Omega was Dead and Now Lives**

After hearing the voice of the Alpha and Omega, John turned to see who was speaking to him (Rev.1:12-17). What he saw scared him so much that he fainted. It is interesting to note that a similar being was seen by the prophets Ezekiel and Daniel (Ezk.1:26-28; Dan.7:9).

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying to me, fear not; I am the First and the Last: I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev.1: 17-18).

The Greek Interlinear translates the Greek phrase *was dead* as *I became dead*, and the Greek word used here for *dead* is *corpse*. The Alpha and Omega said he was a dead body and now is alive forever. This phrase is very important when one considers that some feel the totality of Jesus did not really die and that only his flesh died. This statement, however, says he was totally dead.
Notice that the Alpha and Omega (the Savior) was totally dead at one time: "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things says the first and the last, which was dead [was a corpse], and is alive" (Rev.2:8 KJV).

THE BOOK OF LIFE

"He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white clothing; and I [Jesus] will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life, but I will confess [acknowledge] his name before my Father [God the Father], and before his angels" (Rev.3:5 KJV).

The Alpha and Omega is the one who controls the Book of Life. There should be no doubt that the Alpha and Omega was the Creator God who told Moses he had the power to blot names out of the Book of Life. See Ex.32:32-33 KJV.

JESUS REWARDS THE SAINTS

"Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God [Theos], and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God [Theos], and the name of the city of my God [Theos], which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God [Theos]: and I will write upon him my new name" (Rev.3:12 KJV).

Jesus, who is the Alpha and Omega, has the power and authority from God the Father to give positions and names to the Father's elect children. See Matt.28:18.

"To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev.3:21 KJV).

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty [Greatness] in the heavens" (Heb.8:1 KJV).

AT THE FATHER'S THRONE

In chapter four of the Book of Revelation, John describes another event that takes place in heaven. This momentous event starts with the opening of a door through which John sees a god-being sitting on a central throne with twenty four others he calls elders sitting on thrones around the central throne.

John describes this great god-being in the same way he did the God of Christ in Revelation, chapter one, verse four. Moreover, the scriptures clearly show that all things were created for this god-being's pleasure (Rev.4:11) and that God the Father created all things by and through Jesus Christ (Eph.3:9; Col.1:11-16). Therefore, it should be evident that the god-being sitting on the central throne is God the Father. Revelation, chapter five also shows that the spirit-being on this throne is God the Father.
"And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that lives for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for you have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created" (Rev.4:8-11 KJV).

THE ROOT OF DAVID AND LAMB OF GOD

As this event progresses in heaven, we are told that the One sitting on the throne has a book that no one can open, except Jesus Christ.

"And one of the elders said to me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David [see Rev.22:16] has prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (Rev.5:5-6 KJV). See also Rev.1:4-5.

We know from the prophecies of the Old Testament and the history of the New Testament that the only person who could possibly fit the description of the Lamb is Jesus the Christ.

"And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne" (Rev.5:7 KJV).

As soon as Jesus Christ had taken the book out of the hand of God the Father, the twenty four elders who had been worshiping the Father begin to sing and praise Jesus Christ and worship the One who sits upon the throne.

John again makes a difference between God the Father and Jesus Christ: "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be to him that sits upon the throne and to the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev.5:13 KJV).

Verses 10 through 17 of Revelation, chapter 7 show that some of the elect of God who come out of great tribulation will serve God the Father in his temple. These scriptures also show that the Lamb of God (Christ) is a distinct and separate individual from God the Father.

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; And he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God, saying, We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which are, and were, and art to come; because you have taken to you your great power, and have reigned" (Rev.11:15-17 KJV).
And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. I Jesus have sent my angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the root and offspring of David the bright and morning star" (Rev. 22:12-16 KJV).

SUMMARY

A an honest study of the biblical record will reveal the existence of two god-beings before the creation of humans. One god was the Sovereign God and the other god was the Creator God.

In the beginning of the apostle John's gospel account, he identifies the Creator God as the Word who was with the Sovereign God:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (Jn. 1:1-5 KJV).

The apostle John also tells us that the Word created the world and that the Word came to live among humans as the firstborn son of the Sovereign God (i.e., the Father):

"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came to his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwell among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:10-14 KJV).

The Apostle Paul and the writer to the Hebrews clearly and concisely document the identity of the Sovereign God, the Creator God, and Jesus Christ:

"Giving thanks to the Father, which has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation—for all things were created in him, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth; the visible and the invisible; whether thrones, or lordships, or rulers, or authorities, all things have been created through him. And he is before all things, and all things consist in him. And he is the Head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that he be preeminent in all things" (Col. 1:12-18 Para.). See also Acts 13:33-35; Rev. 1:5 KJV.
"Long ago God spoke in many different ways to our fathers through the prophets [in visions, dreams, and even face to face], telling them little by little about his plans. "But now in these days he [i.e., the Sovereign God] has spoken to us through his Son [i.e., Jesus Christ] to whom he has given everything, and through whom he made the world and everything there is. God's Son shines out with God's glory, and all that God's Son is and does marks him as God. He regulates the universe by the mighty power of his command. He is the one who died to cleanse us and clear our record of all sin, and then sat down in highest honor beside the great God of heaven" (Heb.1:2-3 LBP).

The Creator God who made all that exists for the Sovereign God voluntarily gave up his immortality to come to earth in human form, live a sinless life as an example for us to follow, and sacrificed his life in an agonizing death as payment for the sins of all humanity. He did this in order that each of us could be saved from eternal death as a result of our violation of God's perfect law. See 1.Cor.6:20; 7:23; Ezk.18:4,20; Rom. 6:23.

The reason for so much confusion and misunderstanding among professing Christians today about God, the Family of God, God the Father, and Jesus Christ is quite simple. Satan has deceived most of them into believing that there is only one God-being or that God is a trinity of beings. Moreover, he has deceived the rest of the world into believing that the true God does not exist, and worshiping a false god. See Rev.12:9; 18:23; 19:20; 20:10.

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God [God the Father], and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (Rev.12:9-10 KJV).

A great part Satan's deception is the teaching that God the Father and Jesus Christ are not separate individual God-beings and that the Family of God does not exist.

B.L. Cocherell

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When Jesus was revealing the existence of God the Father and his plan for the salvation of humanity, many of the things he said offended the Jewish religious leaders. These leaders were offended because what he said was a condemnation of their perverted view of God and their incorrect worship of him.

"Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him [Jesus], because he not only had broken the Sabbath [according to their interpretation of the law], but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do: for what things soever he does, these also does the Son likewise. For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all things that he does: and he will show him greater works than these, that you may marvel" (Jn.5:18-20 KJV).

Over and over again, through his teachings, Jesus made it clear that he was the Creator God, the Son of God, and the Redeemer and Savior of humanity. However, most of the people he spoke to did not believe him because they were looking for a release from their physical problems instead of their spiritual problems.

AUTHORITY FROM THE FATHER

The Jewish religious leaders were always asking Jesus where he got the authority to teach the things that he taught and to prove that he was sent from God (Lk.20:1-8). In reply to these leaders' lack of understanding concerning his authority to teach what he did, and his relationship to the Sovereign God, Jesus said the following:

"I am one that bears witness of myself, and the Father that sent me bears witness of me. The leaders replied, Where is your Father? And Jesus answered, 'You neither know me, nor my Father: if you had known me, you should have known my Father also" (Jn.8:18-19 KJV).

Paraphrased in modern English Jesus said in verse 19: Look, if you had really known the God you profess to obey, you would have known me and my Father.

John 8:26-38 KJV

"I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he [God the Father] that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard from him. They did not understand that he spoke to them of the Father" (vs.26-27).
When one understands that the Word and the Light the apostle John spoke of (Jn.1:1-9) is Jesus Christ, and that the God that the Word was with and sent from is the Sovereign God (God the Father), one can easily understand why Jesus said he heard the things that he taught directly from the Father:

"Then Jesus said to them, When you have lifted up the son of man [crucified him], then shall you know that I am [I AM, i.e., GOD] he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father has taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father has not left me alone; for I always do those things that please him. . . . Then Jesus said to those Jews which believed on him, If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (vs.28-32).

When the Jews heard what Jesus had said concerning his position in the Family of God, and the message he was teaching about spiritual freedom they became very angry and said:

"We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how say you, You shall be made free? Jesus replied, Truly, truly, I say to you, Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abides not in the house for ever: but the son abides ever. If the son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. I know that you are Abraham's seed; but you seek to kill me, because my word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father" (vs.33-38).

Because of their self-righteous attitude, these Jews who wanted to kill Jesus could not understand the message that he was bringing from God the Father. Jesus told them bluntly that he received the things that he taught from his Father who is the Sovereign God of all that exists. Now if Jesus received these things while he was with the Father, he must have been in heaven where the Father resides. Either Jesus was telling the truth or he was lying. If he lied, he is not our Savior.

A GREAT DECEPTION

Over and over again our Savior called the Supreme Sovereign whom he served 'Father', and over and over again he spoke about the father-son relationship between himself and the Sovereign God who was in heaven. If what Jesus said about his status in the God family is true, and what he said about God the Father is true, why do so many people believe that there is only one God-being?

The reason that there is so much confusion and misunderstanding among professing Christians today about God, the Family of God, God the Father, and Jesus Christ is quite simple. Satan has deceived most of them into believing that there is only one God-being or that God is a trinity of beings. Moreover, he has deceived the rest of the world into believing that the true God does not exist, and worshiping a false god. See Rev.12:9; 18:23; 19:20; 20:10.
"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour" (1.Pet.5:8 KJV).

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God [God the Father], and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (Rev.12:9-10 KJV).

Notice that it is Satan who deceives the whole world, and a great part of this deception is the teaching that God the Father and Jesus Christ are not separate individual God-beings.

BEFORE CHRIST

Before the advent of Jesus Christ, virtually no one knew that God the Father existed. From the scriptural record it seems that only a few were privileged to understand that there was more than one being in the God family. But for the most part, the Father who those of ancient Israel knew and worshiped was the Creator God who became the Savior. This may seem confusing, but the Savior was the One who created all things; therefore, he was the Father of all creation.

Many of the prophets, priests, and perhaps King David understood the relationship between the Father and the Son:

"The Lord [Yahweh] said to my Lord [Adon], Sit you at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool" (Psa.110:1 KJV).

Here, the Father is talking to David's Lord—the Creator God.

Speaking to the Scribes about the commandments, Christ said, "The first of all the commandments is, Hear O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, . . ." (Mk.12:29-30 KJV).

In context, this scripture is very easy to explain. Christ was not trying to reveal the identity of God; he was answering a question put forth by the Scribes about the commandments (see verse 28). However, in explaining the first commandment, Christ who was the God of Israel stated that the nation of Israel should love God. But which God was he speaking of? The being he refers to as "Our God" (his God also) is the one he came to reveal—God the Father. Yes, "the Lord our God is one Lord"; the living Savior is one God, and the Father is the other God. See 1.Cor.8:6.

Remember the apostle Paul said the understanding of what God was doing here on earth was a mystery (see Col.2:2). This mystery also includes what the God family is and who comprises it.
Beyond a shadow of a doubt, there is a Sovereign Father who reigns supreme above our Savior. And this Supreme Sovereign is the One our Savior said he was sent to reveal.

NO HUMAN HAS SEEN GOD THE FATHER

There are two scriptures that many people believe refer to the Creator God that no human has ever seen or heard; however, these scriptures actually refer to God the Father who sent Jesus Christ to earth to reveal him as the Sovereign Father of all that exists and teach his message of salvation:

"No man has seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him" (Jn.1:18 KJV).

"And the Father himself, which has sent me, has borne witness of me. You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape" (Jn.5:37 KJV).

John clearly says that no man has seen God, and Jesus says that no one has heard the Father's voice or seen his shape; therefore, there should be no question that the God spoken of by John and Jesus is not the same God that walked and talked with humans on earth.

Adam and Eve Walked and Talked with God

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden you may freely eat" (Gen.2:16 KJV).

Some try to justify their monotheistic belief by explaining that the spirit-being in the scriptures that show people speaking to God face-to-face was only an angel who represented God. However, the scriptures plainly state in the accounts where God met and talked with people that it was actually God who spoke with people, not an angel.

"And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden" (Gen.3:8 KJV).

Not only did Adam and Eve hear the voice of God but they were also afraid to stand in his presence.

"And the Lord God called to Adam, and said to him, Where are you? And he said, I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded you that you should not eat? And the man said, The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said to the woman, What is this that you have done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Gen.3:9-12 KJV).
After speaking at some length to Adam, Eve, and the serpent, the Creator makes a statement that proves he was not the only God.

"And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" (Gen.3:22).

To whom was the Creator referring when he said "as one of us"? Was he talking to an angel or was he talking to someone else? Remember, the One we call our Savior was the One who created all things (Jn.1:1-5; Eph.3:9). This reference to a plurality of God-beings becomes very important in reaching a conclusion as to the Father and Son relationship.

Cain Spoke with the Creator

"And the Lord said to Cain, where is Abel your brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he [the Creator] said, What have you done?" (Gen.4:9 KJV).

There is no mention of an angel speaking for the Creator here. It is clear that the Creator is doing the talking.

God Spoke to Noah

"And God said to Noah, the end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (Gen.6:13 KJV). See also Gen.7:1; 9:1.

Conversations with Abraham

"Now the Lord had said to Abram, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you" (Gen.12:1 KJV). "And the Lord appeared to him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day" (Gen.18:1 KJV).

Not only did the Creator appear to Abram but also sat down and ate a meal with him and his wife Sarah:

"And Abraham ran to the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it to a young man; and he hastened to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat" (Gen.18:7-8 KJV).

Because this type of food preparation takes a considerable amount of time, there would have been ample time for conversation while waiting for the food to be cooked and served. During this meeting, God reveals to Abraham why he came:

"And the Lord [YHWH] said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do . . ." (Gen.18:17 KJV).

The rest of chapter eighteen details the conversation between the Creator and Abraham about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.
Jacob and the Creator

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let you go, except you bless me. And he said to him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray you, your name. And he said, Wherefore is it that you do ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Penial: for I have seen God [Elohim] face to face, and my life is preserved" (Gen.32:24-30 KJV).

The common belief is that Jacob wrestled with an angel, but this is not true: It was actually the Creator who wrestled with Jacob:

"And God [Elohim] appeared to Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. And God said to him, Your name is Jacob: Your name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be your name: and he called his name Israel. And God said to him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of you, and kings shall come out of your loins" (Gen.35:9-12 KJV).

Moses, Aaron, and Israel

In Exodus, chapters 3 and 4, we see the Creator personally speaks to Moses and Aaron and appoints them to be his servants. Not only did the Creator speak to Moses and Aaron but also, on one occasion, he spoke to the entire nation of Israel:

"And the Lord said to Moses, Lo, I come to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you for ever. And Moses told the words of the people to the Lord. And the Lord said to Moses, Go to the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai" (Ex.19:9-11 KJV).

In Exodus, chapter 20, God speaks to the people of Israel, which was a very frightening experience for the Israelites. In fact, it was so frightening to them that they requested that the Creator speak to them through Moses, not directly to them.
Moses and the Elders

Moses and the Elders of Israel not only had a meeting with the Creator, but they also ate a meal with him on Mount Sinai:

"Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink" (Ex.24:9-11 KJV).

Face-to-Face

"And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Ex.33:11 KJV).

This is a very clear statement, which shows the kind of close, personal communication the Creator had with Moses. Most people seem to think that the Creator hid himself from mankind and only dealt with his creation through visions or angels. However, this was not the case.

The Creator’s Glory

"And he said, I beseech you, show me your glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And he said, you cannot see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and you shall stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passes by, that I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and will cover you with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen" (Ex.33:18-33 KJV).

It is apparent from the biblical evidence presented so far, that many people have seen the Creator in the physical form of a man, and some people were allowed to see a small glimpse of his glorified form. Without a doubt, the scriptures show that humans have talked to and seen the Mighty One who created all that exists for the Sovereign God. Therefore, who is the being that Jesus and the apostles continually refer to as "the Father" that no one has seen nor heard speak? The answer is very simple, if we let the Bible interpret itself.

JESUS SENT TO REVEAL THE FATHER

"All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt.11:27 KJV). See Jn.17:25-26.
Only Christ can reveal who the Father is, which he does through the Bible for those who are sensitive to the things of the spirit. See Psa.111:10.

"I am one that bears witness of myself, and the Father that sent me bears witness of me. Then said they to him, Where is your Father? Jesus answered, You neither know me, nor my Father: if you had known me, you should have known my Father also" (Jn.8:18-19 KJV).

Christ says that, if they had really known the God they professed to obey, they would have known that he is the God of their fathers, whom they had prophesied would come in the flesh. And if they had known that they would have been able to know that he came to reveal the Father to them; and they would know both Christ and his Father.

"I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father" (Jn.8:38 KJV).

"These things have I spoken to you, that you should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: Yes, the time comes, that whosoever kills you will think that he does God service. And these things will they do to you, because they have not known the Father, nor me" (Jn.16:1-3 KJV).

Christ Did Not Send Himself

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (Jn.3:16 KJV).

Christ did not send himself, as some teach. The scriptures clearly say the One who is called "God the Father" sent him to become the Savior of humanity.

"That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the son honors not the Father which has sent him" (Jn.5:23 KJV).

"I can of my own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me" (Jn.5:30 KJV). See also verses 36-38.

"I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive" (Jn.5:43 KJV). See also Jn.5:30-37; 6:44,57.

Jesus clearly said that he came to earth as a representative of his Father. Just as the people did not believe the clear statements of the Savior then, they do not believe his written word today:
"Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: There is one that accuses you, even Moses, in whom you trust. For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?" (Jn.5:45-47 KJV).

WHO IS THE FATHER?

Our Savior was the Mighty One who created all that exists for the Sovereign God (this is plainly stated by John and Paul and in a multitude of other scriptures), but who is this Father who sent him to earth? Who is this being John calls 'the Father'? The answer to this question will solve many of the mysteries concerning the Family of God.

"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in your sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: And no man knows the son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the son, and he to whomsoever the son will reveal him" (Matt.11:25-27 KJV). See also Mk.4:11-12.

Notice it is Jesus who is able to reveal the things concerning the Father and the mystery surrounding their Father-Son relationship.

Why did Christ have to reveal certain things about the Father? The only logical answer to why the Father sent Jesus to reveal his existence and so many things about himself (e.g., who he is, what his name is, and what his plan is) was that humanity did not know of his existence, and because it was time for him to reveal himself in order for the next phase of his plan for humanity to go forward.

John 17:1-8 KJV

"These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify your Son, that your Son also may glorify you: As you have given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (vs.1-3).

At this point in history, there were very few people who had any knowledge of who the Father and Jesus Christ were.

"I have glorified you on the earth: I have finished the work which you gave me to do. And now, O Father, glorify you me with your own self with the glory which I had with you before the world was" (vs.4-5).

Here, Jesus asks God the Father to return him to his former state of existence as an immortal God in the Family and Kingdom of God.
"I have manifested your name to the men which you gave me out of the world: yours they were, and you gave them to me; and they have kept your word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever you have given me are of you. For I have given to them the words which you gave me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from you, and they have believed that you did send me" (vs.6-8).

Jesus had fulfilled his mission to prepare those whom the Father had called to salvation and to be taught the truth of God concerning the Family and Kingdom of God and their plan for humanity.

THE FATHER IS IN HEAVEN

One of the reasons that Jesus came to earth was to reveal the Father's good news message (his plan for humanity):

"Jesus said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood have not revealed it to you, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt.16:17 KJV).

"And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven" (Matt.23:9 KJV). See Matt.18:35.

"I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in your sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: And no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt.11:25-27 KJV). See also Mk.11:25-26; 4:10-12; Jn.17:25-26; Eph.6:19.

These are but a few of the many scriptures that reveal the Father is in heaven. A small amount of study will reveal that the Father will not come to the earth to reside until the final phase of his plan for humanity.

It is extremely important to understand that unless a person knows who the Father is there can be no understanding of the gospel message that Jesus taught, because it is the Father's message.

WHAT IS THE FATHER LIKE?

"Thomas said to him, Lord, we know not where you go; and how can we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you should have known my Father also: and from henceforth you know him, and have seen him. Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. Jesus said to him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip? he that has seen me has seen the Father; and how say you then, Show us the Father?" (Jn.14:5-9 KJV). See 2.Cor.4:3-4.
In reply to Thomas and Philip, Jesus said that he had revealed what the Father was like to them. Jesus revealed the Father's existence, attitudes, thoughts, desires, love, and personality through his own example and teaching.

THE FATHER'S NAME

The next few pages contain many of Jesus' references to the Father. Through these scriptures, we are able to know what the Father is like and what he wants to be called.

"These things have I spoken to you in proverbs: but the time comes, when I shall no more speak to you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father. At that day you shall ask in my name: and I say not to you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said to him, Lo, now speak you plainly, and speak no proverb" (Jn.16:25-29 KJV).

"I have manifested your name to the men which you gave me out of the world: yours they were, and you gave them me; and they have kept your word" (Jn.17:6 KJV).

"O righteous Father, the world has not known you: but I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me. And I have declared to them your name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (Jn.17:25-26 KJV).

"And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mk.11:25-26 KJV).

"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babes: even so, Father: for so it seemed good in your sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knows who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the son will reveal him" (Lk.10:21-22).

Why did Christ have to reveal the Father and the Father's name if the Father was the Creator God? Did the nation of Israel not know the Creator God's name? It should be obvious that if God the Father found it necessary to send someone to reveal who he is, he is not the God the Israelites had known.
His Name is Father

Our Savior said to call upon our 'Father' who is in heaven. The Greek word used in the New Testament to refer to the Father is 'Pater', and is from a root word, which means 'nourisher', 'protector', and 'up-holder'. See Matt.6:9; Lk.11:2; Jn.14:13; 15:16.

Some who believe in a monotheistic, dualistic or a triune God think that, somehow, our Savior was praying to a part of himself, which he left in heaven while he was on earth. Confusing? Yes, it is confusing and it is not very logical in light of all the very clear scriptures that state Jesus prayed to a being called the Father.

TO WHOM DID JESUS PRAY?

"And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as you will. . .. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, your will be done. . .. And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus to him, put up again your sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Think you that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"


"And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said to them, When you pray, say, Our Father which is in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, as in heaven, so in earth" (Lk.11:2 KJV). See also Matt.6:9.

Mark records an extremely interesting statement made by our Savior just before his death:

"And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calls Elias" (Mk.15:34-35 KJV).

Here, Jesus quotes a prophetic Psalm (quoted below), that foretold what the Messiah's thoughts and words would be in the last moments of life as a human.

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? why are you so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day time, but you hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent" (Psa.22:1-2 KJV).
In Mark 15:34-35, when Jesus speaks to the Supreme Sovereign, he calls him 'God'. It makes no sense whatsoever for Christ to pray to a part of himself, as the doctrines of Monotheism, Dualism, and Trinitarianism teach. All of the scriptural evidence shows Jesus praying to a spirit-being who had authority and power above that of his own. See Jn.14:28.

ASK OF THE FATHER IN JESUS' NAME

Notice our Savior's instructions in what is commonly called the Lord's prayer: "After this manner therefore pray you: Our Father which is in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Matt.6:9 KJV).

"And he said to them, When you pray, say, Our Father which is in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, as in heaven, so in earth" (Lk.11:2 KJV).

"And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the son" (Jn.14:13 KJV).

"Whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (Jn.15:16 KJV).

Christ says that his followers should pray to the Father, whom he came to reveal. Conceptually, if a person prays to the God of ancient Israel, they are praying to the wrong God. So says Christ who says to pray to the Father. The Father was not the Sovereign God of ancient Israel; he is the Sovereign Father of all that exists. This concept can only be understood if one understands that the Father and the Son are two separate and distinct individuals in the Family of God.

THE FATHER'S MESSAGE

The good news that Jesus Christ was sent to proclaim was not his message. He was the messenger, just as John the Baptist was the messenger who foretold and prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah. Jesus Christ did not send himself as some teach; he was sent by God the Father to bring his message to humanity:

"The word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (Jn.14:24). See also Jn.1:1-15; Rom.1:1-3; 2.Cor.4:4-6.

"That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son honors not the Father which has sent him" (Jn.5:23 KJV).

"I can of my own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me" (Jn.5:30 KJV). See also verses 36-38.

"I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive" (Jn.5:43 KJV). See also Jn.5:30-37; 6:44,57.
Clearly the good news message that Jesus brought is from God the Father who is the Sovereign of all that exists.

The apostle Paul also said that the good news message that he preached as a servant of Jesus Christ was not his message but was a message sent from God the Father (2.Thes.1:1-12):

"Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the good news of the Sovereign God that he had promised before by his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, that was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of the Sovereign God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom.1:1-4 Para.).

The Message

Since the life, death, and resurrection of the Father's Son, there has been much preached solely about Jesus as a person. As a result, millions do not believe the message that the Father sent his Son to proclaim.

The Sovereign Father sent his Son bearing his GOOD NEWS of how to become a part of his divine Family and Kingdom, and that his Family and Kingdom are coming to earth to bring peace and order to this troubled world.

The Father's message is a message of hope for a wonderful, peaceful, and happy existence under his care and protection for all eternity. This is the good news that Jesus, the apostles, and the early Church proclaimed; this is the message that has not been preached in its totality for centuries; this is the message that Jesus said would be proclaimed and published to all the world just before his return as King of kings and Lord of lords.

By B.L. Cocherell
WHEN DID JESUS BECOME THE SON OF GOD?

The exact moment in time when Jesus became the Son of God is a subject that has perplexed many people throughout the centuries. We know that Jesus came from God the Father (Jn.3:13; 6:44; 16:28) and that he qualified to be our Savior by living a sinless life and freely giving his life as the perfect sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sins. However, when did he become the Son of the One he called Father?

In order to answer this question there are four events that must be analyzed: Jesus' conception, birth, baptism, and resurrection from the dead.

THE CONCEPTION OF JESUS

Matthew 1:18-23

"These are the facts concerning the birth of Jesus Christ: His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But while she was still a virgin she became pregnant by the holy spirit. Then Joseph, her fiancé, being a man of stern principle, decided to break the engagement but to do it quietly, as he didn't want to publicly disgrace her." As he lay awake considering this, he fell into a dream, and saw an angel standing beside him. "Joseph, son of David", the angel said, "don't hesitate to take Mary as your wife! For the child within her has been conceived by the holy spirit' (vs.18-20 LBP).

In verse 20, the word conceived is a translation of the Greek word gennao; which can mean to regenerate, bear, beget, be born, bring forth, conceive, be delivered of, engender, make and spring.

"And she shall bring forth [Greek, tikto. English, bear] a son, and you shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (vs.21-23 KJV).

The Greek word for God is theos. In these verses, it is ho-theos, which means a Deity, the Supreme Divinity.

Notice that Jesus was also called God with us. This scripture shows that Jesus was unique. He was not just any man; he was God in human flesh and he came to save humanity from the penalty of sin.
Luke 1:30-35 KJV

"And the angel said to her, Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God. And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus" (vs.30-31).

Here, the word conceive is the Greek word sullambano, which literally means to conceive as in conception of children. The difference in the usage of this Greek word by Matthew and Luke seems to be in the past and future tenses of the verb. In Matthew, the child had already been conceived, in Luke, the child was yet to be conceived.

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give to him the throne of his father David" (v32).

Jesus is called the Son of the Highest. The English word Highest is translated from the Greek word Hupsistas. In this case, Hupsistas denotes the Sovereign of the Universe, the Most High, the Highest, the Supreme God. This spirit-being is the Supreme Sovereign above all that exists; this Sovereign God is the Father of Jesus Christ.

"And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary to the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (vs.33-34).

The Power of the Highest

Mary asks the angel how she could give birth to the Savior, because she had not had intercourse with a man:

"And the angel answered and said to her, The holy spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: Therefore also the holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God" (v35).

Notice that it was the power (i.e., holy spirit) that came from the HIGHEST that impregnated Mary and performed the process of conception. We are not told how this was accomplished; we are just told it was performed by the Father's power.

Clearly, the scripture says that Jesus was conceived by the holy spirit; but, was the holy spirit the father of Jesus?

Nowhere in the Bible do we find Jesus or anyone else referring to the holy spirit or the spirit of God as the Father, a person, or an entity with a personality. Therefore, it should be obvious that the holy spirit was not the father of Jesus, but that it was through God the Father's spirit-power and energy that the process of conception was performed within Mary.

Physical Conception:

Both Matthew and Luke record the following facts about the conception of Jesus:
• The Sovereign Father of all that exists was the Father of Jesus. See Matt. 1:32; 7:21; Mk. 1:9-11.
• God the Father performed the process of impregnation and conception within Mary's womb through his spirit power. See Matt. 1:35.
• Jesus became a physical Son of God at conception. See Jn. 1:14, 18.

THE HUMAN BIRTH OF JESUS

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel [God with us]" (Isa. 7:14 KJV). See also Isa. 8:8-10.

How a physical human could be both God and human is a question that many people ask. The answer to this question is that Jesus was the Creator God who voluntarily gave up his immortality and power to become a human being; therefore, he was both God and man.

As the God of Israel, Jesus inspired many prophesies that foretold his human birth. The New Testament writers record that Jesus was in fact a human and the Creator God:

"And the word [the Creator God] was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten [only born] of the Father), full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14 KJV).

Evidence

The scriptural evidence shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that God the Father is the father of Jesus Christ and that the Father used his spirit-power and energy to cause the conception of Jesus within the womb of Mary. It is clearly evident that the holy spirit is not a separate entity from God the Father and Jesus Christ, but it is the force and power of the God family.

THE GOD WHO BECAME HUMAN

Although many scriptures show that Jesus is a member of the God family, many people still feel that Jesus did not exist before his birth as a human. The following are some of the many clear statements made by Jesus and others about his pre-existence and his return to the place that he came from.

Jesus the Creator God

John records Jesus telling the Jews of his pre-existence:

"Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM" (Jn. 8:58 KJV).
Jesus told these Jews very bluntly that he had existed before Abraham. By using the term 'I Am', he indicated to them that he was the Creator God of Abraham. This made the Jews so angry that they immediately tried to kill him for speaking what they considered to be blasphemy.

**Jesus Came From God**

"I came forth from the Father and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" (Jn.16:28; 3:13 KJV).

Jesus said that he came forth from the Father into the world and would leave it again, but what did he mean by again? If it is understood that Jesus is the Creator, this statement will not be a mystery. Again is translated from the Greek word *palin*, which means once more, repetition, or again. As the Creator God, Jesus came to this planet many times. Remember that the Biblical record shows that Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and many others saw, talked with, ate with, and communicated face-to-face with the Creator.

**The Word Was God**

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shined in the darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. . . . He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (Jn.1:1-5,10 KJV).

There can be no doubt that prior to his human birth, Jesus was the Creator God.

**The Word Made Flesh**

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth" (Jn.1:14 KJV). See also Matthew, chapters 1 through 4; 1.Jn.4:14-15; Heb.1:1-6.

**God in the Flesh**

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached to the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1.Tim.3:16 KJV).

In verse 16, the word *manifest* is translated from the Greek word *phaneroo*, which means appear, declare, or show.

Here, Paul speaks of the multitude of witnesses of the fact that Christ who was the Creator God became a flesh and blood human being. But when did God manifest himself in the flesh?
Only in the New Testament do we find the conditions that fit all the descriptive terms used in 1 Timothy 3:16, and the only person in the Bible who claims to represent and come from the Father is Jesus. So, logic tells us that God (the Creator/Jesus) manifested himself in the flesh at his physical birth. Moreover, at the time of his physical conception, Jesus became the Son of God.

Two very important things happened at the time of the physical manifestation of God (the Creator/Jesus):

1. Jesus became a Son of God at physical conception.
2. Jesus became a physical Son of God at birth.

**JESUS' BAPTISM: A SPIRITUAL CONCEPTION AND BIRTH**

Before his baptism, Jesus was a physical human, just like any other human. Jesus was a physical son of God the Father before his baptism with water and the spirit (Matt.1:18-20; Lk.1:34-35) after which he became the first human to be transformed from a human being, with only the spirit of man into a human being with both the spirit of man and the spirit of the Father. After this transformation, Jesus became the first son of the Father's New Creation (Rom.8:29; Col.1:15-18).

The prophet Isaiah foretold the spiritual conception, birth, and empowerment of Jesus as a son of God:

"And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isa.11:2 KJV).

At the time of Jesus' physical conception he received the genetic imprint of the human family and upon receiving the spirit of God, Jesus received the genetic imprint of God the Father:

"And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan. And straight-away coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, You are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mk.1:9-11 KJV). See also Matt.3:16-18; Jn.3:1-10; Heb.1:1-6.

As the spirit of God descended on Jesus, God the Father declared that Jesus is his Son.

The apostle Paul was inspired to record that when a person is converted from the original human creation into the New Creation through God’s spirit, that person becomes a son of God:

"For as many as are led by the spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery again to fear, but you received a spirit of adoption by which we cry, Abba! Father!" (Rom.8:14-15 KJV). See also Col.1:15-18.
God the Father's Firstborn

"For to which of the angels did he say, You are my Son; today I have begotten You? And again I will be a Father to him, and he shall be a Son to me. And again when he brought the firstborn into the world, he said let the angels worship him" (Heb.1:5-6 Para.). Quoted from Psalm 2:7. See also Heb.5:5.

Here, the writer to the Hebrews speaks of Jesus becoming a physical Son of God at conception and at birth, and a spiritual Son of God upon receiving the spirit of the Father at baptism.

BEFORE CHRIST'S DEATH

"And now Father, glorify me with yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the existence of the world" (Jn.17:52 Para.). See also Jn.17:24; 8:38-59.

When Jesus asks his Father to return his glory, Jesus was no longer a human with only the spirit of man. At this point in time, he was the first of humanity to have God the Father's spirit residing in him. He was the first Son of God the Father to be created out of the human race; he was the first of the New Creation.

THE GOD WHO DIED

Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things (Jn.1:1-3). Before becoming human, Jesus was an immortal spirit-being who inherently possessed the highest form of existence: life that springs forth from itself, never dying or decaying. The Creator God emptied himself of his glory, power, and immortality to become a mortal man who was subject to death. Then he allowed his creation to murder him. He voluntarily gave up his life and, for a short time, completely ceased to exist as a living entity:

"Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in the fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross" (Phil.2:6-8 KJV).

Jesus died; he ceased to exist. All that remained of him was the physical and spirit record of his existence, which could have been completely destroyed and erased if the Father had not resurrected him from the dead. See Matt.10:28; Lk.12:4-5; Gal.1:1; Acts 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30.

Alpha and Omega

In the first chapter of the Book of Revelation, the apostle John records his encounter with Jesus Christ who says he is the God Alpha and Omega:
"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. and he laid his right hand upon me, saying to me, fear not; I am the first and the last [Alpha and Omega]; I am he that lives, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, amen, and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:4, 17-18 Para.). See also Rom. 6:8-10; Acts 2:24-32; 3:15, 26; Heb. 2:9; Rev. 2:8.

The Greek Interlinear Bible translates the phrase, was dead in verse 18 as I became dead. The Greek word used for dead here is corpse, which means that the 'Alpha and Omega' says he was a dead body, but now, he is alive forever. Jesus explains that he was totally dead, not only dead in the flesh as some people believe.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

"Not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;" (Gal. 1:1 KJV). See also Acts 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30.

In his letter to the Church at Corinth, the apostle Paul records that Jesus was the first human to be resurrected from the dead as a spiritual Son of God. Moreover, in his letter to the Church at Colosse, he states the same thing and adds that it was Jesus who created all things.

1. Corinthians 15:20, 22-23 KJV

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and became the firstborn of them that slept" (v20).

In verse 20, Paul says that Christ is the first of humanity to have passed from the human life-form to the spiritual; then, in verses 22-23, he says that others will follow:

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order. Christ the first-fruits. Afterwards, they that are Christ's at his coming" (vs.22-23).

The reason Jesus was described as the firstborn of the dead and the firstborn of many brothers is that he was literally the first of his kind to be created. He was the first of the New Creation: the firstborn spiritual Son of God the Father:

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation—for all things were created in him, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth; the visible and the invisible; whether thrones, or lordships, or rulers, or authorities, all things have been created through him. And he is before all things, and all things consist in him. And he is the Head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that he be preeminent in all things" (Col. 1:15-18 Para.). See also Acts 13:33-35; Rev. 1:5 KJV.
SUMMARY

It seems logical from the scriptures which have been presented here, that Jesus became the Father's physical Son the instant he emptied himself of his immortality and allowed God the Father to perform the miracle of conception within the egg of the virgin Mary.

Jesus remained the Father's physical Son until he was baptized with water and with the holy spirit. After this baptism, Jesus became the Father's first Son of the New Creation. And he became God the Father's first Son to be made immortal when he was resurrected from the dead.

Jesus first became the Son of God the instant he became a human being. Although he was the first to become a Son of God the Father, he will not be the last:

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order. Christ the first-fruits. Afterwards, they that are Christ's at his coming" (1.Cor.15:22-23).

By B.L. Cocherell
TRINITARIANISM

The theory of a trinity is the most popular belief about who and what the God of the Bible is. Trinitarianism is the belief that God is a combination of three beings or personalities within one entity. This is a very difficult concept to prove because of the total lack of scriptural evidence.

The Council of Nicaea

After the Babylonian mystery religion was well established as a Christian church, the Council of Nicaea was convened in 325 A.D. to solve some major political and theological problems within this church. One of the major problems that had to be solved was the question of who and what God is. Two members of the Alexandrian congregation appeared before the council to declare their theories on the subject: One of them was a priest named Arias who believed that Christ was not God but a created being. The other was a deacon named Athenius who believed that the Father, the Son, and the holy spirit were the same being living in the form of a trinity.

Emperor Constantine, who had convened the council, made the final decision in this matter. Although he had little interest in religion, he had a great deal of interest in politics. Constantine knew this theological question had to be solved in order for unity and harmony to prevail within this politically powerful religion.

Emperor Constantine declared God to be a trinity and excommunicated Arias, the priest. This single act by Constantine solidified the church and produced a doctrine that is still believed by millions with no question as to its veracity.

The Facts About 1.John 5:7

The foundational scripture used in attempting to prove the validity of the trinity doctrine is 1.John 5:7:

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (1.Jn.5:7 KJV).
This is the only scripture in the entire Bible that seems to give credibility to the teaching of a trinity. However, the historical facts surrounding this verse reveal that it does not support this teaching. Moreover, it is a clever deception.

The following facts about this verse reveal that it was intended as a deception:

- This verse does not appear in any of the Greek manuscripts prior to the fourteenth century.
- Jerome's original version of the Vulgate does not include this verse.
- The first person to formally quote this verse was Priscillian who died in 385 A.D. after which this verse was noted in Latin texts.
- The first Greek Testament published by Erasmus in 1516 A.D. omitted this verse.
- Nearly all Bible Commentaries confirm that the King James translation of this verse is a blatant alteration of early manuscripts (circa. 800 A.D.) where this verse is found.

The historical record and multiple biblical scholars have proven, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that 1.John 5:7 was not in the original writings of the New Testament, and that it was actually added to the Bible. Simply stated, this scripture is not a part of the Word of God, and it was added in an attempt to justify the teaching of a triune God.

DUALISM

Dualism is the belief that God is composed of two personalities within one entity, and the holy spirit is a power or energy of this entity. This theory allows for God to be two persons: the spiritual God, and the physical God.

MONOTHEISM

Monotheism states that there is only one God. There are many versions of this doctrine, and each version has a different explanation of what the holy spirit is and who and what Jesus Christ was and is.

Most people who adhere to this doctrine believe that the Creator God is the Father spoken of in the New Testament.

The Three Theories

All three of these popular theories about the identity of God have extreme difficulty explaining how a being with multiple personalities or a single entity could function as God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the holy spirit. In order to disprove these three popular theories and discover the truth of who God is, which is revealed in the Bible, this chapter answers a number of questions about God using the Bible.
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

There is an endless amount of questions that could be asked about God. Below are a few of the more important questions with answers and comments that should help one to understand who and what God is.

THE GODHEAD

Q. What is the meaning of the word Godhead?

A. In the Bible, the English word Godhead is translated from the Greek word theotes, which means divinity. Theios and theiotes are other forms of this word that connote duality. See Acts 17:29; Rom.1:20.

Colossians 2:9 is the only place in the New Testament where the word theotes is used. In this verse it is used to indicate the fullness of Christ's divinity, power, and authority:

"Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ. For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead [theotes, divinity] bodily" (Col.2:8-9 KJV).

In Acts, theios is used to show that the divine majesty of God is above that of human concepts and representations of God.

"Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead [theios] is like to gold or silver, or stone, graven by the art and man's devise" (Acts 17:29 KJV).

In Romans, theiotes is used to indicate that something is divine or has the quality of being divine:

"For the invisible things of him from creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead [theiotes]; so that they are without excuse" (Rom.1:20 KJV).

When King James authorized the Bible to be translated into English the concept of God as a triune being was popular, which is inferred by the Greek word theotes being translated into the English word Godhead.

The meaning of the word Godhead used in the 1611 King James translation of the Bible is basically the same today as it was then. The word Godhead still indicates the nature of God and the concept of God existing as a dualistic or triune being of multiple personalities.

However, when the word Godhead is properly translated into the word divinity with its various word-forms, the scriptures containing it do not support a dualistic or triune concept of God. See pages 119-123, vol.3, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, (G. Kittel) for a more in-depth analysis of the Greek word theotes (divinity).
THE EVERLASTING FATHER

Q. Isaiah 9:6 says that the Messiah was the everlasting Father. However, does this prove that Christ is also God the Father?

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isa.9:6 KJV).

A. In this scripture, there are five different names given for our Savior, and each has a different meaning, which shows different functions, characteristics, and aspects of his office.

The first chapter of John reveals that the Creator was the One who became the Christ. Jesus said he came to reveal the Father whom no one knew. And in the Book of Mark, God the Father called Jesus his beloved Son. Can Jesus be both a son and be a Father? The answer is yes! Simply stated, the Creator God who became the Savior was the Father of humanity, but he is not the Supreme Father who he came to reveal. See Matt.3:13-17; 11:27; Jn.16:25-29; 17:25-26.

THE FATHER IS GREATER THAN THE SAVIOR

Q. How could the Father be greater than Christ when Paul said that Christ was equal with God?

"For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who subsisting in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave, having become in the likeness of men" (Phil.2:5-7 Para.).

A. Before the Creator God emptied himself of his spiritual glory, he was equal to God the Father in that he was also an immortal God.

Comment

Many would like to believe that there was little difference between the God in Heaven (the Father) and the God on earth (the Savior) during the life of Jesus and that this difference only pertained to the physical versus the spiritual condition, which supports the theory of an omni-present triune, dualistic, or monotheistic God-being. However, the concept that Jesus and the apostles continually taught about the God Family was one of a Father-Son relationship:

"You have heard how I said to you, I go away, and come again to you. If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father: for my Father is greater than I" (Jn.14:28 KJV).

Not only did Jesus acknowledge that the Father was greater, but also acknowledged that his Father was his God (see Mk.15:34-35). How could the Father be greater than Jesus, if they were the same spirit-being? How could one part of a being be greater than the other? And how could the Father be Jesus’ God, if Jesus was that same God?
The reason the Father was greater than Jesus during his human existence was that the Father was the only immortal spirit sovereign in existence while Jesus was living in human flesh. Moreover, the reason that the Father is greater than Jesus today, is that Jesus is now the son of the Father's New Creation, and he is second in authority to his Father in the Kingdom of God. See Matt.26:62-64; Mk.10:35-40; Acts 7:51-56; 1.Cor.15:23-28; Eph.5:19-20; 1.Pet.18-22.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Q. If the holy spirit is not a God-being, what is it?

A. A short study into the Greek language will eliminate the 'proof' that most theologians use in claiming that the holy spirit is a person. The Greek language, like many other languages, has gender associated with nouns: an object can be feminine, masculine, or neuter. This treatment of a word has nothing to do with whether the object is feminine, masculine, or neuter; it is just a grammatical tool.

The text used by most people to prove that the holy spirit is a person, is found in John, chapters 14, 15, and 16. In these chapters, the apostle John quotes Jesus speaking about the spirit as a Comforter (Greek: parakletos). John speaks of the holy spirit using the pronoun he in connection with the word parakletos. However, with the exception of these few scriptures the spirit of God is always described with words that mean breath, wind, mind, or spirit.

As diligent as the King James translators tried to be, they were influenced by the theology of the day, which stated that God was a trinity. Therefore, it is not hard to understand why they would translate any word that referred to the holy spirit into he. However, in Romans 8:16 they did translate the gender of the noun correctly:

"The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

Very rarely did the writers of the Old Testament attribute emotion or intellect to the holy spirit and when they did, these expressions are allegorical or mere figures of speech. Moreover, there are no references to the holy spirit being an individual in any of the Old Testament writings.

In the Old and New Testaments the holy spirit is pictured as the power of God. The New Testament details many of the attributes, functions, and qualities of the holy spirit as they relate to the elect of God, and the majority of the New Testament texts reveal the holy spirit as a thing and not a personage. Moreover, when a manifestation of the spirit is ascribed to the holy spirit, there is never a contextual justification for its personification.
The Holy Spirit is Power

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy spirit to them that ask him?" (Lk.11:13 KJV).

Jesus says that the holy spirit is something that will be given to those who ask the Father for it. The reason that the Father can give the holy spirit to each and every person who follows Christ is that the holy spirit is a thing; it is an energy or a power, it is not a person.

"And he said, Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah must suffer and die and rise again from the dead on the third day; and that this message of salvation should be taken from Jerusalem to all the nations; There is forgiveness of sins for all who turn to me. You have seen these prophecies come true. And now I will send the holy spirit upon you, just as my Father promised. Don't begin telling others yet—stay here in the city until the holy spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven" (Lk.24:46-49 LBP).

"And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry you in the city of Jerusalem, until you be endued with power from on high" (Lk. 24:49).

When the apostles were told to wait until God sent power from on high, they were being told that God would send them something that was going to give them power.

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the holy spirit" (Rom.15:13 KJV).

Notice that Christians are to abound in hope through the power of the holy spirit. Power is definitely associated with the holy spirit.

"For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2.Tim.1:7 KJV).

Again, we see that the holy spirit is power, and this power is given to the elect of God.

The simple truth is that the holy spirit is not a personage, but it is the energy and power of the Father through which he causes his will to be performed throughout his kingdom.

We have seen scripture after scripture showing that the Father and the Son are two distinct individuals, each with their own personality and separate functions in the Family of God. However, we can search the Bible from beginning to end and never find any evidence to support the theory that the holy spirit is a third member of the God family.
The Creator God of Israel stated that he would not give away his glory:

"I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory I will not give to another . . ." (Isa.42:8 KJV).

Some say this scripture proves there is only one God. But this is not the case at all. Isaiah 42:8 just tells us the Creator will not share his personal glory with others. It does not tell us that others cannot have their own glory. See also Dan.12:3; Rom.8:18; Col.1:26-27; 1.Thes. 2:11-12; Rev.15:8; 18:1; 22:22-23.

**Return to Glory**

"And now, O Father, glorify you me with your own self with the glory which I had with you before the world was" (Jn.17:5,24 KJV).

Here, Jesus asks the Father to use his power to return him to the state of spiritual glory that he had as a part of the God family before he created the world and before he became the Savior of humanity. This request by our Savior to his Father is one more proof that the Father and the Son are individuals in the God family.

**ANGEL OR GOD?**

There is a teaching that the One who came as the Savior was an angel sent from the Creator. This belief assumes that the Savior was not God incarnate, but a being of lesser status and power. If this doctrine were correct, mankind would not have a Savior, because neither angels nor ordinary humans can atone for sin.

The law of sacrifices clearly shows that a sacrifice of lesser worth than the individual being sacrificed for could not forgive sin, but could only temporarily forestall the punishment for sin.

Only a sacrifice of greater value than the sinning individual could pay the full penalty for sin and allow the sinner to be set free. Until a sacrifice of greater worth was made, the sinner was still under the death penalty for their sin (Ezk.18:4-32; 33:11-20). This is why only a God-being could fulfill the ultimate of sacrifices; only a being who was the Supreme Being or equal in status and power to the Supreme Being could fulfill this requirement of an ultimate sacrifice.

Because the Savior was the Sovereign of ancient Israel and the Creator of all that exists for the Sovereign God, including mankind (Jn.1:1-18; Eph.3:9; 1.Cor.10:1-4), he was superior to his creation (Gen.1:26; 11:7). Only when the Sovereign Creator gave up immortality and became flesh was he inferior to the spiritual realm (Jn.14:28; Heb.2:9), and then this inferiority was only one of mortality versus immortality.
If the Creator God who is now our Savior was not the supreme sacrifice, we do not have a Savior (Heb.9:9-28; 10:1-22; 6:4-8). It is an abominable thing for anyone to disdain the sacrifice of our Savior as anything less than the supreme sacrifice, when the price paid for our salvation was the death of the Sovereign who created mankind.

There is no salvation for anyone who does not believe that the Savior was the literal Son of the Father—the Son of God. Please read John 1:18,34,36; 3:16-18; Matt.3:16-17 to see how serious it is to disdain our Savior's sacrifice.

NO OTHER GOD FORMED

Based on what Isaiah recorded, some people believe that the Creator God is the only God-being in existence and no other God-beings will ever exist:

"You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen; and that you may know and believe, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" (Isa.43:10 Para.).

Although Isaiah's record does raise some questions as to the eternal past of the Creator God, because it seems to imply that the Creator may have himself been created, there are a number of things which should be considered before making any conclusions as to the meaning of what Isaiah recorded:

• Questions about the eternal existence of the Creator God do not eliminate the clear scriptures which show two individual God-beings in the Family of God at this present time.
• It is very possible that there may be some senses or inflections of the Hebrew word מָצַר (matsar) that may mean fashion, form, or make, which are not understood at this time, therefore, it is impossible to correctly translate this scripture.
• The being Isaiah speaks of is obviously the Creator, and if we accept the fact that the Creator was the One who became Jesus, then there must have been another God who did the forming of the Creator. Therefore, we can establish that there was another God besides the one who was formed.
• Although this scripture is often quoted to put forth the idea that the God family is a closed unit and no more God-beings will be added, it actually only says that no more will be 'formed' (created), which imposes no restriction against others being born into the God family.

ONE GOD

"Thus says the Lord [Yahweh] the king of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord [Yahweh] of Host, I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God [Elohim: 'Gods']" (Isa.44:6 KJV).
It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word for both the Lord of Israel and its redeemer is 'Yahweh'. When the last half of verse 6 is translated without the extra words that were added to the text by the English translators, the intended meaning becomes clear. "I the first and I the last and beside me no God [Hebrew, Elohim. English, Gods].

"Fear you not neither be afraid: Have not I told you from that time, and have declared it? you are even my witnesses. Is there a God [Eloah] beside me? yes, there is no God [rock]; I know not any" (Isa.44:8 KJV).

Here we find Eloah [God] describing himself as the rock, which indicates that he is a protector, a stabilizing force, solid, and enduring.

In much of Isaiah, chapters 44 and 45 the Creator God is telling the Israelites not to worship false gods.

"And there is no God [elohtym: 'gods'] else beside me and a just God [El, 'A Mighty One' or 'The Almighty'] and a Savior there is none beside me. Look to me, be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God [El], and there is none else" (Isa.45:21-22 KJV).

National Israel only knew the Almighty One. To them the Creator was the only Sovereign (Psa.83:18). There was none other beside him, because he had not yet come as the Messiah to reveal God the Father.

THE ONENESS OF GOD

The scripture that is most used to prove Christ and God the Father are one and the same being is John 10:30, which states, "I and my Father are one." Although this statement is true, there is a problem with what has been taught about what it means. Traditionally it has been taught that this statement means that the Father and Christ are a single spirit-being.

It is a scriptural fact that the Father and Christ are one: one family, of one kind, of one purpose, of one thought pattern and attitude, of one opinion, and of one spirit-energy and power. However, they are not one spirit-being, they are two distinct spirit-beings.

The Greek language in this verse shows the concept of oneness, but it does not denote a single being. If this verse were saying that these two beings were encompassed in one entity, what do we do with all of the scriptures which clearly show they are separate individual beings in the sovereign spiritual Family of God? See Eph.3:15; Jn.14:28.

Another scripture used to prove that there is only one God, is John 17:3:

"These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you: As you have given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life, to as many as you have given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (Jn.17:1-3 KJV).
The English words *only* and *true* are from the Greek words *monos* which means *alone*, or *solidarity*, and *alethinos*, which denotes *true*, in the sense of *real*, *ideal*, or *genuine*.

Given the meanings of these two Greek words, John 17:3 takes on a different meaning from the English translation:

"That they might know you, a genuine God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (Jn.17:3 Para.).

"I have glorified you on earth: I have finished the work which you gave me to do. And now, O Father, glorify you me with your own self with the glory which I had with you before the world was" (Jn.17:4-6 KJV).

These scriptures make sense when one understands that the people of Christ's day did not know God the Father and for the most part, they had a perverted concept of God and how to worship him, which Christ tells us in Matthew 23:1-3 and John 8:54-57.

**COMMENT**

When one compares the various beliefs about the identity of the God of the Bible with the many clear scriptures that speak of a father-son relationship between God the Father and Jesus Christ, only one conclusion can be reached concerning the identity of the God of the Bible. Two god-beings—the Sovereign God and the Creator God—comprised the Family of God before the advent of the Messiah, and there are two god-beings that presently comprise the Family of God—the Sovereign Father, and Jesus Christ. Moreover, these two Gods have a father-son relationship (God the Father and God the Son).

By B.L. Cocherell
The Bible is the most widely published book in the world, but what is this book? Is the Bible purely mythology about the origin of the universe and human beings that has been fabricated by writers of the ancient nation of Israel to explain their history and existence? Does the Bible hold the secret to the mystery of life and its eternal purpose? Is it the word of the Supreme Sovereign of all that exists for the instruction of his creation?

These are but a few of the many questions that have been asked about this most read and least understood book. In the pages that follow, we will attempt to help answer some of these questions and show the importance of the Bible to understanding the purpose of human existence.

IN THE BEGINNING

The first chapter of the Bible gives the purpose for the Bible's existence. Verse 1 shows that God created the physical dimension of existence. Verses 2 through 25 record the process of structuring the physical creation and creating various kinds of creatures within the confines of the earth. In verses 26-28, God creates humanity, and gives them rule over all of the physical creation:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen.1:1 KJV).

"And God said let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen.1:26-28 KJV).

THE MYSTERY OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

From the first few verses of Genesis to the last verse of the Book of Revelation, there is only one major subject being revealed—God's plan and purpose for humanity.
A Well Kept Secret

The purpose for human existence is being kept secret from most people until humanity learns a lesson that only time and experience can teach:

Matthew 13:10-17 KJV

"And the disciples came, and said to him, why speak you to them in parables? he answered and said to them, Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given...Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (vs.10-13).

"And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (vs.14-15).

"But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them" (vs.16-17). Also see Mk.4:11-12; Lk.8:10.

The Mystery Revealed

Today, in this age of unrest, suffering, and anguish, through the Bible and his servants, God is beginning to reveal the Good News of his soon-coming Kingdom and his purpose and plan for humanity.

"Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Amen" (Matt.28:19-20 KJV).

God the Father and Jesus Christ's purpose for humanity is so awesome and exciting that it is almost beyond belief. God the Father, the One who sent his Son Jesus Christ to earth over nineteen hundred years ago, is in the process of creating more spiritual children out of human beings. God the Father is expanding his family.

Instructions for Today and the Future

The Bible is the God family's instruction book to humanity, and within its pages the following things are revealed:
• The purpose of human life
• How to worship the true God
• How to live in peace and harmony with others
• How to have a happy marriage
• How to have peace of mind
• How to become an immortal being in the Family of God

These are just a few of the many exciting and important messages and concepts that God reveals through his written word.

The apostle Paul said that the scriptures were written for inspiration, teaching, correction, instruction in righteousness, and so that we can have hope for something better than this present existence:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works" (2.Tim.3:16-17 KJV).

"For whatever things were written before, were written for our instruction, that through patience and encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope" (Rom.15:4 Para.). See also 1.Thes. 4:13-17.

GOD AND THE BIBLE

The vast majority of those who profess to believe in God have not taken the time nor spent the effort to actually prove that God does exist and that the Bible is his word. Most have just taken the word of someone in whom they have confidence or they just have a feeling that these things are true. But, is it logical to take the word of someone else or trust your feelings on such an important question?

King David reveals the kind of person who refuses to acknowledge the existence of the true God and Jesus spoke of the importance of the information that is found in the Bible:

"The fool has said in his heart there is no God" (Psa.53:1 Para.).

"It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Lk.4:4 Para.).

IS THERE EVIDENCE THAT THE BIBLE IS TRUE?

But is there any evidence of the veracity of the Bible? Is there evidence that the Bible is the word of God put into print?

Yes, there is proof that the Bible is actually the written word of God. There is so much evidence that the Bible is the work of God that it would be impossible to list and explain all of the evidence in any single publication.
Obviously, some of the evidence may be very convincing to one individual, and totally meaningless to another. What any person believes will depend on each individual's background, life experience, and what they choose to believe regardless of the facts. Therefore, it is not the purpose of this chapter to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt the validity of the Bible. God clearly shows through his written word that it is the responsibility of each person who wants to worship him to sort these questions out for themselves and to prove his existence and the validity of his word to their own satisfaction.

**BIBLICAL ACCURACY**

Throughout history, many people have tried to disprove the validity of the Bible; however, the Bible stands as one of the most accurate of all ancient historical books. There are so many proofs that the Bible is the written word of God that it is difficult to categorize and list them all.

Year by year, the names, places, events, and scientific data mentioned in the Bible are being verified and found to be absolutely correct in the smallest detail. What was once thought to be myth or error in the Bible is rapidly being proved to be true and is being added to the immense amount of evidence that proves the accuracy of the Bible.

**Historical Records**

Historians, ancient records, and civil and religious documents confirm the accuracy of the Biblical record. These historical writings are full of evidence of the existence of the people and places mentioned in the Bible.

All one has to do to prove the validity of the Bible, is go to any good Bible reference library and do a small amount of research in order to find undeniable proof of the historical, prophetic, and scientific accuracy of the Bible.

**Science**

There are many scientific principles mentioned in the Bible that were doubted for centuries by the scientific community, until scientific research found them to be absolutely true. For example, the Bible records the following scientific facts:

- The earth is round (Isa.40:22).
- The stars are innumerable (Gen.15:5).
- There is an empty space in the North sky (Job 26:7).
- The life of the flesh is in the blood (Lev.17:11).
- Air currents constantly circle the earth. (Ecc.1:6).
- Rain comes from the process of evaporation (Ecc.1:7).
PROPHECY VALIDATES THE BIBLE

The Bible is a record of the past, and contains prophecies for the present, and the future, which deal with the purpose for the existence of humanity. In the fulfillment of prophecy, the Bible stands alone in its accuracy.

There are dozens of prophecies about people and events that have been fulfilled with absolute accuracy, and many books have been written, which detail the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. These fulfilled prophecies are but another proof of the Bible’s veracity.

Many Bible prophecies have already been fulfilled, many are being fulfilled now, and many more will come to pass in the near future. As sure as the universe and God exist, the prophetic word of God is accurate in every detail.

THE BIBLE ENDURES

Jesus said that the word of God contained within the Bible would endure past this present existence of the physical heavens and the earth. Although the Bible’s enemies have tried to destroy the truth which it contains, they all have failed, and the Bible and its truth still exist today:

"Truly I say to you, Until the heavens and earth pass away, in no way shall one iota or one tittle pass away from the law until all comes to pass" (Matt.5:18 Para.).

Jesus says that not even the smallest detail of what God has caused to be canonized as his word will fail to be accomplished:

"The heaven and the earth will pass away: but my words, in no way will pass away" (Lk.21:3 Para.). See also Jn.10:34-35.

BIBLE NUMERICS

The Bible was written by dozens of men over centuries of time, and most of these men were not scholars, scientists, or mathematicians; however, an intricate mathematical pattern is found to exist from the first verse of scripture to the last.

Every word, sentence, phrase, and concept, pertaining to any given subject is linked together with a specific numerical value or mathematical equation which is unique to itself.

The mathematical construction of the Bible is beyond the ability of modern technology to reproduce and it is far beyond the realm of mere blind chance. The mathematical complexity and structure of the Bible proves beyond a doubt that a supreme intelligence guided its construction.
UNITY WITHIN THE BIBLE

The Bible traditionally consists of 49 books, that were written by more than thirty different authors over a period of 1500 years in three different languages. Moreover, these books were written under every circumstance imaginable. When combined these 49 individual books reveal fantastic unity of thought and purpose.

The unity of concept and story flow that exists from the beginning of the Bible to the end of its last book is truly astounding. Each writer was inspired to reflect the overall concepts, themes, and story flow of the existing scriptures as well as adding to the detail and revelation of God's great plan for humanity.

There is no conceivable way that such a book, with its unity of purpose and thought, could have come into existence unless there was a master author who guided its many writers and its development through many centuries.

JESUS AND THE BIBLE

The birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ is an undeniable fact of the Biblical record. Jesus literally changed the course of history. Below are some of the historical references to the existence of Jesus and his impact upon history and humanity.

The birth of Jesus, which was foretold by Daniel and other prophets, triggered the mass murder of all male children who were two years of age and under by King Herod of Judea. See Matt.2:1-18.

Found in the Vatican library is a document titled 'Herod Antipater's Defense'. This document was written by Herod to the Roman Senate to explain and justify why he had murdered the young children around Bethlehem about the time of the birth of Christ.

In this same library there is also the letter from Herod Antipas to the Roman Senate regarding his beheading of John the Baptist and the denial of Pontius Pilate's accusation that he was cowardly and disobedient in the case of Jesus. In this letter, Herod also upholds his father Herod Antipater's decision to murder the young children at Bethlehem about thirty years earlier.

The writings of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Eusebius, and other early church leaders mention Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator who ruled Judea from A.D. 26 to 36. Moreover, these writings make reference to an official report Pilate made to Emperor Tiberius about the trial and condemnation of Jesus.

Sometime between 115 A.D. and 117 A.D. Tacitus, a Roman historian, mentions Jesus specifically in his annals, where he explains the meaning of the word 'Christians': "Christ, from whom they derive their name, was condemned to death by the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Emperor Tiberius" (1 Annals xv:44).
Even Jewish history confirms the life and death of Jesus. Of all the people on earth who would have a vested interest in proving that Jesus and the history surrounding him was only a myth, it would be the Jews; however, they cannot do so.

The Jewish historian Josephus (A.D. 37-100), who lived shortly after Jesus' death and resurrection, wrote the following about Christ:

"Now, there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was (the) Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold. These and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him, and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct to this day"

(Antiquities of the Jews).

History clearly records that Jesus of the Bible was not a myth or a legend—he did exist.

Comment:

In the preceding pages we have only explored a very small amount of the evidence available that proves the Bible is the written word of a being of supreme intellect and power. To say that the Bible is not the written word of the Creator God is to deny its very existence. See chapter 7, "Books And Reference Materials", for a short list of reference works that help prove the validity of the Bible.

GOD SPEAKS TO US

The Bible clearly shows that God spoke to his people through the patriarchs, the prophets, Jesus Christ, and the apostles. All of the things which he has caused to be written in the Bible are intended to be understood by those who are called to salvation. Notice some of the things which are said about the importance of the word of God:

"Every scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; so that the man of God may be perfect, fully finished for every good work" (2.Tim.3:16-17 Para.). See also Eph.6:10-17; Heb.4:12.

"Now all these things happened to them for examples, and are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1.Cor.10:11KJV). See also Psa.19:7; Pro.1:1-7; Dan.12:9-12.
JESUS THE TEACHER

"And he said to them, These are the words which I spoke to you, yet being with you, that must be fulfilled, all the things having been written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms, concerning me. Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, so it has been written, and so it was necessary that the Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead the third day" (Lk.24:44-46 Para.).

Jesus came to earth not only to save humanity from the death penalty imposed for the breaking of the law of God, he came also to reveal the secrets of God's plan for humanity.

The Bible reveals why Jesus taught the things he did, why he must come again, the time of his return, and what those who have been called to follow him must do until he returns:

"All those who listen to my instructions and follow them are wise, like a man who builds his house on a solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents, and the floods rise and the storm winds beat against his house, it won't collapse, for it is built upon a rock. But those who hear my instructions and ignore them are foolish, like a man who builds his house upon the sand. For when the rains and the floods come, and the storm winds beat against his house, it will fall with a mighty crash" (Matt.7:24-27 LPB). See also 1.Tim.6:17-19.

Other Inspired Writings

Most people who seriously study the word of God realize that God inspired much more to be written and recorded than is found in the collection of writings of the modern-day Bible.

The Book of Jasher is mentioned in Joshua 10:13 and 2.Samuel 1:18, and Jude refers to the contention between Michael and the devil over the body of Moses and a prophecy of Enoch. None of these reference works are found to be a part of our modern-day Bible. However, these reference works were a part of what God had inspired to be recorded.

There are probably many other letters, prophetic writings, and written accounts that God inspired to be written throughout history, and if these were found and understood, they might clarify some gray areas of history and the plan of God.

There is obviously more truth recorded and yet to be found and understood about God, the ministry of Jesus, the acts of the apostles, and the early church than is contained in the Authorized King James Version of the Bible.

Scholars, archeologists, and historians have discovered literally thousands of ancient writings, documents, and records, which contain information and revelation about God and his plan for humanity.
The important question to answer is whether God has caused enough information to be made available in order that a person he calls to become his son can understand that calling, perform the function or responsibility for which they have been called, and grow toward spiritual maturity.

The answer to this question is, yes! God has caused sufficient information to be documented and placed into the book we commonly call the Bible. This information, if rightly understood and truly followed by any whom God has called to salvation, will lead to spiritual success.

**Additional Knowledge and Revelation**

Not all of what Jesus taught, and obviously not all that the Father wants revealed to his children is recorded in the Bible. However, enough is recorded that all who are called to salvation can acquire enough knowledge and understanding to fulfill their calling. All other knowledge that the Father and Jesus Christ want to give to the elect of God is given through the holy spirit, angelic messengers, dreams, visions, and other methods that are mentioned throughout the Bible.

The apostle John says the following about the things that were not recorded about Jesus and his teachings:

"I am that disciple! I saw these events and have recorded them here. And we all know that my account of these things is accurate. And I suppose that if all the other events in Jesus' life were written, the whole world could hardly contain the books" (Jn.21:24-25 LBP).

Jesus told his disciples that the holy spirit would be sent to them, they would be taught by it, and it would remind them of the things that he had taught:

"But when the Father sends the Comforter instead of me—and by the Comforter I mean the holy spirit—he [it] will teach you much, as well as remind you of everything I myself have told you" (Jn.14:26 LBP). See also Jn.16:12-13; 1.Cor.2:11; Eph.3:1-5; 1.Pet.1:12.

**SUMMARY**

The Bible is unique. There is no other book on earth that can claim its values. Moreover, it is the only book that claims to have the answers to the basic questions of life; it tells humanity who its Creator is, why it was created, and what its ultimate destiny is to be.

It is the only book that shows the purpose for humanity's existence and its awesome potential. It is the only book which gives a formula that will lead to eternal life and immortality in the Family of God, if it is followed.

The Bible is the only book on the face of the earth that claims to be the Word of the Creator God.
The Bible is not just a collection of stories, myths, and legends; it is the inspired Word of God, and the most important book ever written to humanity. Moreover, it has the answers to life’s greatest questions about the purpose of human existence—past, present, and future.

Very few people throughout human history have been privileged to understand the Bible. In this age, God is presenting the opportunity to understand his great and awesome purpose for humanity. If you are beginning to understand the Bible, do not dismiss this opportunity casually, because the reward for those who act positively upon the knowledge that is being revealed to them is almost beyond the comprehension of the human mind.

By B.L. Cocherell
STUDY THE BIBLE

The word of God is not like any other book, it is unique in authorship and purpose, and it is a book of mysteries, secrets, and revelation. It is through diligent Bible study that we can learn its true purpose and unlock its many mysteries and secrets.

Paul encourages Timothy to study the word of God in order to be equipped to perform a work for God:

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness" (2.Tim.2:15-16 NKJV). See also 1.Thes.4:10-12.

Proper knowledge and understanding of the Bible is necessary for the spiritual growth and fulfillment of a person's calling to salvation and one's responsibilities to God the Father.

Because all who are called to salvation in this age are required to study the word of God, it is important to know some things about how to approach the study of the Bible.

Bible Contradictions

The first thing to firmly fix in one's mind prior to studying the Bible, is that God's written word is truth and there are no contradictions in what he has caused to be written.

In speaking of the word of God, Jesus says, "Your word is truth" (Jn.17:17) and "The scripture cannot be broken" (Jn.10:35). God inspired the Bible to be written and it is impossible for God to lie (Heb.6:18; Tit.1:2); therefore, God's word will always be true, even if every person that wrote it were a liar (Rom.3:4).

The problem with seemingly contradictory scriptures is never with what God has inspired to be written, it is always with people's perspective or understanding of what has been written or with how it has been translated or interpreted from the original writing.

Consider this for a moment: If God is a God of truth who cannot lie, and he has said that he inspired and instructed his prophets, servants, and apostles to record all that is his sacred word, there cannot be any errors, lies, or contradictions in his originally inspired written word.
Solving Contradictions

Seemingly unsolvable scriptural contradictions are normally the product of the following:

• Insufficient research on the subject
• An error in translation from the original language
• An error in the interpretation of the original language
• The copy of the original text that is being translated from is in error or incomplete

Because the above conditions may exist, doctrine should never be established by using vague or difficult to understand scriptures. All major teachings of the Bible, such as those concerning God and his plan of salvation, are expounded with clear, concise statements that prove their validity to anyone whom God is calling to salvation.

No Original Text Available

When reading the Bible, it is important to remember that no original copies of the biblical text are available for use by scholars or the general public. What exist today are copies of the originals and translations of these copies, which would seem to make it impossible to prove the validity of the biblical record. However, the author of the Bible has hidden many undeniable proofs within the biblical text which reveal that what has been recorded is his word. Those who diligently study the Bible will find this proof which is overlooked by the casual reader.

Textual Errors

A major error that should be avoided when studying the Bible and related documents is the belief that the more ancient a manuscript or document is, the more accurate it is. This is a very dangerous assumption to make. Just because a document is ancient, does not make it accurate. The test of accuracy is the test of truth and the continuity of truth. If an ancient writing does not conform to proven Biblical truth, and departs from the overall theme and continuity of the Bible, it should not be used to establish doctrine.

Because no original writings of the scriptures are available and centuries have passed since their writing, all modern translations and interpretations of the original text contain some error, due to one or more of the following:

• Poor scholarship
• Additions or omissions due to private interpretation
• Lack of attention to detail
• Lack of the correct linguistic information
• Justification by translators for false teaching
The King James Version

The 1611 King James version of the Bible was translated from the Masoretic text and the Received text. From the historical evidence and the continuity of truth that is revealed through these texts, it appears that both of these are reference works through which God is conveying his truth and his will today.

Truth Will Endure

God has promised that his truth will never be lost. Although there may be copy errors or translation errors of the original writings, the truth and the will of God can still be understood by those to whom he chooses to reveal it. See Jer.33:3; Lk.11:9-13; Jn.14:26; 16:12-13; 1.Cor.2:9-16.

The Bible Interprets Itself

Trying to justify preconceived ideas and beliefs are a major obstacle to gaining a correct understanding of any biblical subject. The proper approach to understanding the Bible should be an unbiased attempt to understand what is truly written and not what a person thinks is written. However, this is very difficult to do because of the vast amount of false teaching about God and the Bible today:

"We have also the sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that you take heed, as to the light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time [at any time] by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved of the holy spirit" (2.Pet.1:19-21 KJV).

Because of the way the Bible has been written, it will interpret itself if a person is willing to collect all of the relevant facts and references and let the holy spirit guide one's mind into truth.

Precept Upon Precept

Those who think that the Bible sometimes contradicts itself have failed to understand that the Bible is a complex book, which must be studied as a whole, if its mysteries and secrets are to be understood.

One of the fascinating and inspiring aspects of the Bible's construction is the way various subjects are interwoven throughout its pages. Because of this, it is sometimes necessary to collect all of the references to a subject before one can begin to understand what is being taught:

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isa.28:10 KJV). Read also Isa.28:9-13.
Continuity of Truth

There is a continuity of truth throughout the entire Bible, which is very helpful in separating truth from error. Each specific teaching or doctrine of the Bible will conform to the overall theme and purpose of the entire Bible. If any teaching or doctrine is found to be in conflict with another, one or both of the teachings may be based upon false assumptions or incorrectly understood scriptures.

A PROMISE OF JESUS

Many feel that a person must be highly educated or very intelligent to understand the Bible. However, this is not true. All those whom the Father calls to salvation can understand what he has caused to be written for their inspiration, correction, and edification. Because the Father wants his children to succeed in their calling and to perform his will in their lives, he has provided a way for them to learn and understand his truth.

One of the many promises Jesus makes to those who believe in him, is that he will send the holy spirit as a teacher to guide them into truth. See Jn.14:26; 16:12-13.

One way that the holy spirit carries out teaching and guiding is through the written word of God. The acquisition of truth, spiritual knowledge, and understanding with the help of the holy spirit requires effort, on the part of the one being called, to study the Bible and related information.

WHOM SHALL GOD TEACH?

"Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts" (Isa.28:9).

Just as there is a physical growth process from infancy to adulthood, there is a spiritual growth process in the acquisition of spiritual knowledge and understanding. The more a person learns and the more one practices what they have learned, the more spiritually mature they become, and the more spiritual knowledge and understanding God can reveal to them. See Isa.66:1-2.

STUDY FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

If a person only studies the Bible for information, very little understanding that is profitable for spiritual growth will be gained. However, if a person studies the Bible to gain knowledge and understanding in order to do the following things, their study will become profitable, and God will honor their request for him to reveal the secrets of the Bible that will benefit them and others with whom they come into contact:
• To understand God's plan for humanity
• To know God's will in one's life
• To learn what God expects of them
• To grow toward spiritual maturity
• To serve God and his children
• To understand how to fulfill one's particular calling

PREREQUISITES AND REQUIREMENTS

The Bible itself reveals the prerequisites and requirements that are necessary in order to be successful in its study. Listed below are some of the major things that one can do in order to acquire more knowledge and a deeper understanding of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and their awesome plan for humanity:

• Remove obstacles to learning by putting away improper attitudes and behavior.
• Have a serious desire to understand the things of God and study with an open mind
• Remember and practice the things which are already understood to be the truth of God.
• Study to grow spiritually, to serve others, and to fulfill your calling.
• Ask the Father for spiritual knowledge and understanding.
• Meditate on God's law in order to improve spiritual understanding.
• Make what is learned a part of your life.

Remove Obstacles to Learning

The Apostle Peter lists some things that hamper spiritual growth, which should be replaced with a desire to understand the word of God:

"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1.Pet.2:2 Para.).

The writer to the Hebrews makes a number of very important observations about growing in spiritual knowledge and understanding:

"About whom [Melchizedec] the word to say is much, and hard to interpret, since you have become dull in hearing. For indeed because of the time you are due to be teachers, you need to have someone teach you again the rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God, and you having become in need of milk, and not of solid food; for everyone partaking of milk, is not skilled in the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the full-grown ones, who through habit have exercised the faculties for distinguishing both good and bad" (Heb.5:11-14 Para.).

77
Notice the following about these verses:

- Something happened that caused these people to have difficulty in understanding the word of God.
- These people were not new converts and they should have reached the point in their spiritual lives where they had sufficient knowledge and understanding to be able to teach others.
- Because they had not grown in spiritual knowledge and understanding, they had become spiritually weak and had regressed instead of going forward.
- Those who lack the knowledge and understanding of the basic teachings of God cannot hope to know or understand the more difficult concepts and teachings of the Bible.
- In order to gain understanding into the more difficult things of God, a person must be practicing the basic truths of God in their life.

"But whosoever keeps his [God's] word, in him truly is the word of God perfected . . ." (1.Jn.2:5 KJV).

Ask for Truth and Guidance

The Psalmist and Jesus reveal that a person should ask God for guidance into his truth so that they can obey him with their whole being and be thoroughly established in his way of righteousness:

"Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes; and I shall keep them to the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep your law; yes I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of your commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken you me in your way. Establish your word to your servant, who is devoted to your fear. Turn away my reproach which I fear: for your judgment is good. Behold, I have longed after your precepts: quicken me in your righteousness" (Psa.119:33-40 KJV). See also Jer.10:23.

"Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled" (Matt.5:6 Para.).

Luke 11:9-13 KJV

"And I say to you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened" (vs.9-10).

Here, Jesus reveals a major key that will help unlock the great truth to be found in the Bible. Not only must a person desire to understand God's word, a person must also take positive action in order to acquire it.
First, a person must go to the Father and ask to be given knowledge and understanding. Second, a person must diligently seek knowledge and understanding by making a sincere effort to study:

"If a son shall ask bread of you that is a father, will you give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy spirit to them that ask him" (vs.11-13). See also Matt.7:7-8; Jn.14:14; 15:7; Lk.12:6-7, 23-31.

When asked for food, will any father who truly loves his child give them harmful things instead of the food they need to sustain their life? Of course not! A loving father will give them what they need and more, if it is within his power to do so.

God the Father is more than willing to give knowledge and understanding of the things that will benefit those he has called to salvation. It is his desire to give us the spiritual nourishment that is necessary for spiritual growth. See 1.Pet.2:2.

**Meditate on God's Word**

"Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law does he meditate day and night" (Psa.1:1-2 KJV). See also Psa.119:115-148; 1.Tim. 4:12-16.

There are tremendous blessings for those who perform the will of God in their life. The person who is being blessed loves God's law (i.e., God's way of life) and is constantly thinking about it.

**Prove all Things**

"Test all things; and hold fast that which is good" (1.Thes.5:21 Para.). See also Rom.12:2.

This statement is in the context of a person doing the will of God in their life. Paul refers to the testing or examining of what one is doing in their life and comparing it against the righteous standards of behavior that God has established. Notice that Paul says to "hold fast that which is good." A person can only know what is good if they understand the word of God. Therefore, a person must study God's word in order to fulfill Paul's admonition.

Speaking of those at Berea, Luke says,

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Therefore, many of them believed . . ." (Acts 17:11-12 KJV).
Many of those at Berea were serious about the things of God; therefore, they seriously studied the scriptures in order to prove to themselves what was correct before God, and because of this, many of them believed. The kind of true enduring belief that God desires for his children to have is based in the knowledge and understanding of him and his ways. The only place this kind of knowledge and understanding is available is in the Bible.

SUMMARY

The Bible was written to be understood, it is not a book of theory, philosophy, or meaningless stories; it is a logical factual presentation of the things that God wants people to know and understand.

The Bible is also a witness to the greatness of its author, a warning to those who will not obey the law of God, and an instruction manual for those who have been called to salvation.

By B.L. Cocherell
BIBLE STUDY BOOKS AND REFERENCE MATERIALS

Bible study is an extremely important part of the spiritual growth process for all who have been called to salvation. In order to make the study process efficient, enjoyable, and worthwhile, a person should have the proper tools. This section presents several helpful publications with short comments as to the information they contain:

**BIBLES**

There are many translations of the Bible and each has its own particular strengths and weaknesses. Some help clarify difficult scriptures and concepts, while others do the opposite—they introduce heretical teachings. Because there is no totally accurate translation of the original text, the admonition of Paul to Timothy becomes very important to those who are serious about building a strong spiritual foundation based upon the word of God:

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2.Tim.2:15 NKJV).

**The 1611 King James Bible**

Although it was written in early modern English in 1611, the King James Authorized Version is a very accurate translation of the original texts. However, because of this translation's archaic language, it is helpful to have some modern translations in order to help clarify difficult passages. The New International Version and the Living Bible can sometimes be helpful in translating concepts that are difficult to understand because of the language of the King James version.

**Interlinear Bible**


Both of these publications are translated from the Masoretic and the Received texts and are keyed to the James H. Strong numbering system, with a word for word English translation of the original language of the Bible. They are relatively easy to read and understand, and they are an excellent study aid for doing specific subject and word studies.
The NIV Bible


The NIV is written in modern English, it is easy to read, has many accurate scriptural notes and comments and excellent introductions to each book. And it has some very good reference charts and maps. It has some good translations for a few difficult scriptures; however, some important additions and omissions have been made to major doctrines in order to conform with today's popular theologies.

The LBP Bible


Although it is not a word for word translation, the Living Bible paraphrases scriptures in a way that often clearly reveals their true intent. As with the NIV, the Living Bible is not correct in many of the major doctrinal areas, and it should not be used as a basis for doctrine.

BIBLE STUDY AIDS

Strong's Concordance


This is an extremely valuable and easy to use study aid. It contains a dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words with short explanations of their meanings. Although it is not totally accurate in every detail, this concordance has a numbering system that is used as a reference key for most other word study books. The compact paper back version is recommended, because the hard cover issue is very large, hard to handle and store, and cumbersome to travel with.

Theological Word Book


This reference book contains easy to read and understand explanations of the original language of the Old Testament.

Theological Dictionary


This is a one volume abridged version of the ten volume Theological Dictionary of the New Testament; it is easy to read and has clear definitions of Greek words.
PROOF OF GOD AND THE BIBLE

There are many excellent books that have been written to prove the existence of God and the validity of the Bible. Many of these books are based on historical, geological, and/or scientific facts that cannot be disputed. However, some are not; therefore, as with anything that is written, one should exercise caution in believing the information that is put forth and measure it against the empirical standard of the Bible itself.

Below are some excellent works, that contain much truth and should help a person to appreciate the grandeur of God's creation and the great care with which he has guided humanity toward salvation.

Astronomy and the Bible


Both of these books give many details about how the constellations and the Bible interact to reveal God's great design of and purpose for the heavenly bodies.

History


This is an analysis of the promises to King David and the prophecies concerning the royal family of Judah and the Ten Lost Tribes.


This book is an excellent, clear, and concise historical overview of Old Testament Israel, and it has a very accurate chronology of events and dates beginning with the Patriarchs and ending with the prophet Malachi.


This book contains many details about the temple ministry and services at the time of Christ.

Mathematics of the Bible


This book expounds the mathematical design of the Bible and the mathematical relationships of the physical, prophetic, and spiritual meanings of the scriptures.

This book contains a systematic analysis, coordination, and correlation of important numerical data in the Bible.


This book contains an exhaustive work that expounds the complex numeric design and structure of the Bible.

**Science in the Bible**


This book explains many scientific principles and concepts that are stated in the Bible.

**Translation Discrepancies and Omissions**


This work documents discrepancies and omissions of popular translations of the Bible, and it shows the deliberate effort of many translators to distort the word of God.

By B.L. Cocherell
Is the universe and all that exists in it just an incredible cosmic accident, or is there a purpose for its existence?

When our lives come to an end, do we cease to exist forever, or is there hope of a future beyond the grave?

If all that exists was created for a purpose, is there a way to discover what that purpose is?

These and many other questions will be answered in the following pages. Moreover, we will see that the creation of the universe, the entire history of mankind, and the cataclysmic earth-shaking events of the near future have been very carefully planned.

The Creation was planned and executed in preparation for the grand climax of the most awesome and incredible event to ever take place. This fantastic event is the culmination and fulfillment of the purpose for human life on this planet.

Prior to explaining the purpose of the universe and human life, it will be necessary to briefly cover several subjects that will form a foundation for vital knowledge concerning the purpose of this physical existence.

DID ALL THAT EXISTS EVOLVE OR WAS IT CREATED?

Is there proof that the universe and all that exist within it are the product of a Creator? Yes, there is proof that all things which exist are the products of careful engineering and intelligent design. The proof is so abundant that it is difficult to find a place to begin. A person does not have to be a scholar or have a degree in higher mathematics to prove that all that exists is the product of tremendous planning and design. Anyone with average intelligence can easily find the abundant evidence of a perfectly engineered creation.

This short summary of some of the proofs of divine creation is meant to show the reader the logic behind the belief in an intelligent supreme Creator versus the belief in the blind chance of evolution. It is also meant to inspire those who profess to believe in a creator to prove his existence, instead of blindly following the lead of others, because the proof of the existence of a Creator is foundational to understanding the reasons for human existence.
YOU CAN KNOW!

The vast majority of those who profess to believe in a Creator have not taken the time or spent the effort to really prove his existence. Most believers have just taken the word of someone in whom they have confidence, or they just have a feeling that a supreme being exists.

But is it logical to trust someone else's belief, or even one's own feelings about the answer to the question: Does a Creator exist? The answer to this question will certainly have an impact on the way you live. If you believe in a Creator, you will live one way, and if you do not, you will live another way.

EVOLUTION AS A THEORY

When we analyze the Theory of Evolution and ask some rather pointed questions, we find that to believe in evolution takes far more faith than to believe in an intelligent Creator.

The Theory of Evolution states that all life came from dead, lifeless matter. This theory assumes the pre-existence of matter with no explanation of where the matter came from, or how it came into being. The pre-existence of matter also necessitates the pre-existence of universal law and order. But, where did the energy or force come from that created these laws? The discoveries of Louis Pasteur shed some light on the many questions concerning evolution verses creation.

Pasteur proved through his experiments with bacteria and protozoa that life can only be generated from life. The evolutionist theory states that through existing law, energy, and matter, a spark of life was struck and the process of evolution began. Then, after the passing of billions of years, life evolved from the simple to the complex.

This statement flies in the face of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which states: Left to themselves, all things tend to greater randomness.

Another question is: Why would an organism change or evolve into a more complex form if it were able to exist in its present form? What would give it the ability to change? It would seem that if an organism had the ability to change form and function, it must have already been a very complex structure.

The Theory of Evolution states that survival was the motivating factor that induced change. This statement sounds logical on the surface, but if a life-form was surviving, why would there be a need to change? If it was not surviving, it would simply cease to exist.

It is very strange that those who study ancient life-forms cannot find any intermediary species, but instead only find completely developed organisms which were perfectly adapted to their particular environment. When their environmental conditions changed, they did not evolve in order to survive, they became extinct (like the dinosaurs). A careful
analysis of the fossil record does not show a slow gradual change; rather it shows a radical abrupt change in life-forms from age to age.

Evolutionists must truly have great faith to believe this theory. They must believe in the pre-existence of matter, law, order, and blind chance!

THE CREATOR AND SCIENCE

Is there really a conflict between belief in a Creator and science? Science is defined in Webster's dictionary as: "The possession of knowledge, as distinguished from ignorance or misunderstanding."

When we look into the scientific proof of a Creator and Creation, we can immediately see that there is no conflict at all; true science proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that there is a supreme intelligence that has created and continues to sustain the physical existence:

"The fool has said in his heart, There is no God" (Psa.14:1; 53:1).

WHAT IS LIFE?

Life is the essence, the power, the energy, the force that gives a combination of chemicals, gases, liquids, and solids the ability to regenerate and procreate. The above statement is as good as any you will find in any scientific textbook. The truth is that no human being knows what life is. Even in this modern technological society, we still do not know. However, we do know what life does and what happens in its absence. Life is a great mystery.

Scientists have repeatedly proven that life only comes from life. In his famous experiments with bacteria and protozoa, Pasteur proved this scientific fact. Pasteur's discovery has been a great benefit to civilization. We can now prevent many diseases by using the laws of biogenesis (i.e., life only comes from pre-existing life and life of the same kind). Life can only come from pre-existing life, but where did the life that imparted this essence to the first lifeless chemical compound come from?

Life demands a Life-Giver. Not only does the variety of life on this planet demand a Life-Giver, it demands a very intelligent one. To deny the existence of a Creator of life is to deny the very existence of life itself.

MATTER

The fact that matter exists is another proof of a Creator. Most matter in the universe is in an incandescent state; it is slowly expending energy and consuming itself. Because its energy is being consumed, we can safely assume that the physical universe is running down. Like a clock spring that has been wound up, the spring's energy is expended with each second that passes and eventually the clock will stop. The same thing will happen to all matter in the universe; it will eventually stop functioning as matter. The physical creation will simply cease to exist unless it is sustained or replaced from a source other than itself.
It is a scientific fact that physical matter does not have an eternal existence. Matter is not eternal, so it must have come into existence at some point in time. How could this have happened? What caused matter to be formed out of nothing? What was the motivating force that brought it into being? Who or what created matter and gave it orderly controlled motion? What energy sustains it? Is it logical to assume that matter had no beginning when we know it has an end?

The existence of matter requires a powerful, intelligent Creator:

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork" (Psa. 19:1).

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

SYMBIOSIS

The symbiotic relationship between two dissimilar organisms (i.e., an intimate living together for mutual benefit) is a major proof of intelligent design.

There are many partnerships in nature that defy evolutionary logic. For example: There are the cellulose-digesting protozoan in the intestines of wood-eating cockroaches and termites, and the bacteria in the stomachs of cud-chewing animals that help digest the animals' food. In both cases, each type of life-form is dependent upon the other for its very existence.

The interrelationship of nitrogen-fixing bacteria with leguminous plants makes it possible for both to exist. The bacteria's metabolic process gives off nitrogen in just the right form for the plant to use in its growth process. And in return for the life-giving nitrogen, the plant provides the bacteria with a home and a ready supply of food. Here again, one life-form cannot exist without the other.

Probably, the best known of all symbiotic relationships is the honeybee and the flower. Much of the food humans eat would not exist if it were not for the relationship between the bee and flower. There are many plants and trees that cannot bear seed or fruit until they are pollinated by the only insect designed for the job—the honeybee!

Some logical questions to ask about this unique interdependent relationship are: How did the plants and trees procreate before the honeybee evolved? And, if they managed to procreate without the bee, why is there a need for the bee?

One of the most fascinating cases of symbiosis or mutuality is that of the Pronuba Moth and the Yucca plant. Both moth and plant are absolutely dependent on each other for survival. The moth is only active during the night when the Yucca flower opens. This takes incredible timing on the part of the moth and the plant. While the process of metamorphosis is changing a caterpillar into a moth, the plant is producing flower buds. At just the right time, when the Yucca flowers
start to open and bloom, the moths break out of their cocoons and struggle up and out onto the desert sand. Mating quickly takes place between the moths, and then the female moth, attracted by the Yucca flowers' odor, flies to the nearest Yucca flower.

The Yucca flowers are designed to allow only the Pronuba Moth to enter and gather pollen on its body. The moth deposits some of this pollen at the base of the pistil, then, piercing a hole in the flower's seed cell pouch, she lays her eggs in the seed cells. When the cycle is complete, the moth eggs will hatch, the pollinated flower will bear seed, and the life-cycle will repeat itself.

Did the moth design the plant? Did the plant design the moth? Obviously, this is perfect evidence of a planned purposeful design that demands a designer.

There are tens of thousands of these symbiotic relationships in the world, without which this planet would be a very desolate place indeed. The fact that symbiosis exists is just another proof that there is a Creator.

THE ATOM AND CREATION

We live in the atomic age, yet we know so little about atoms. We are constantly striving to understand this basic building block of the universe, which is yet another proof of an intelligent Creator:

"The cement that holds the Universe together is the force of gravity. The glue holding the atom together is electro-magnetic attraction. But the glue that holds the nucleus of the atom together is a mystery that defies all our experience and knowledge of the physical world. It is a force so unlike any we know that we can hardly find words to describe it" (Robert E. Marshak in an article on "Pions" in the Scientific American Magazine).

Could the atom have evolved or just been a fortunate cosmic accident? The forces that hold the atom together are truly awesome and terrifying. Within this small package, one millionth of one millionth of one millimeter in diameter, is locked the destructive power of the atomic and hydrogen bombs. Who designed the atom's satellite electrons that orbit its nucleus millions of times per second? Who decided that the atom should be constructed of over thirty-two subatomic particles of energy and matter? Who engineered the electromagnetic forces in the atom to act as they do?:

"For the invisible things of him [God] are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made [visible], even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they [those who deny God] are without excuse" (Rom.1:20 Para.).

"For by him, [Christ] were all things created, . . . and by him [God the Father] all things are held together" (Col.1:16-17 Para.).
Who, after looking at the marvels of the atom, could believe that it is a product of blind and brainless chance. The atom clearly demands creative engineering, ingenuity, design, and intelligent thought for its existence.

The atom shows by its very design that there had to be a designer. And it shows by its power that there had to be a greater power to contain, control, and energize it. According to the laws that the atom obeys, there had to be a Lawmaker and Lawgiver.

A WORLD FULL OF PROOF

The world is overflowing with invisible things that one cannot see that physically do exist and have a dramatic impact on all life on this planet: wind, electricity, protons, neutrons, gravity, human thought, etc. Human beings are unable to see any of these, but we cannot deny their existence. We can absolutely prove the existence of invisible things by the visible effect they have on things around them.

Everywhere we look we can see orderly design, from a simple crystal to the complex prismatic coloration of a butterfly's wing. Scientists and non-scientists—past and present—stand in awe of the marvelous and intricate design of God's creation. But most are unwilling to accept the undeniable proof that a Creator exists. To accept and acknowledge a Creator would naturally mean that there is a higher power than humanity to be reckoned with.

Many attempt to hide their heads in the sand when it comes to acknowledging the existence of a creator by telling themselves, "If I ignore the facts, they will go away!" But the Creator God will not go away. It is physical humans who will cease to exist if we do not get in harmony with his awesome purpose for humanity.

When we honestly look at the physical universe, we must concede that everything that exists must be the result of intelligent design. To have design there must be a Designer. And, before something is designed and built, there must be a purpose for its existence.

Because there is no question that humans, the earth, and the universe do exist, the next logical question is: What was the purpose for their creation?

There is only one book which claims to have all of the answers to the above question—the Bible.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TODAY AND THE FUTURE

The apostle Paul said that the scriptures were written so that we might have hope for something better than this present existence:

"For whatever things were written before, were written for our instruction, that through patience and encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope" (Rom.15:4 Para.).
The apostle Paul was also inspired to record the following:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works" (2.Tim.3:16-17 KJV).

But is the Bible the Word of the Creator God to his creation? Does the Bible hold the secret to the mystery of life and its purpose? Or is the Bible just so much mythology and quaint stories fabricated by the ancient nation of Israel?

Many people throughout history have tried to disprove the validity of the Bible. However, the Bible stands as one of the most accurate of all historical records. Time after time it has been proven to be accurate by archaeologists, geologists, scientists, and historians. There are so many proofs that the Bible is the written word of the Creator God that it is difficult to categorize and list them all.

**BIBLICAL ACCURACY**

The Bible is a marvel of historical and scientific accuracy. Ancient historical data mentioned in it is constantly being corroborated by discoveries of modern science and archaeology.

Discovery after discovery have established the historical accuracy of innumerable minute details of the biblical record. Anyone can prove this by making a trip to a good Bible reference library and doing some simple research.

**PROPHECY**

The Bible penetrates both the past, present, and the future, as it deals with the purpose for the existence of mankind. In the fulfillment of prophecy, the Bible stands alone in its accuracy. There are hundreds of predictions about people and events, which have come to pass with absolute fulfillment. Moreover, the Bible is extremely specific in many cases as to the outcome of events.

There is abundant proof that the Bible is the word of God; all one has to do to acquire this proof is to put forth the effort and do a small amount of research.

**BIBLE NUMERICs**

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. In each of these languages every letter of the alphabet corresponds to a number. This means nothing by itself; however, when one looks at the mathematical construction of the Bible the reason for this numerical correspondence becomes clear.
Every sentence, every phrase, and every concept pertaining to any given subject is linked together with a specific numerical value or mathematical equation unique to itself. This is far beyond blind chance or the ability of mere humans. This mathematical construction shows design on a grand scale.

Even though the Bible was written by dozens of men over centuries of time and very few of these men were scientists or mathematicians, this intricate mathematical pattern runs from the first verse of scripture to the last and it is accurate to the primes of numbers.

Many good books covering the topic of Bible numerics can guide the reader to a better understanding and appreciation of the mathematical construction of the Bible.

The mathematical complexity and structure of the Bible proves beyond a doubt that a Supreme Intelligence guided its construction.

These are but a few of the proofs that the Bible is the Word of a spirit-being of supreme intellect and power.

A Unique Book

The Bible is unique. The Bible is the only book that claims to have the answers to the basic questions of life. The Bible tells humanity who its Creator is, why it was created, and what its ultimate destiny is. Indeed, the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and has the answers to life's greatest question: What is the purpose for human existence?

THE MYSTERY OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

The purpose for human existence has been hidden from man for many centuries. God has intentionally kept most of humanity from understanding his plan until humans were able to learn the lessons that only time and experience can teach:

Matthew 13:10-17  KJV

"And the disciples came, and said to him, Why speak you to them in parables? He answered and said to them, Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given . . . Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand . . . " (vs.10-13).

"And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (vs.14-15). See also Isa.6: 9-10.
"But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say to you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them" (vs.16-17). See also Mk.4:11-12; Lk.8:10.

The Mystery Revealed

Now, in the end of this age, God is revealing, through the Bible and his servants, the good news of his soon-coming Kingdom and his purpose for human existence:

"Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Amen" (Matt.28:19-20 KJV).

God the Father and Jesus Christ's purpose for humanity is so awesome and exciting that it is almost beyond belief. God the Father, the One who sent his Son Jesus Christ to earth over nineteen hundred years ago, is in the process of creating children out of human beings; Yes, that's right! God the Father is expanding his family:

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," (Jn.1:12 KJV).

"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1.Jn.3:1-2 KJV). See also 2.Cor.6:18; Heb.2:10; Rom.8:14,19.

God the Father has embarked upon the greatest and grandest of all his creations; he is creating beings just like himself (Phil.3:21; 1.Jn.3:2), and his intent is to share with them all he has created or will create throughout eternity:

"But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him" (1.Cor.2:9 KJV).

SUMMARY OF GOD'S PLAN FOR HUMANITY

At some point in eternity, a plan unfolded that is more fascinating and engrossing than any science fiction story or real life saga that has ever been told. That plan involves every person who has lived, is now living, and is yet to be born.
PHASE 1

ORIGINAL CREATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen.1:1).

The Bible does not say exactly how long ago the earth was created; however, Biblical and historical evidence indicate that between six and seven thousand years ago humanity began to populate the earth:

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:" (Gen.1:26 KJV).

The word "God" in the above verse is a uniplural Hebrew word that means more than one being is involved. Please read John 1:1-18.

You will notice after reading these scriptures that there are two persons mentioned—The Word and God. Ephesians 3:9 KJV states that God the Father created all things by Jesus Christ. In John 1:1, "The Word" is Jesus Christ and "God" is God the Father (Jn.14:21, 23, 28; 15:10, 21-24). As in any organization, there is someone in charge and someone else who carries out the directives of the one in charge, and it is no different in the government of God.

From the time of Adam to the days of Noah, humans were allowed to live and do their own thing, but during the days of Noah, man had become so wicked and rebellious, that God was sorry he had created the human race:

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repents me that I have made them" (Gen.6:5-7 KJV).

Not wanting his human creation to continue to suffer under the oppression of evil any longer, God destroyed all of humanity in a worldwide flood, except Noah and his family.

PHASE 2

A NEW START AFTER THE FLOOD

Only eight people survived the flood. This small remnant was all that was left of a race that had existed for almost two thousand years, and had populated the earth with millions of people.

God told Noah and this small remnant to repopulate the earth, and promised that he would never again destroy the earth and humanity with a flood. As a token of this promise, God said he would cause a change in the atmospheric conditions so that rainbows could be seen from time to time as a reminder of this promise (Gen.9:7-17).
Approximately 130 years after the flood, the earth's population had grown to hundreds of thousands and perhaps millions. Because of the knowledge brought from the former civilization by Noah and his family, and because of a common language, man's knowledge and scientific achievements were advancing at a rapid pace, so much so that God stepped in and suppressed man's ability to communicate among themselves (Gen.11:5-9). This slowed scientific progress and forestalled the inevitable result of the misuse of scientific knowledge—genocide through war and the destruction of the environment.

The next 1900 or so years of man's history was business as usual. People were doing the things they had been doing from the creation of Adam; being born and dying, loving and hating, marrying and divorcing, and warring and seeking peace.

But most importantly, history was being recorded so that humanity could eventually see and understand the utter hopelessness of human existence apart from God's influence and guidance.

PHASE 3

THE PLAN REVEALED

About 2,000 years ago, the Roman Empire ruled most of the world, and there was a rare period of partial peace in human history. During this time of peace, God the Father sent the One we call Jesus Christ to be born of a virgin and become a human being.

There were many reasons for this bold venture, some of which are the following:

- To gain a firsthand knowledge of what it was like to be human.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on himself the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like to his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself had suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted" (Heb.2:14-18 KJV). See also Heb.5:7-8.

- To reveal God's plan to humanity.

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God" (Mk.1:14 KJV; Lk.8:10).
• To show the God Family's concern and love for their human creation by giving a gift worth more than all in existence. That gift was the life of one of the members of the God Family. This life was to be given as payment for the sins of all humanity, because it is only through the death of Jesus Christ, that humanity is able to obtain forgiveness of their sins.

While Jesus Christ was on earth (approximately thirty-three and a half years) he lived his life much as any other Jew of his day, with one great exception, he knew that he was the Creator God in the flesh and if he failed in any part of his mission, he would cease to exist and humanity would lose its opportunity for salvation and eternal life (Jn.3:15-17; 12:47; 1.Tim.2:4-6; 1.Cor.15:17).

At about thirty years of age, Jesus chose twelve men (Matt.10:1-11; Lk.6:12-16; 8:10; Mk.3:13-19) who were to learn God's Plan and then teach others. Throughout the ensuing centuries (Rom.16:24-26; Eph.6:19; Col.1:25-27), others would also be specially selected by God the Father to proclaim his plan to the world:

"No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn.6:44 KJV).

"For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom.8:14 KJV). See also Acts 2:47; Matt.20:16; 28:19-20.

PHASE 4

AMBASSADORS FOR JESUS CHRIST

Since the days of Jesus Christ and his disciples, God's Plan has been presented to humanity in a publication known simply as The Book. However, God's plan was understood by only a very few prior to the advent of Jesus. But since Jesus Christ came and revealed it to his disciples, this understanding has been passed on by his followers from generation to generation.

These individuals who have received and are receiving this knowledge must accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and live their lives in accordance to the rules for human behavior as set forth in the Bible. They must be ambassadors for Christ in this age. Their duties as ambassadors include:

1. Showing that God's way of life is the best way to live, in order to have real peace and happiness:

"The thief comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (Jn.10:10 KJV).
2. Proclaiming the good news of God's soon-coming world-ruling government of God:

"And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel" (Mk.1:15 KJV). See also Matt.28:19-20.

3. Explaining that the result of ignoring God's laws, precepts, and principles will bring eternal death:

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.6:23 KJV).

4. Preparing to assume the role of priests and kings to rule the earth with Christ at the institution of God's government over humanity:

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev.20:4-6 KJV).

PHASE 5

THE END OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT

Jesus was asked a question by his disciples—a question that all who serve God and desire real peace on earth have asked throughout the centuries: When will the government of God come to the earth? The answer is found in Matthew, the 24th chapter. Read it very carefully and think about the condition of the world today.

When we take careful note of world conditions, it appears that we are indeed living in the times spoken of by Christ, and that these events could very well end in the complete annihilation of all life from the face of the earth.

If this is the time spoken of by Christ, the end of human government is very near, and will be accomplished by the direct intervention into world affairs by Christ who will save humanity from total destruction.
PHASE 6
THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD COMES TO EARTH

This earth will be invaded by Jesus Christ, his angels, and the elect resulting in the most horrible and terrifying war that humans will have ever experienced (Jude v15; 1.Thes.3:13; Rev.19:14-15). This invasion will be met with tremendous resistance by the warring nations of the earth (Rev.17:12-14; Matt.24:21-22), but physical humans will be no match for the Creator and his army of spirit-beings (Rev.6:15-17). All resistance will be put down quickly, and God's government will rule the earth from Jerusalem forever:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. And many people shall go and say, Come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa.2:2-4 KJV).

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev.11:15 KJV).

PHASE 7
THE FAMILY OF GOD

The entire history of mankind, from God's creation of the universe to the earth-shaking events to come, has been carefully guided through the centuries in preparation for the grand climax of God's plan for humanity. This phase in the plan is the changing of physical humans into immortal spirit-beings in the family of God:

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1.Cor.15:50-53 KJV).
"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1.Cor. 15:54-57 KJV).

That's right! Humans were created to become eternal beings just like God the Father and Jesus Christ (1.Jn.3:2; Phil.3:21; Rom.8:14-19). This is God's primary purpose for the physical creation, and this is what is in store for those who obey God (Jn.1:12; Heb.1:12). They will become spiritual Sons of God, and live forever with their spiritual Father and spiritual brother Jesus Christ (Rom.8:29; 1.Cor.2:9).

YOUR PART IN THE PLAN

If you are willing to accept the challenge, your part in this drama of human existence, is to be among the very first humans to become Sons, Kings, and Priests of God:

"And he that overcomes, and keeps my works to the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron;" (Rev.2:26-27 KJV).

"Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev.20:6 KJV).

Do you want to become a part of the God Family and live an exciting and joyful life for eternity? The process by which this very special relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ can be obtained is called Salvation and it is offered to those whom God the Father calls:

"For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

B.L. Cocherell
Chapter Nine

Salvation: The Secret to Eternal Life

Throughout the ages many questions have been asked about salvation. What is it? Why should we seek it? How do we acquire it? Answers to these and many other questions about this vital subject are found in the handbook for human survival—the Bible.

The Reality of Death

The reality of death is one of the most terrifying realities of this human existence. It is so frightening and distasteful that most people try to avoid talking or thinking about it, and most humans go about their daily lives acting as if death only happens to other people. Many will go to great expense and effort to try to preserve their life and will use every scientific device available to extend their life. Some will even needlessly take another's life in order to preserve and extend their own.

Yes, life is our most precious possession, but no matter what we do or how hard we try to preserve it, the inevitable will happen; we will die.

What is Death?

The scientific definition of death is "the cessation of the life function" (i.e., all systems cease to operate). The heart stops pumping blood, the brain stops sending orders to the organs, the thought processes cease, the body becomes immobile, all regeneration processes stop, and the body starts to decay.

The biblical definition of death is basically the same as the scientific one, with one exception. God said to Adam and Eve after they had disobeyed in the garden of Eden:

"For dust you are, and to dust shall you return" (Gen.3:19 KJV).

"His breath goes forth he returns to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psa.146:4 KJV).

There is no quarrel with the scientific definition here. It would seem as though human life is just a chemical-electrical reaction of a well designed structure of gas, fluids, and solid matter, reacting to internal and external stimulation.
IS DEATH THE END?

Is death the end of our existence? Is there no more to human life than just a few short years on this planet? People throughout the centuries have pondered these same questions about life and death. Men and women alike have searched in vain for the elixir of life, the fountain of youth, a magic potion, a philosophy, anything that would extend life, both life here on earth and beyond the grave.

Many believe in life after death, and a multitude of bizarre theories have developed over the centuries as to how to attain life after death. One religion teaches that holding the tail of a cow will bring life after death. The ancient Egyptians believed that after death their spirit embarked on a great journey and would be carried to the after-life on a boat. Many today believe they will be reincarnated at death, and their spirit will re-enter another human, a beast, a bird or an insect. Almost no one believes that at death they will cease to exist.

THE HOPE OF SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY

Those who do not believe in life after death hope for a continuance of life through scientific achievements. Scientists say that given enough time, money and effort there is no doubt that they will discover a way to prolong life almost indefinitely. But what about those who have died in the past? Will science be able to bring them back to life? Even if science could extend life a thousand or a million years, what happens when the earth and the universe finally wear out and cease to function? What about accidental death? What about those who die before a life extending discovery is made?

If there is no hope beyond this physical life, at death we would cease to exist, never again to enjoy the fragrance of a flower or feel the sun and wind on our face, never again to see a beautiful sunset or hear the voice of a loved one; we would return to the basic elements from which we are composed. Or will we?

HUMANITY NEEDS SALVATION FROM ETERNAL DEATH

Humanity needs God's intervention in order to live on after physical death.

The first reason that we need God to save us is that, to date, all human efforts have failed to eliminate death and produce eternal life. The second is that all humans are under a death sentence for violating God's law. Therefore, there is no hope of eternal life unless it comes from the Creator of all life.

The Creator God explained the frailty of human life to our ancient ancestors:

"In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return to the ground; for out of it were you taken: for dust you are, and to dust shall you return" (Gen.3:19 KJV). See also Psa.146:4; Matt.10:28.
This saving from the fate of eternal death, and being given eternal life by God the Father through Jesus Christ, is defined in the Bible as salvation.

**LIFE AFTER DEATH**

Salvation from eternal death and the granting of eternal life is a central theme of the Bible. It is this salvation that Jesus Christ, the apostles, and prophets expounded upon throughout the pages of the Bible. Being given salvation from God the Father through Jesus Christ is the only hope of the living and the dead. No science or philosophy can guarantee life after death. Only God the Father and Jesus Christ (who was the Creator of mankind) have the power to resurrect and change the physical to eternal.

**Job**

Thousands of years ago, a man named Job asked the same questions that many people today ask about life after death. The only difference between Job and most people of today, is that Job knew the answers to the questions. He knew that there would be a resurrection of the dead, and that there was a purpose for humanity beyond this physical existence:

"But man dies, and wastes away: yes, man gives up the spirit, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decays and dries up: So man lies down, and rises not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that you would hide me in the grave, that you would keep me secret, until your wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come [Job knew he would be resurrected.] You shall call, and I will answer you: you will have a desire to the work of your hands" (Job 14:10-15 KJV).

**God Desires All to be Saved**

It is the intense desire of God the Father and Jesus Christ for all of humanity to be saved from eternal death and to become eternal spirit-beings in the God family:

"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1.Tim.2:4 KJV).

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness: but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should parish, but that all should come to repentance" (2.Pet.3:9 KJV).

"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost" (Matt. 18:11 KJV). See also Lk.9:10.
God the Father and Jesus Christ earnestly desire that all mankind be saved, but they leave the choice up to each of us individually. God will neither force us into his kingdom, nor will he grant eternal life to those who will not obey his laws, precepts, and principles. See Deut.30:19, 15-29; Rev.22:14-15.

**SIN—A MAJOR OBSTACLE TO SALVATION**

There is no doubt that the Father and Christ want to save human beings from eternal death and give them eternal life. However, there is a major obstacle which must be overcome prior to a person being transformed into an eternal spirit-being.

The obstacle that prevents a person from obtaining salvation is the death sentence which has been imposed upon humanity for the violation of God's empirical law.

**The First Lie**

The first lie recorded in the Bible was spoken by Satan when he told Eve that she would not die if she ate the forbidden fruit. Since that time, Satan has deceived most of humanity into thinking they already have an immortal soul. However, humans do not have an immortal soul, and will not escape the penalty for disobedience to God, which is death. All sinful humans shall be put to death, and this death is final and eternal if they persist in their rebellion against God.

Paul explains that because of Adam's violation of God's instructions, the death sentence through the law was imposed upon all humanity:

"Because of this, even as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, so also death passed to all men, insomuch as all sinned; for sin was in the world until the law, but sin is not charged where there is no law. But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even on those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's transgression" (Rom.5:12-14 Para.).

**UNDER THE LAW**

Because of Adam's disobedience, humanity is now under the dominion of God's perfect law, and because this law is perfect, it demands perfect obedience. If perfect obedience is not maintained, the law requires the death of the violator. The writers of the Bible record clearly that the violation of the law results in the violator being put to death. The prophet Ezekiel and the apostles John and Paul expressed simply what constitutes the violation of the law, and what the penalty for its violation is:

"Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins, it shall die" (Ezk.18:4,20 KJV).

"Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1.Jn.3:4 KJV).
"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.6:23 KJV).

Under the Sentence of Death

Many believe that all of humanity will enjoy a life after death regardless of their behavior during this present existence, and others believe sinners will somehow escape punishment. However, the Bible says that all of humanity is under the death sentence because of the violation of God's law, and they must be put to death unless they have their sins forgiven and their death sentence removed:

"Do you not know that the unjust ones will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be led astray, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterors, nor abusers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous ones, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor plunderers shall inherit the Kingdom of God" (1.Cor.6:9-10 Para.). See also Ezk. 33:11; Rom. 1:28-32; Jms.5:19-20; 2.Pet.2:1-22.

God's law requires perfect obedience, and no one except Jesus Christ has ever kept the law perfectly. Everyone is under a death sentence, until it is removed by God the Father:

"For all have sinned; and come short of the glory of God;" (Rom. 3:23 KJV).

None Righteous

Romans 3:10-20 KJV

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes" (vs.10-18). See also Isa.59:1-2; 64:6-7; 1.Jn.1:8-10.

Here, Paul speaks of the natural condition of a person prior to having their sins forgiven and being made sinless by God the Father through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ:

"Now we know that what things soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (v19).

God's law is very specific as to what the law is, and what constitutes obedience and disobedience to his precepts and principles. Because of the strict and eternal standards of the law, everyone has violated them and stands guilty before God:
"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (v20).

Paul goes on to say that no one can be justified in God's sight by keeping the deeds of the law, since everyone has fallen short and has violated the law sometime during their life, and after the law has been violated, no amount of obedience to the law can erase the penalty of past violations.

Humanity's attempts to be justified or declared righteous before God by their own efforts have failed. Therefore, all of humanity is doomed to death, unless there is another method by which individuals can be made righteous before God.

God the Father and Jesus Christ knew that humanity might not obey and would come under the penalty of the law; therefore, their plan for the salvation of humanity included a method by which people may escape the death sentence.

**GOD HAS HAD A PLAN FROM THE BEGINNING**

Humanity was created with the ability to reason and weigh alternate courses of physical and mental action. In other words, humans were created with the ability to choose to do as they please, whether good or evil. Before God created humanity, he knew that they might choose evil over good, and that after choosing evil and seeing the results of such behavior, some would want to change and establish a positive relationship with him.

Long before creating human beings, God formulated a sacrificial system in order to give humanity a way to be placed back into contact and right-standing with their Creator.

**The Sacrifice**

"Then Abel brought the first lamb born to one of his sheep, killed it, and gave the best parts of it as an offering. The Lord was pleased with Abel and his offering, but he rejected Cain and his offering. Cain became furious, and he scowled in anger. Then the Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry? Why that scowl on your face? If you had done the right thing, you would be smiling, but because you have done evil, sin is crouching at your door. It wants to rule you, but you must overcome it. Then Cain said to his brother Abel, Let's go out in the fields. When they were out in the fields, Cain turned on his brother and killed him" (Gen.4:4-8 GNB).

God tells Cain that if he had done the right thing, he would be smiling. But what was it that Cain should have done? The answer is obvious when we see what the apostle John says to Christians about Cain's behavior:
"The message you heard from the very beginning is this: we must love one another. We must not be like Cain; he belonged to the Evil One and murdered his own brother Abel. Why did Cain murder him? Because the things he himself did were wrong, and the things his brother did were right" (1.Jn.3:11-12 GNB).

The apostle John says that Christians must not be like Cain who hated his brother and murdered him. But why did Cain hate his brother and murder him? The scriptures seem to indicate that Cain was jealous of Abel, because the things that Cain did were wrong, and the things his brother Abel did were right. But what were the right things that Abel did?

Here is what the writer to the Hebrews says that Abel did right and Cain did wrong:

"It was by faith that Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain. Through his faith he won God's approval as a righteous man, because God himself approved of his gifts. Because of this act of faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead" (Heb.11:4 GNB).

It was through a more excellent sacrifice that Abel obtained the witness which showed that he was righteous (i.e., in right-standing with God).

Why was Abel's sacrifice more excellent than Cain's? And how did the act of offering the correct sacrifice cause Abel to continue to speak to us?

THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD

Without the shedding of blood there can be no atonement for sin; unless a life is sacrificed to pay the penalty for violating the law, sin cannot be forgiven:

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul" (Lev.17:11 KJV).

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb.9:22 KJV).

From the Genesis record it is obvious that Cain and Abel had been instructed as to how to be put back in right-standing with God through the sacrificial system. Cain was unwilling to diligently follow God's instructions and was a sinner before God. However, Abel was willing to obey God and was righteous in God's eyes.

As it says in Genesis 4:7, Cain would have been smiling if he had given the proper sacrifice. We know Abel offered the proper sacrifice (Heb.11:4), because he was put back into right-standing with God.
Why was Abel's sacrifice more excellent than Cain's? Genesis 4:4 tells us that Abel offered a firstling of his flock. Abel knew that someday Christ would come to earth and offer himself as a perfect sacrifice, and through Christ he could have his sins taken away, never to be remembered again. Abel offered the proper sacrifice, which was symbolic of Christ's sacrifice. His sins were then covered, and he was put back into right-standing with God. Through his faith in this sacrifice (a type of Christ) Abel still speaks to us.

If a person could always maintain perfect and faithful compliance with God's law, they would always be in constant harmony and fellowship with him.

Prior to Christ, when someone violated God's law, their fellowship with him was interrupted and their access to him was barred. In order to deal with this situation, God designed the priesthood and the sacrificial system. The priest functioned as a mediator and bridge-builder between people and God by means of the sacrificial system. By offering a correct sacrifice, the breach of the law was repaired and fellowship with God was restored.

The Ancient Israelites

In the covenant that God made with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai, he promised that if they would keep his law (Deut.5:29-33; 30:15-20), they would be righteous and sinless before him.

Maintaining a right-standing with God was a major part of the terms and conditions of the Old Covenant. God told the Israelites that if they would obey him, he would bless them, but disobedience would bring curses (Deut.28:1-68).

It is very important to understand how those before Christ maintained a good relationship with their Creator because it is this good relationship or right-standing with God the Father that ensures a person salvation under the terms and conditions of the new Covenant:

"And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore to our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us" (Deut.6: 22-25 KJV).

Here, we see that the commandments are defined as righteousness. If a person could always keep the commandments perfectly without ever violating one of them, he or she would be a righteous individual in God's eyes and would escape the second death.
The Prophets and Writers

"When a righteous one turns from his righteousness and does injustice, and dies in them; he shall die for his injustice which he has done. And when the wicked turns from his wickedness that he has done, and does justice and righteousness, he shall keep his soul alive. Because he considers and turns from all his transgressions that he has done, surely he shall live; he shall not die" (Ezk. 18:26-28). See also Ezk.3:18-21; Jer.4:14.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Psa.19:7 KJV).

"My tongue shall speak of your word: for all your commandments are righteousness" (Psa.119:172 KJV).

SALVATION THROUGH JUSTIFICATION

There are many scriptures which speak of the necessity to be justified before God in order to obtain salvation. But just what does being justified mean? Since being justified is necessary in order to obtain salvation, it is vital to understand exactly what justification is, and how to obtain it.

The Word Justify

The English word justify as used in the Old Testament, is translated from the Hebrew word that means to render just or innocent, free, justify, or to be righteous. The words justification and righteousness deal with the concept of being made free from sin and being placed in harmony with God.

It will help in the study about salvation to understand that the words justification and righteousness as used in the New Testament are derived from the same Greek word and are used interchangeably.

Both the Hebrew and the Greek words for justification and righteousness are used to convey the same basic meaning of being made right with God and being sinless before him.

God is Our Salvation

"Look to me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa.45:22 KJV).

"Lead me in your truth, and teach me: for you are the God of my salvation; on you do I wait all the day" (Psa.25:5 KJV).
In order to obtain salvation, we must have our sins forgiven and our death sentence removed. Because it is impossible for us to forgive our own sins or remove our own death sentence, it must be done for us. The only being who can forgive sins and remove the death sentence is God the Father, because he is the Sovereign of all that exists. Therefore, it is he that must declare us sinless and worthy of saving. The question is not whether or not he will save us, the question is how does he save us?

**The Righteousness to be Revealed**

"So says the Lord: Keep justice and do righteousness; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed" (Isa.56:1 Para.).

A careful study of the Bible reveals how to become righteous and be saved from eternal death. The righteousness Isaiah foretold was the righteousness of the life and sacrifice of Christ. It is through belief in the perfect sacrifice of Christ that a person may obtain righteousness and salvation.

As we have read, righteousness is defined as the obedience to God's law. What is the righteousness that Isaiah foretold that would be revealed? The answer to this question is found in the writings of Paul:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For in it is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom.1:16-17 KJV).

_Romans 3:20-31 KJV_

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets:" (vs.20-21).

Paul says that a person can no longer be justified by their efforts of keeping the law, because God has revealed a method to become righteous apart from the deeds of the law.

"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ to all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:" (vs.22-24).

Under the New Covenant, the way to receive righteousness and to be justified takes faith in the redemptive power of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ:
"Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus" (vs.25-26).

It is through the righteousness of Jesus Christ that a person may be justified and declared righteous before God the Father, and it is because Jesus Christ sacrificed his life blood that we can have our sins forgiven, our death sentence removed, and be made innocent before God.

**JESUS, THE ONLY WAY TO SALVATION**

"Be it known to you all, 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, even by him does this man stand before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:10-12 KJV).

Jesus Christ holds the key to our salvation because he is our Savior. It is through his sacrifice and intercessory authority with the Father, that we can have our sins forgiven. It is through his sacrifice that all of humanity—past, present, and future—may obtain salvation:

"For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1.Thes.5:9 KJV).

Jesus Christ was not only sent to pay the penalty for our sins, but also to explain how to obtain salvation:

"Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me" (Jn.14:6 KJV).

"This parable spoke Jesus to them: but they understood not what things they were which he spoke to them. Then said Jesus to them again, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep" (Jn.10:6-11 KJV). See Jn.6:39-40; 11:25-26; Rom.1:16-17.

The writers of the four gospels give us a summary of Christ's teachings. In the 14th and 15th chapters of the gospel of John, Jesus stated how he and his Father want those who would obtain eternal life to live their lives. If a person desires to have life everlasting, they must endeavor to obey the teachings of God's word.

110
Note:
Please read John 14 and 15 before reading the rest of this study.

THE GOD WHO BECAME MAN

History clearly shows that Jesus was not a myth or a legend; he did exist. He was a real human being who preached and taught God's word with great power and zeal.

John 1:1-5, 10-14 KJV

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (vs.1-5).

"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came to his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwell among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (vs.10-14).

The God Who Died

Prior to being human, Jesus was an immortal spirit-being who possessed the highest form of existence; life that springs forth from itself, never dying or decaying. This immortal being who was not subject to death, emptied himself of his glory, power, and immortality to become a mortal man.

"But now in these days he has spoken to us through his Son to whom he has given everything, and through whom he made the world and everything there is. God's Son shines out with God's glory, and all that God's Son is and does marks him as God. He regulates the universe by the mighty power of his command. He is the one who died to cleanse us and clear our record of all sin, and then sat down in highest honor beside the great God of heaven" (Heb.1:2-3 LBP).

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb.2:9 KJV). See Lk.24:1-7; Acts 2:24-32; 3:15,26; Rom.6:8-10; Phil.2:6-8; 1.Pet.3:18; Rev.2:8; 1:4,17-18.
The Creator God who made all that exists for the Sovereign God voluntarily gave up his immortality to come to earth in human form, live a sinless life as an example for us to follow, and sacrificed his life in an agonizing death as payment for the sins of all humanity. He did this in order that each of us could be saved from eternal death as a result of our violation of God’s perfect law. See 1.Cor.6:20; 7:23; Ezk.18:4,20; Rom.6:23.

Before the advent of the Messiah, animal life could be sacrificed in place of the life of the violator of the law in order to temporarily cover the sin. Under the New Covenant, the Creator God who became the Messiah sacrificed his own life as a substitute for the life of the violator in order to forgive sins.

Jesus Christ, the Creator and Son of God the Father, holds the key to our salvation because he is our Savior (Isa.43:11; 45:21). It is through his sacrifice and intercessory authority with the Father that we can have our sins forgiven.

Notice what the writer to the Hebrews says about the sacrifice of Christ being the ultimate and final sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin:

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb.9:14-15 KJV).

It is extremely important for anyone who is seeking salvation to understand and believe who Jesus Christ is, and that he sacrificed his sinless life to pay the penalty for their sins.

The scriptures say that all have sinned and are under a death sentence waiting to be executed. In order to escape execution, a person must have their sins forgiven and be justified (made innocent) before God the Father.

The Bible says that the only way to have one's sins forgiven is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Without belief in Christ—who he was and what he did—no one can be saved.

As human beings, we cannot begin to comprehend or understand the enormous sacrifice the Creator made when he became a human himself. The price he paid and what he gave was worth more than the sum total of all that exists, because he was and is the Creator of all that exists for the Sovereign God.

**Jesus Our Creator and Our Savior**

"I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no Savior" (Isa.43:11 KJV).
"This says the Lord, your redeemer, and he that formed you from the womb, I am the Lord that makes all things..." (Isa.44:24 KJV).

"I the Lord am your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob" (Isa.60:16 KJV). See also Isa.45:21.

"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned" (Mk.16:16 KJV).

"For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," (1.Thes.5:9 KJV).

"For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them..." (Lk.9:56 KJV).

"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost [i.e., humanity]" (Matt.18:11 KJV).

The apostle Paul said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1.Tim.1:15 KJV).

**JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD—SAVED BY HIS LIFE**

Paul spoke to the Colossians about God the Father redeeming us by sending his Son to give his life as payment for the sins of humanity.

Colossians 1:13-22 KJV

"Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell;

"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in the earth, or things in heaven.

"And you, that who were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has he reconciled. In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight:"

Again, it is by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (the Creator God) that we are reconciled to God the Father and have our death sentence removed:
"And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1.Cor.15:14 KJV). See also 1.Cor.15:3-4.

If Christ had not risen from the dead, we would be lost without any hope of salvation. This is a very important point because it shows that not only did Christ have to die for our sins but also he had to be brought back to life in order for us to be saved. But why?:

"For we yet being without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will with difficulty die for a just one—for perhaps one even dares to die for the sake of the good one—but God commends his love to us in that we yet being sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being justified now by his blood, we shall be saved through him from wrath. For being enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom.5:6-10).

Paul says that we are reconciled to God the Father by the blood of Christ and that we shall be saved from death through him. Notice also that we are made innocent before God the Father by the death of his Son, and because he lives, we are saved. But what is it about Christ's life that brings salvation to humanity?

OUR HIGH PRIEST

Christ now holds an extremely important position, which is vital to our salvation. This position is that of our High Priest. It is because he lives that he is able to be our High Priest and intercede before the Father on our behalf:

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb.4:14-15 KJV). See also Heb.2:14-18; 9:7-28.

Christ, our High Priest and Mediator now sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven. Christ can and does understand why we sin. He knows our weaknesses as human beings, because he has been human (Heb.2:14-18). Therefore, when we petition the Father, we can also ask Christ to intercede with the Father on our behalf, because he understands exactly what we are feeling. He understands us because while he was here in the flesh, he was also tempted.

Jesus knows how weak the flesh is and now he can explain to the Father who has never been human how difficult it is to dwell in this flesh. Then, the Father can also understand and have mercy on us and forgive us of our sins, because all of us sin, even after we are baptized. Therefore, we still need forgiveness on an ongoing basis, in order that we can always stand before God as righteous individuals.

When we go before God the Father in prayer, we must ask all things in the name of Jesus, which is the same as asking by his authority as our
High Priest, because Jesus alone has the authority to intercede on our behalf for the forgiveness of our sins. See Acts 4:12; Heb.7:25.

Notice what is said about the intercessory power and authority of Jesus:

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them" (Heb.7:25 KJV).

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1.Tim.2:5 KJV).

**SALVATION IS A GIFT FROM GOD**

God the Father is expanding his family (Jn.1:12; 1.Jn.3:1-2; 2.Cor.6:1; Heb.2:10) and his intent is to share all he has throughout eternity with beings just like himself (1.Cor.2:9). To accomplish this, he has set in motion a plan through which he will give eternal life and immortality to those who will accept his way of life.

Salvation cannot be earned, purchased, or taken from God by anyone. The power to save a person from eternal death and impart eternal life and immortality is God the Father's alone (1.Sam.2:6), and he will freely do this through Christ for those who meet his terms and conditions:

"For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of your selves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph.2:8-9 Para.).

**God Desires to Save All of Humanity**

"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1.Tim.2:4 KJV).

The desire to save humanity was so great and important to the God Family that Jesus Christ, the Creator God, came to earth and sacrificed himself in order to remove our death sentence.

**JESUS THE GIVER OF LIFE**

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give to them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (Jn.10:27-28 KJV).

"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which sees the Son, and believes on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn.6:40 KJV).

The apostle Paul also spoke of the hope of life after death and a resurrection from the dead:

"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the
wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.6:22-23 KJV).

Paul understood that the material things of this life are worthless and that the real prize to be sought in life is the knowledge of how to obtain eternal life and immortality:

"Yes doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead" (Phil.3:8-11 KJV).

JESUS CHRIST IS THE HOPE OF THE DEAD

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world: but that the world through him might be saved" (Jn.3:16-17 KJV). See Mk.16:16; 1.Jn.4:9-10; Rom.8:7-18.

After Christ's death and resurrection, the apostles taught the hope of the dead through the sacrifice of Jesus and a resurrection:

"And as they spoke to the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold (i.e., jail) to the next day: for it was now evening" (Acts 4:1-3 KJV).

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1.Cor.15:20-22 KJV).

"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that does not believe shall be condemned" (Mk.16:16 Para.).

"For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1.Thes.5:9 KJV).

JESUS THE RIGHTEOUS

Jesus was the only truly righteous human who has ever lived. He perfectly kept all the commandments, precepts, and principles of God his entire life without ever sinning. He did not deserve to die, but chose to die for us, in order that we could have our sins forgiven and live (see 1.Pet.2:21-24):
"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom.3:27-28 KJV).

Is it because of a person's efforts to obey God's law that they are declared righteous before God? Absolutely not! All that is required to become righteous is that a person believe in Jesus who was able to meet all the righteous demands of the law:

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

Is it now permissible to violate the righteous laws of God because a person has been justified or declared righteous through belief in Jesus Christ? The answer is an emphatic NO! After a person is declared righteous, they must then establish the law. But how is this done? This is done by beginning to keep the law ourselves with the help of the spirit of God; we establish the law by practicing it. See Rom.6:15-16.

JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH AND WORKS

Some believe that all one has to do to obtain salvation is believe that God exists. This may sound good to some; however, this is not the kind of belief Abraham had. His belief in God was much more than just an awareness of God's existence:

"What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he has whereof to glory: but not before God. For what says the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness" (Rom.4:1-3 Para.).

Paul said that, if Abraham had been justified by works, he would have had something to boast about. Notice that Abraham "believed God" and he was counted worthy, declared righteous, and justified by God.

"And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform... But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Rom.4:21, 24 Para.).

Because Abraham had faith that God would fulfill his promises, he obeyed what he was told to do.

In verse 24, we find that we can become righteous or justified if we believe in God the Father who raised Christ from the dead. We know also that a person may have righteousness imputed to them (given as a gift) because of their belief in Christ's blood. And we have also found that all efforts by humans to earn righteousness (justification) have failed.
THERE IS NO FAITH WITHOUT WORKS

Up to now we have studied about faith. But what about works? Do works have something to do with justification and salvation?

James 2:11-24 LPB

"For the God who said you must not marry a woman who already has a husband, also said you must not murder, so even though you have not broken the marriage laws by committing adultery, but have murdered someone, you have entirely broken God's law and stand utterly guilty before him. You will be judged on whether or not you are doing what Christ wants you to. So watch what you do and what you think; for there will be no mercy to those who have shown no mercy. But if you have been merciful, then God's mercy toward you will win out over his judgment against you’ (vs.11-13).

"Dear brothers, what's the use of saying that you have faith and are Christians if you aren't proving it by helping others? Will that kind of faith save anyone? If you have a friend who is in need of food and clothing, and you say to him, 'Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat hearty,' and then don't give him clothes or food, what good does that do? So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. You must also do good to prove that you have it. Faith that doesn't show itself by good works is no faith at all—it is dead and useless" (vs.14-17).

James says that it is not enough just to have faith, because faith that does not show itself through good works is no faith at all. It is dead and useless.

FAITH AND WORKS

"But someone may well argue, "You say the way to God is by faith alone, plus nothing; well, I say that good works are important too, for without good works you can't prove whether you have faith or not; but anyone can see that I have faith by the way I act." Are there still some among you who hold that "only believing" is enough? Believing in one God? Well, remember that the devils believe this too—so strongly that they tremble in terror! Fool! When will you ever learn that "believing" is useless without doing what God wants you to? Faith that does not result in good deeds is not real faith" (vs.18-20). The King James Version renders verse 20 as: "Faith without works is dead."

"Don't you remember that even our father Abraham was declared good because of what he did, when he was willing to obey God, even if it meant offering his son Isaac to die on the altar?" (v21).

James says that Abraham was declared righteous or justified because of what he did. Abraham was willing to obey God, even if it meant offering his only son, Isaac, to die on the altar:
"You see, he was trusting God so much that he was willing to do whatever God told him to; his faith was made complete by what he did, by his actions, his good deeds" (v22).

Abraham was willing to trust (have faith) in God, no matter what God instructed him to do. Therefore, because of his physical works, his faith was complete. Thus, without the manifestation of works, faith is not complete.

Abraham's faith was also the knowledge that God could resurrect Isaac, and that God had promised the blessings to come through Isaac. His physical works, based on knowledge, resulted in faith that was complete:

"And so it happened just as the Scriptures say, that Abraham trusted God, and the Lord declared him good in God's sight, and he was even called 'the friend of God'. So you see, a man is saved by what he does, as well as by what he believes" (vs.23-24).

BELIEVING AND DOING

James concludes that a man is justified or made righteous by what he does, as well as by what he believes. It is very important to understand what James said about faith and physical works. It takes physical effort, as well as a right attitude to fulfill God's laws, precepts, and principles:

"For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified (or declared righteous)" (Rom.2:13 KJV).

Righteousness is imputed to us (given as a gift) because of our belief in Christ's sacrifice of his own life. We have found also that all efforts by man to earn righteousness (justification) without God's help have failed, and that we must obey God's laws in order to be justified.

SUMMARY

Prior to the coming of Jesus, all of humanity was awaiting the death sentence to be carried out as punishment for the violation of God's law. But now, we may have our sins forgiven and be made totally innocent before the Father through the sacrifice of Christ.

Prior to the advent of Jesus Christ, a person could offer a sacrifice for certain sins, and be put back in right-standing with God.

Because Jesus Christ offered his life as the final and supreme sacrifice for the sins of mankind, there is no longer a need for animal sacrifices to be performed for justification; however, there is still a need for the forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ:
"But God commends his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom.5:8-10 KJV).

**Escape the Death Sentence**

Now the forgiveness of sin can be accomplished by going directly to God the Father by the authority of Jesus Christ and asking to be forgiven. The Father will then forgive and forget the sin because of the supreme sacrifice of his Son.

This is how we are saved. This is the way God has chosen to give us salvation. For those who accept the call of God and follow his way of life, the reward is eternal life, tremendous joy, and happiness forever.

God the Father wants everyone to repent of sin and obtain salvation. He has set before humanity the choice of life and death, and each one of us must eventually choose which we desire—death or life (Deut.30:15-20).

Now that you have this knowledge, may God give you the wisdom and strength to act upon it in a positive manner.

If you are being called to salvation in this age, the apostle Peter says, "Repent and be baptized . . . and you shall receive the gift of the holy spirit" (Acts 2:38 KJV).

By B.L. Cocherell
What does the future hold for you and your loved ones? What will the world be like? Will it be a world of unending chaos or a world of abundance and happiness? Why is there such perplexity and confusion in every phase of life today? Is there something beyond this physical life? If there is, what is it and what will it be like?

These are all very important questions that people have sought answers to since the beginning of mankind’s existence. Are there answers to these questions? Yes, there are answers, and they are found in the most published, read, and studied book ever written—the Bible.

THE BIBLE

The Bible is unique. It is the only book that has the answers to the basic questions of life and claims to be written by the Creator God. It tells humanity who its Creator is, why it was created, and what its ultimate destiny is.

Although the Bible does reveal the purpose for human existence, the understanding of this awesome purpose has been intentionally hidden within its pages in a carefully coded message. But why? It has been hidden from most people until humanity could learn and record the lessons that only time and life experience can teach:

Matthew 13:10-17

"And the disciples came, and said to him, Why do you speak to them in parables? He answered and said, Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. . . Therefore I speak to them in parables: because seeing, they see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. . .' (vs.10-13 Para.).

"And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, that says, By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them' (vs.14-15 KJV). See also Isa.6:9-10.
"But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For truly I say to you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them" (vs.16-17 KJV). See also Mk.4:11-12; Lk.8:10.

The Mystery Revealed

Now, in the end of this age, prior to the return of Christ, many of the hidden mysteries contained in the Bible are being revealed and proclaimed as an advance announcement that God is beginning to initiate the next phase of his great plan for humanity. See Dan.12:4,10; Eph.6:19; Col.1:24-27; 1.Pet.1:12.

The Gospel Message

"Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt.28:19-20 KJV).

God the Father and Jesus Christ's purpose for humanity is so awesome and exciting that it is almost beyond belief. God the Father who sent his Son Jesus Christ to earth over nineteen hundred years ago is in the process of creating children out of human beings. Yes, that's right! God the Father is expanding his Family:

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God,. . ." (Jn.1:12 KJV).

"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know him. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be like: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1.Jn.3:1-2 para). See also 2.Cor.6:18; Heb.2:10; Rom.8:14,19.

At some point in eternity past, a plan unfolded that is more fascinating and engrossing than any science fiction story or real life saga that has ever been told. That plan involves every person who has lived, is now living, or is yet to be born. With the creation of humans, God the Father embarked upon the greatest and grandest of all his creations; he is creating beings just like himself (Phil.3:21; 1.Jn.3:2), and his intent is to share with them all he has created or will ever create throughout eternity.

THE GOOD NEWS

The entire New Testament is concerned with only one theme—the good news message from God the Father to humanity.
The New Testament:
- Tells about the Father’s plan for humanity.
- Records his message and the people and events surrounding its proclamation—past, present, and future.
- Reveals why he sent the message and what he hopes to accomplish through it.

The Father’s good news to humanity reveals the following important information about grace, peace, Christ, Salvation, and the Kingdom of God:
- Grace - God’s favor, concern, and compassion toward humanity
- Peace - Between God and humanity, and between individuals and nations
- Christ - Sending of the Redeemer and Savior of humanity to earth
- Salvation - How to be saved from eternal death
- Kingdom of God - God’s eternal government

Within these five interwoven subjects, we find the focus of everything that Jesus said and did for the 3 1/2 years of his ministry, as well as a strong witness and warning to specific individuals and the entire world at large.

A Witness
The gospel is a witness to specific individuals that they have been called to salvation during this present age, and it is a witness to the whole world that God the Father exists and is beginning to implement his plan to save humanity from destruction.

A Warning
The gospel is a warning to those whom God the Father calls to salvation during this present age, that if they do not accept the opportunity that they are being offered, they will suffer his judgment—eternal death.

The gospel is also a warning to the world at large that God the Father is about to intervene in world affairs and punish those who will not accept and obey his good news message.

Note:
The following chapters are meant to provide an overview of the good news from God the Father to humanity and to reveal a small part of the awesome opportunity that is being offered to those who will hear and heed his message.

By B.L. Cocherell
CHAPTER ELEVEN

GOD THE FATHER

Although it is extremely important to know what the gospel message is, what it says, and what it will accomplish, it is also extremely important to know who sent the message to humanity. Therefore, before studying the details about this truly astounding message, it is important to remove one of the major barriers to understanding, which is who and what God is and the relationship between God the Father and Jesus Christ.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD

"For I want you to know how great a struggle I have concerning you, and those in Laodicea, and those who have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts may be comforted, being joined together in love, and to all the riches of the full assurance of the understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God, even of the Father and of Jesus Christ" (Col.2:1-2 Para.). See also Eph.3:3-6.

Paul spoke of God the Father and Jesus Christ as a mystery that was understood by the Colossians. When this mystery is understood, it becomes much easier to comprehend the gospel message and its importance to the plan of God for the salvation of humanity.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul reprimands the elect of God for listening to those who preach a false gospel message. Two important points to note are that Paul said he was preaching the good news message from God and the God that Paul refers to is not Jesus Christ; it is God the Father who sent Jesus Christ to preach this same good news:

"You seem so gullible: you believe whatever anyone tells you even if he is preaching about another Jesus than the one we preach, or another spirit than the holy spirit you received, or shows you a different way to be saved. You swallow it all. Yet I don't feel these marvelous 'messengers from God,' as they call themselves, are any better than I am. If I am a poor speaker, at least I know what I am talking about, as I think you realize by now, for we have proved it again and again. Did I do wrong and cheapen myself and make you look down on me because I preached God's Good News to you without charging you anything?" (2.Cpr.11:4-7 LBP).
God is a Family

Until a person comes to understand that there are two individual and separate God-beings who comprise the God-family, and that the relationship between the Sovereign God (God the Father) and the Creator God (Jesus Christ) is a Father–Son relationship, almost none of the Bible, including the Father's good news message, can be clearly understood.

The apostle Paul clearly documents the existence of a Sovereign Family of God-beings:

"For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named"
(Eph.3:14-15 KJV).

There are many scriptures that record Jesus saying, "I and my Father" or "my Father." We never see any others mentioned in scripture as being a part of this divine family, except for those who have been promised immortality and eternal life as a part of their participation in the first resurrection and those who are called sons of God who obtain salvation after the return of Christ.

"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him"
(Jn.14:20-23 KJV).

"To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne"
(Rev.3:21 KJV). Again, we see two Gods are mentioned, no less and no more.

It is evident from many scriptures that the Family of God in heaven consists of 'the Father' and 'the Son', plus those who are called to be Sons and have their names written in the Book of Life—the true followers of God, the Saints/the Elect of God who not yet have been made immortal.

TWO GODS DOING TWO SEPARATE WORKS

"But Jesus answered them, My Father works hitherto, and I work"
(Jn.5:17 KJV).

The Father does a work and Christ does a work. Jesus' own words clearly document the fact that he and his Father are two separate God-beings working harmoniously together doing two separate works.

"But I have a greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father has given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father has sent me. And the Father himself, which has sent me, has borne witness of me. You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And you have not his word abiding in you: for whom he has sent, him you believe not. . . I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe,
which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuses you, even Moses in whom you trust" (Jn.5:36-45 KJV).

Here, we see two individuals in the God-family—The Father and Christ. Clearly, Jesus' own words should be proof that he and the Father are two separate individuals in the God-family, each performing a separate work in order to accomplish a common goal—bringing new sons into the God-family.

JESUS REVEALS THE FATHER

When Jesus was revealing the existence and plan of the Father, he constantly said things that offended the Jewish religious leaders, not because the things he said were wrong or imprudent, but because what he said was a condemnation of their perverted view of God and their incorrect worship of him:

"Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him [Jesus], because he not only had broken the sabbath [according to their interpretation of the law], but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do: for what things soever he does, these also does the Son likewise. For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all things that he does: and he will show him greater works than these, that you may marvel" (Jn.5:18-20 KJV).

Over and over again, through his teachings, Jesus made it clear that he was the Creator God, the Son of God, and the Redeemer and Savior of humanity. However, most of the people he spoke to did not believe him because they were looking for a release from their physical problems instead of their spiritual problems.

Authority From The Father

The Jewish religious leaders were always asking Jesus where he got the authority to teach the things that he taught and to prove that he was sent from God (Lk.20:1-8). In response to their lack of understanding concerning his authority to teach what he did and his relationship to the Sovereign God, Jesus said the Following:

"I am one that bears witness of myself, and the Father that sent me bears witness of me. The leaders replied, Where is your Father? And Jesus answered, "You neither know me, nor my Father: if you had known me, you should have known my Father also" (Jn.8: 18-19 Para.).

Jesus told them that, if they had really known the God they professed to obey, they would have known him and his Father.
John 8:26-38 Paraphrased

"I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he [God the Father] that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard from him. They did not understand that he spoke to them of the Father" (vs.26-27).

When one understands that the Word and the Light that the apostle John spoke of (Jn.1:1-9) is Jesus Christ, and that the God that the Word was with and sent from is the Sovereign God (God the Father), one can easily understand why Jesus said he heard the things that he taught directly from the Father:

"Then Jesus said to them, When you have lifted up the son of man [crucified him], then shall you know that I am [I AM, i.e., GOD] he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father has taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father has not left me alone; for I always do those things that please him. . . Then Jesus said to those Jews which believed on him, If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (vs.28-32).

When the Jews heard what Jesus had said concerning his position in the Family of God and the message he was teaching about spiritual freedom, they became very angry and said:

"We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how say you, You shall be made free?" (v33).

"Jesus replied, Truly, truly, I say to you, Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abides not in the house for ever: but the son abides ever. If the son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. I know that you are Abraham's seed; but you seek to kill me, because my word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father" (vs.34-38).

Because of their self-righteous attitudes, these Jews who wanted to kill Jesus could not understand the message that he was bringing from God the Father. Jesus told them bluntly that he received the things that he taught from his Father who is the Sovereign God of all that exists. If Jesus received these things while he was with the Father, he must have been in heaven where the Father resides. Either Jesus was telling the truth or he was lying. If he lied, he cannot be our Savior.

A GREAT DECEPTION

Our Savior called the Supreme Sovereign whom he served "Father", and he repeatedly spoke about the Father-Son relationship between himself and the Sovereign God who was in heaven. If what Jesus said about his status in the God-family is true and what he said about God the Father is true, why do so many people believe that there is only one God-being?
The reason that there is so much confusion and misunderstanding concerning God, the Family of God, God the Father, and Jesus Christ is quite simple. Satan has deceived the whole world into thinking that there is only one God-being, and that the God-family does not exist. See Rev.12:9; 18:23; 19:20; 20:10 and chapter four, Three Popular Beliefs About God regarding the popular trinity doctrine.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour" (1.Pet.5:8 KJV).

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God [God the Father], and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (Rev.12:9-10 KJV).

Notice that it is Satan who deceives the whole world, and a great part of this deception is the teaching that God the Father and Jesus Christ are not separate individual God-beings.

PRIOR TO CHRIST

Prior to the advent of Jesus Christ, virtually no one knew that there was another God in addition to the Creator God. From the scriptural record, it seems that only a few were privileged to understand that there was more than one spirit-being in the God-family.

One should remember that the historical concept of God that the Israelites held was one of monotheism. The God whom the Israelites worshiped was a single entity; they believed in one God who ruled supreme (Deut.32:39; Mal.2:10).

Because of this belief it is easy to understand why the Jews and even Jesus' disciples had a problem with what he taught concerning the concept of the God-family. Here was a person who said he was God and also said that he was sent by his Father. This was a very strange and repugnant doctrine to the vast majority of the Jews who felt it was blasphemous to even consider such a thing. See Jn.10:29-38.

Note:

Read the entire sixteenth chapter of John for a detailed explanation of the Father-Son relationship between these two Supreme spirit-beings.

For the most part, the Father who those prior to the advent of Christ knew and worshiped was the Creator God. Some might ask, how could this be possible? The answer to this question is quite simple. The Creator God who later became Jesus Christ was the one who created all things for the Sovereign God; therefore, the Creator God was essentially the Father of all creation. See Jn.1:1-3; 1.Cor.8:6; Col.1:15-18; Eph.3:9-11.
Remember, the apostle Paul said the understanding of what God was doing here on earth was a mystery (see Col.2:2). This mystery also includes what the God-family is and of whom it is comprised.

**THE FATHER**

The writings of the apostles John and Paul and a multitude of other scriptures plainly state that it is the Father who sent Jesus to earth. A major part of the good news message concerns the revealing of the Father to those whom he calls to salvation.

The reason we need to have the knowledge of who the Father is firmly fixed in our minds is because it is the Father's good news that Jesus, the apostles, and the early church preached, and it is his good news that all those who follow Jesus are to continue to preach and teach until Jesus returns.

**THE FATHER IS IN HEAVEN**

One of the reasons that Jesus came to earth was to reveal the Father's good news message (his plan for humanity):

"Jesus said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood have not revealed it to you, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt.16:17 KJV).

"And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven" (Matt.23:9 KJV). See Matt.18:35.

"I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in your sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: And no man knows the Son, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt.11:25-27 KJV). See also Mk.11:25-26; 4:10-12; Jn.17:25-26; Eph.6:19.

The scriptures above are a few of the many, which reveal that the Father is in heaven. A small amount of Bible study will reveal that the Father will not come to the earth to reside until the final phase of his plan for humanity.

It is extremely important to understand that, unless a person knows who the Father is, there can be no understanding of the gospel message. Why? Because it is the Father's message.
WHAT IS THE FATHER LIKE?

"Thomas said to him, Lord, we know not where you go; and how can we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you should have known my Father also: and from henceforth you know him, and have seen him. Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. Jesus said to him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip? he that has seen me has seen the Father; and how say you then, Show us the Father?" (Jn.14:5-9 KJV). See 2.Cor.4:3-4.

In reply to Thomas and Philip, Jesus said that he had revealed what the Father was like to them. Jesus revealed the Father's existence, attitudes, thoughts, desires, love, and personality through his own example and teaching.

The Father's Name

"I have manifested your name to the men which you gave me out of the world: yours they were, and you gave them to me; and they have kept your word" (Jn.17:6 KJV).

"O righteous Father, the world has not known you: but I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me. And I have declared to them your name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (Jn.17:25-26 KJV).

Why did Christ have to reveal certain things about the Father? The only logical answer to why the Father sent Jesus to reveal his existence and so many things about himself (e.g., who he is, what his name is, and what he is doing) is that humanity did not know of his existence and it was time to reveal himself in order for the next phase of his plan for humanity to go forward.

JOHN 17:1-8 KJV

"These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify your Son, that your Son also may glorify you: As you have given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (vs.1-3).

At this point in history, there were very few people who had any knowledge of who the Father and Jesus Christ were.

"I have glorified you on the earth: I have finished the work which you gave me to do. And now, O Father, glorify you me with your own self with the glory which I had with you before the world was" (vs.4-5).
Here, Jesus asks God the Father to return him to his former state of existence as an immortal God in the Family and Kingdom of God.

"I have manifested your name to the men which you gave me out of the world: yours they were, and you gave them to me; and they have kept your word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever you have given me are of you. For I have given to them the words which you gave me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from you, and they have believed that you did send me" (vs.6-8).

Jesus had fulfilled his mission to prepare those whom the Father had called to salvation and were being taught the truth of God concerning the Family and Kingdom of God and their plan for humanity.

**IT IS THE FATHER'S MESSAGE**

The good news that Jesus Christ proclaimed was not his message, he was the messenger just as John the Baptist was the messenger who foretold and prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah. Jesus Christ did not send himself, which some teach; he was sent by God the Father to bring his message to humanity:

"The word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (Jn.14:24 Para.). See also Jn.1:1-15; Rom.1:1-3; 2.Cor.4:4-6.

"That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son honors not the Father which has sent him" (Jn.5:23 KJV).

"I can of my own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me" (Jn.5:30 KJV). See also verses 36-38.

"I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive" (Jn.5:43 KJV). See also Jn.5:30-37; 6:44;57.

Clearly, the good news message that Jesus brought is from God the Father who is the Sovereign of all that exists.

The apostle Paul also said that the good news message that he preached as a servant of Jesus Christ was not his message, but was a message sent from God the Father (2.Thes.1:1-12):

"Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the good news of the Sovereign God that he had promised before by his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, that was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of the Sovereign God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom.1:1-4 Para.).
The Message

Since the life, death, and resurrection of the Father's Son, there has been much preached solely about Jesus as a person. As a result, millions do not believe the message that the Father sent his Son to proclaim.

The Sovereign Father sent his Son bearing his GOOD NEWS of how to become a part of his divine Family and Kingdom, and that his Family and Kingdom are coming to earth to bring peace and order to this troubled world.

The Father's message is a message of hope for a wonderful, peaceful, and happy existence under his care and protection for all eternity. This is the good news that Jesus, the apostles, and the early Church proclaimed. This is the message that has not been preached in its totality for centuries; this is the message that Jesus said would be proclaimed and published to all the world just prior to his return as King of kings and Lord of lords; and this is the message that will be explained in the following chapters.

By B.L. Cocherell
BEFORE THE GOSPEL

Before Jesus Christ came to earth to proclaim the gospel message, every individual that had ever existed or would ever exist was under the curse of eternal death that was inherited from the first humans as a result of their rebellion against God. Death was to be the cessation of our existence; never again would we experience the pleasures of life, such as the fragrance of a flower, the sensation of the sun and wind on our face; never again would we see a beautiful sunset or hear the voice of a loved one. We were destined to return to the basic physical elements from which we are composed.

THE GARDEN EXPERIENCE

"And the Lord God planted a garden toward the east in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And the Lord made to grow out of the ground every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; and the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Gen.2:8-9 Para.).

After everything had been created, the Creator God planted a garden for the benefit of Adam and Eve. This was a place of great beauty with plenty of food and a perfect climate. Everything was designed for Adam and Eve's maximum comfort and enjoyment. In the middle of the garden were two magnificent trees that were the focal point of the entire garden. Held within the fruit of these trees was the future destiny of the human race.

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you may not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die" (Gen.2:15-17 Para.).

Note that they were only forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but they could eat freely of the tree of life.

Why were Adam and Eve forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and have the knowledge that its fruit would impart?

Genesis 3:1-7 Paraphrased

"Now the serpent [Satan] was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Is it true that God has said, you shall not eat from every tree of the garden?" (v1).
Satan, the master of deception, questioned Eve to see if she understood what the Creator had said regarding the trees of the garden.

"And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; But the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die;" (vs.2-3).

Notice that Eve knew that God not only had forbidden them to eat the fruit of this particular tree but also he had forbidden them to touch it. The Creator had made it very clear to Adam and Eve that this particular tree was something very dangerous to their well being. In fact, it was so dangerous that even to touch it would bring death.

"And the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die: For God does know that in the day you eat of the fruit, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil" (vs.4-5).

Here, we find Satan telling Eve a lie in order to deceive her. Then, he tells her the truth about the knowledge that could be gained from eating the fruit of the tree. Satan told the truth about the tree bringing knowledge and he suggested that the Creator was trying to keep something that was very desirable from her and Adam.

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit and ate it and also gave some to her husband and he also ate it" (v6).

The English word wise in verse 6 is translated from the Hebrew word sakal, which can also be translated as insight or comprehension. Adam and Eve now had the knowledge of good and evil:

"And both their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked..." (v7).

This single act of rebellion against God brought about a progression of events that was irreversible and would have an adverse impact upon all humanity. The eating of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil by Adam and Eve brought an irrevocable death penalty upon all of their descendants.

DEATH THROUGH SIN

Paul explains that because of Adam's violation of God's instructions, a death penalty through the law was imposed upon all humanity:

"Even as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, so also death passed to all men, inasmuch as all sinned; for sin was not in the world until the law; and sin is not charged where there is no law. Therefore, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even on those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's transgression..." (Rom.5:12-14 Para.).
Above, we see two very important facts stated by the apostle Paul. First, he says that Adam violated the law of God and brought the death penalty upon all of mankind. Second, he says that where no law exists, there can be neither a violation of law nor an associated penalty for law breaking.

With these two facts in mind, it should be obvious that the eating of the forbidden fruit transferred the understanding of the laws of God and the penalties for transgressing them to Adam and Eve.

UNDER THE DOMINION OF THE LAW

Because of Adam's disobedience, humanity is now under the dominion of God's law, and because this law is perfect, it demands perfect obedience. If perfect obedience is not maintained, the law requires the death of the violator.

The writers of the Bible clearly record that the end result of the violation of the law is the execution of the violator. The prophet Ezekiel and the apostles John and Paul reveal what constitutes the violation of the law and what the penalty for its violation is to be:

"Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins, it shall die" (Ezk.18:4;20 KJV).

"Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1.Jn.3:4 KJV).

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.6:23 KJV).

Under the Sentence of Death

Many believe that regardless of their behavior during this present existence, they will somehow escape eternal punishment—death by fire. However, the Bible says that all humanity is under the death sentence because of the violation of God's law, and all will be put to death by fire unless their sins are forgiven and the death sentence is removed:

"Do you not know that the unjust ones will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be led astray, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor abusers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous ones, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor plunderers shall inherit the Kingdom of God" (1.Cor.6:9-10 Para.). See also Ezk.33:11; Rom. 1:28-32; Jms.5:19-20; 2.Pet.2:1-22.

The law of God requires perfect obedience, and no one except Jesus Christ has ever kept the law perfectly. Therefore, all people are under a death sentence, and we will all be executed for the violation of the law of God and will cease to exist for all eternity unless God the Father intervenes on our behalf.
NONE RIGHTEOUS
Romans 3:10-20 KJV

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes" (vs.10-18). See also Isa.59:1-2; 64:6-7; 1.Jn.1:8-10.

Here, Paul speaks of the natural condition of people prior to having their sins forgiven and being made sinless by God the Father through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

"Now we know that what things soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (v19).

The law of God is very specific as to what the law is and what constitutes obedience and disobedience to its precepts and principles. Because of the strict and eternal standards of the law, everyone has violated it and stands guilty before God—we all deserve to die for our violation of God's law.

Paul goes on to say that no one can be justified in God's sight by keeping the deeds of the law, because everyone has fallen short and has violated the law sometime during their life. After the law has been violated, no amount of obedience to the law can erase the penalty of past violations:

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (v20).

People's attempts to be justified or declared righteous before God by their own efforts have failed. Therefore, all are doomed to death, unless there is another method by which individuals can be made righteous before God:

"For the wages of sin is death. . ." (Rom.6:23 KJV).

WHAT IS SIN?

In past centuries there has been much debate and confusion as to what sin is and is not. Notice how sin is defined in the Bible:

"Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1.Jn.3:4 KJV).

"All unrighteousness is sin" (1.Jn.5:17 Para.).
"Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Blessed is the one not condemning himself in what he approves. But the one doubting, if he eats, he has been condemned, because it is not of faith—and all that is not of faith is sin" (Rom.14:22-23 Para.).

"Therefore, to anyone knowing to do good, and not doing it, it is sin to him" (Jms.4:17 Para.).

Sin is the violation of the physical and spiritual law of God—sin is lawlessness. Sin is any deviation from God’s righteous laws, precepts, and principles that define how people should live and worship God. It is this deviation from the law of God for which each person is guilty.

THE STANDARD FOR PERFECTION

Because the law is perfect, no individual has ever been able to live up to its standard of perfection; the only exception is Christ who lived a perfect, sinless life:

"Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom.3:20 Para.).

After Adam's transgression that resulted in all people coming under the dominion of the law, all people also came under the penalty for its violation.

The law reveals the standard of behavior with which all must comply, and its perfect system of justice demands the execution of all law-breakers. The law only determines guilt or innocence; it does not have the ability to restore harmony between God and humanity. Because no one except Jesus Christ has ever been able to accomplish the perfection of the law, all others are found guilty of its violation.

Prior to eating from the forbidden tree, Adam and Eve could have eaten from the tree of life and lived forever. However, they decided to rebel against their Creator; therefore, they and all their descendants lost access to the tree of life and were doomed to die for all eternity.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Rom.3:23 KJV).

It does not matter whether or not a person believes or disbelieves the biblical record concerning the human condition in regard to sin and its eternal consequences, because the word of God does not depend upon human validation.

The law of God is perfect. Its precepts, principles, and value judgments are empirical. As sure as the sun rises and sets, the only way anyone will escape its death sentence is to become righteous (i.e., sinless), and no one can become sinless through one's own efforts because each person is already in a condition of sinfulness.
The good news that Jesus Christ brought tells us how to become righteous (i.e., sinless), how to escape eternal death, and how to gain access to the tree of life that gives eternal life through Jesus Christ:

"But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.6:23 KJV).

HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

In his infinite love and mercy, God has provided a way for us to escape our death sentence if we will only heed what he has to say in the Bible. In this book, he reveals not only how to become righteous and how to avoid eternal death but also how to gain access to the tree of life and live forever.

Where is this information located in the Bible? It is located in the gospel message that God the Father's Son, Jesus Christ, brought to earth centuries ago.

By B.L. Cocherell

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE GOSPEL

One of the great mysteries of the Bible concerns the gospel message. There seems to be as many opinions as to exactly what this message is as there are people to ask about its meaning. However, most of these people will agree that it concerns Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. The gospel is indeed about these two things, and within the meaning of these two things lies the reason that the Creator God divested himself of his immortality, came to earth in human form, lived and died the human experience, and proclaimed the gospel message.

The true gospel message was not a popular message. It was not a popular message when Jesus preached it, when the apostles and the early church preached it, and is not a popular message today.

Jesus Christ was crucified for preaching the gospel message; most of the apostles along with many members of the early church were murdered for preaching it, and many others will also be murdered just before the return of Jesus Christ for preaching this truly astounding message.

Jesus says that most people, including those who say they love him and his Father, would hate those who proclaim the gospel message:

"I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" (Jn.15:19-20; Mk.13:13 Para.). See also Matt.10:16-23; 24:8-14; Lk.21:16-17.

But why will the vast majority of people hate the followers of Jesus? Do not all people desire to live happy and prosperous lives, and is not this what Jesus promised to those who follow his teachings?

Two Questions To Answer

If the message that Jesus and his followers taught is a message of good things, why would Jesus warn of hatred and persecution for those who follow him? And what was it that Jesus and many of his followers said and did that caused them to be persecuted and murdered?

These two questions are extremely important to any who truly desire to follow Jesus Christ and reap the rewards that are offered for diligent service to him and his Father. These questions and many others will be answered in the following study into the gospel message that Jesus brought, the prophecies that concern this message, and world events just before Christ returns.
Now that we have established that the gospel message comes from God the Father and that Jesus Christ was its first messenger, we can look into this highly inflammatory message that was preached by Jesus and the early church and will be preached just before Jesus' return.

THE BEGINNING

The beginning of the gospel message is found in Genesis 3:15 with the prophetic promise from the Creator to destroy the evil spirit who deceived Eve into disobeying his instructions forbidding her and Adam to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Creator also made a promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, promising that all humanity would be blessed through him (i.e., his descendent Jesus Christ). Both of these promises are a major part of the gospel message because they both result in the removal of obstacles to human salvation.

Since the rebellion of Adam and Eve, the promises contained in the gospel message and the prophecies about who was to give this message have been revealed through many of God's servants. The following are two of the more well known prophecies about the gospel message and its first messenger:

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in. . ." (Mal.3:1 KJV).

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the humble. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted, to announce liberty to the captives, and to open the eyes of the blind. He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of God's favor to them has come, and the day of his wrath to their enemies" (Isa.61:1-2 Para.).

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Jesus said of John the Baptist, "Truly I say to you, Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt.11:11 KJV).

The birth and ministry of John the Baptist was the second most important birth and ministry that has ever happened on earth. Why? Because John made the announcement of the coming of the Messiah who would reveal and proclaim the good news from God the Father.

Before John the Baptist's birth, his father was told that he would father a son who would herald the coming of the Messiah who would bring salvation to the world:
"He will be a joy and a delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. . . and he will be filled with the holy spirit even from birth. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah. . . to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord " (Lk.1:14-16 NIV).

"And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest [God the Father]: for you shall go before the face of the Lord [Jesus Christ] to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins,. . . To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Lk.1:76,77,79 KJV). See also Matt.1:18-23.

**John's Mission**

"As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before your face which shall prepare your way before you. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Mk.1:2-3 KJV). See also Matt.11:7-10.

It is important to understand that John's mission was to lay the foundation for God's messenger to build upon. John was to make the announcement of the coming message and the messenger and set the boundaries of the message that the messenger would explain and expound upon— "make his paths straight." Therefore, John's message contained the foundational elements of the things that Jesus Christ would teach, such as repentance, forgiveness of sin, baptism, and the Kingdom of God:

"John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission [pardon or deliverance] of sins" (Mk.1:4 KJV).

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea. And saying, Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt.3:1-2 KJV).

Jesus did not deviate from the message which John announced that Jesus would proclaim. From the beginning to the end of his ministry, Jesus explained in great detail the things that concern repentance, pardon of sin, baptism, and the Kingdom of God.

**THE WORD AND THE LIGHT**

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him [The Word, The Logos]; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shined in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (Jn.1:1-5 KJV).
"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world" (Jn.1:6-9 KJV).

The apostle John clearly said that Jesus was the Light of God who came to illuminate the world with spiritual insight, and that John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for the coming of the Light (i.e., Jesus Christ).

THE LIGHT BEGINS TO SHINE

One of the very first things that we see recorded about the ministry of Jesus Christ is his announcement that he is the one sent from God to proclaim the message of good news:

"He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: The spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Lk.4:16-19 NIV).

There are many significant things that we can learn concerning the gospel message and its messenger from Jesus' quotation of Isaiah's prophecy:

1. When Jesus quoted Isaiah 61:1-2, he did not quote the last part of the prophecy that says, "And the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn." By leaving out this prophecy, Jesus clearly revealed that his mission was one of proclaiming a message from God and that he neither came to punish humanity for their rebellion against God and the violation of his laws nor to establish God's rule upon earth at that time, both of which the Redeemer of humanity will do at another time.

2. He came to preach to the poor. We know that God is no respecter of persons; therefore, the preaching of good news to the poor was symbolic of revealing the true word of God to those who were spiritually poor—those devoid of the spiritual riches that can only come from hearing, understanding, and obeying the wonderful truth of God.

3. Jesus was sent to proclaim the good news that humanity was going to have the opportunity to be set free from both the prison that held them in bondage and slavery to sin, and the result of sin—eternal death.
4. He was sent to open the eyes of those who were spiritually blind by revealing the truth of God concerning him and his Father and their plan for the salvation of humanity. And he was sent to reveal how to be removed from the oppression and subjection of this world's evil religious and governmental systems.

5. He came to proclaim the "year of the Lord's favor" which concerns the total ministry of the Messiah including his death, resurrection, and return as King of the earth. All of these periods of time have to do with God's favor—his grace toward humanity.

SPIRITUAL DARKNESS

After he had fasted forty days and nights and had overcome the temptations put to him by the devil, Jesus heard that John the Baptist had been put in prison. He then went to Capernaum in order to fulfill a prophecy concerning the bringing of the message of enlightenment to a people who were in spiritual darkness:

"The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up" (Matt.4:15-16 KJV).

I AM THE LIGHT

"Then spoke Jesus again to them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (Jn.8:12 KJV). See also Isa.42:1-7; Mal.4:2; Acts 26:13-18.

Jesus knew who he was and why he had been sent to earth. The problem was that, prior to the completion of his ministry, no one else truly knew or understood who he was (except John the Baptist) or why he had come. The Jewish people, the priesthood, and the religious leaders whose sacred trust it was to preserve God's word in its purity and meaning had, instead, perverted God's law and worship system. Therefore, they did not understand the prophetic meaning of the events that transpired concerning John and Jesus. The Jews and those who lived around Palestine, at this point in time were in spiritual darkness and they recognized neither John or Jesus or the message that these two men brought.

"Hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophecy about you, saying, This people draws near to me with their mouth, and with their lips honor me; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the ordinances of men" (Matt.15:7-9 KJV Para.). See Isa.29:13; Ezk.33:31-32.

Both John and Jesus began their ministries among a people who were in great spiritual darkness. Although the Jews of Jesus' day were extremely religious and zealous in what they believed, they were not correctly worshipping the true God.
THE MESSAGE

Matthew and Mark record that after John the Baptist had completed his mission of preparation for the Messiah who would proclaim and fulfill the gospel message, Jesus came from Galilee preaching about his Father's government:

"From that time [John's imprisonment] Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt.4:17 KJV).

"Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, saying, the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe the gospel" (Mk.1:14-15 Para.).

JOHN'S QUESTION

While John was in prison, he heard of the many things that Jesus taught and the works that he did. Being curious to find out whether his cousin Jesus was indeed the Messiah, he sent two people to ask Jesus if he was the Messiah or if they should be looking for someone else. See Matt.11:2-3; Lk.7:17-19.

Because of many prophecies, the Jews of Christ's day were expecting a Messiah who would deliver them from their physical bondage and restore national Israel as a world power. They were not looking for spiritual enlightenment or for the Messiah to come and sacrifice himself for the sins of humanity.

John understood the prophecies concerning national Israel and knew, beyond a doubt, that he had been selected by God to announce the coming of the Messiah. Because of the expectations concerning the restoration of national Israel, John and the rest of the Jews had trouble understanding Jesus' ministry:

"John's disciples asked John's questions of Jesus. Jesus replied, Go back and tell John all that you have seen and heard here today: how those who are blind can now see, the lame are walking without a limp, the lepers are healed, the deaf can hear again, the dead are raised back to life, and the poor are hearing the good news. And tell him, Blessed is the one who does not lose faith in me" (Lk.7:20-23 Para.).

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matt.4:23 KJV).
BELIEVE THE GOSPEL

Although there was plenty of proof that Jesus was the Messiah, there were very few who believed the message that he brought. Why? Because they were looking for something very different from what they heard him teach:

"Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, saying, The time is at hand: repent and believe the gospel" (Mk.1:14-15 Para.). See also Matt.4:12-17; 9:35-38; Lk.8:1.

It is evident that, during the ministry of Jesus, the apostles, and the early church, there were very few people who understood and truly believed the good news message that was being proclaimed. This same situation exists today. Although there are over 20,000 differing sects professing to follow the God of the Bible, most do not believe or understand the good news message that the Son of God brought centuries ago. Most have believed a false message that has hidden and perverted the true message that Jesus brought.

Jesus Christ, the one who was the Creator God, said that it is necessary to believe his message in order to have eternal life (Mk.16:15-16), yet millions of professing Christians do not even know what this good news message is.

Today there are many different philosophies and teachings that claim to be the gospel message. Among these are the "Gospel of Salvation," "The Gospel of Grace," "The Gospel of the Kingdom," The Gospel of Jesus," and the "Social Gospels."

Why are there so many different gospels being taught and proclaimed? Why is there so much confusion today concerning what the good news message is and what it means? Because there are so many different gospels being taught today, does it make any difference which one a person believes?

Yes, it does make a difference what a person believes in relation to the Gospel. Why? Because there can be no doubt as to what Jesus meant when he said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; and he that does not believe shall be damned" (Mk.16:16 Para.).

Yes, in addition to repentance and baptism, the following things must be believed in order for one to escape the death penalty and live forever:

• One must believe the things that Jesus was sent by his Father to proclaim concerning his Father's offer to extend his grace to humanity and his offer to establish peace between himself and humanity.
• One must believe that Jesus is the Son of the Sovereign God of all that exists, and that he who was the Creator God was sent by his Father to become the Redeemer and Savior of humanity.
• One must believe in and practice the way of salvation in order to have eternal life and enter into the Family and Kingdom of God.

Yes, one must believe the true gospel message that Jesus Christ, his apostles, and the early church proclaimed in order to reap the benefits offered by God the Father. Yet, many hundreds of millions who profess to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ do not believe or understand the message he brought or how it relates to their personal salvation or the salvation of humanity today and in the future.

THE OTHER GOSPEL

Most of Christianity has believed and accepted a false gospel. As inconceivable as this sounds, it has happened. Jesus Christ warned his disciples to be on guard against false teachings that would be preached in his name:

"Take heed [beware] that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ [I am the Christ]; and shall deceive many [the majority of people]" (Lk.21:8; Mk.13:5-6; Matt.24:4-5 Para.).

Even before the end of the first century, the apostles of Jesus Christ warned their followers to be aware of deceptions, because they could see false teachings about the way of God beginning to emerge.

Toward the close of the first century, Jude one of the brothers of Jesus Christ, wrote that evil men were turning the grace of God into a license to sin and he admonished the elect of God to recapture the original faith that Jesus Christ had delivered:

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 3-4 KJV). See also 2.Pet.2:1-3.

About forty years before Jude wrote his warning to the church and barely twenty years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Galatia giving them a strong warning to be aware of false teachings. Even then (52-53 A.D.), as the early church grew in numbers, so did those who opposed the truth of God. During Paul's time, the true gospel and teachings of Jesus Christ were being perverted by people who were determined to distort the truth of God for their own purposes.

Paul issued a severe condemnation and warns of punishment for those who attempt to change or corrupt the true gospel:
"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. . . So I now say again, if any man preach any other gospel to you than that you have received, let him be accursed" (Gal.1:8-9 Para.).

This is no shallow meaningless threat by the apostle Paul; his decree is backed by the authority of Jesus Christ whom the apostle Paul served as a minister of the gospel. What is recorded here is a historical fact: during the lifetime of the apostles, the true gospel was being corrupted, and another gospel was being taught to confuse and seduce the elect of God and the rest of the world into believing a false gospel.

Does it really matter which religious organization a person is associated with or what basic philosophy one holds to be true as long as one believes that it is correct and tries to be a good person?

If God the Father and his Son do not exist, and the Bible is not the word of God, it does not matter what one believes or how one conducts one's life.

However, there is abundant proof that God the Father and Jesus Christ do exist and that the Bible is their instruction manual to the elect of God and to the human race. If one is truly seeking to obey God the Father and Jesus Christ, one will desire with all their being to associate with people who are truly following the ways of God and one will be making a diligent effort to conduct every aspect of one's life in a way that will please the Father.

The true message that Jesus Christ brought from his Father is very different from what has been taught by popular Christianity throughout the centuries.

No matter how cleverly crafted and eloquently stated the other gospel is, it teaches a message that is diametrically opposed to the Father's message. This false message will always lead away from the truth of God and will result in eternal death for those who believe it.

A COUNTERFEIT GOSPEL

What occurred to cause the original gospel to become corrupted into a false gospel? How could such a thing happen? What made people believe and follow the heretical teachings of those who professed to follow Jesus, but did not?

The Bible reveals that it is Satan the Devil and his ministers who have counterfeited the true good news message with a perverted version. It is this false gospel that has been accepted as the original teachings of Jesus Christ:

"That old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives [Greek, 'is deceiving'] the whole world. . ." (Rev.12:9 Para.).
This powerful spirit-being known as the Devil (Satan) and other evil spirits are actively deceiving the entire world politically, philosophically, and religiously.

Here is what Paul was inspired to write to the Galatians concerning the other gospel:

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different good news message—that is in reality no good news message at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the good news of Christ" (Gal.1:6-7 Para.).

The Bible tells us how this other gospel started and how it differs from the true gospel message. Secular and religious history also record these perversions of the true gospel since it was originally proclaimed. It is also openly admitted by many biblical scholars and religious leaders that what is taught today as Christianity is very different from what was taught during the days of the apostles.

Through his followers, Satan has taught a counterfeit Christianity and gospel message. These false teachings that began centuries ago were accepted as original truth. Today, almost all of professing Christianity has accepted these false teachings as the truth of God.

Because the Father does not want his children to be ignorant of these attempts to pervert his truth, there are many warnings in the scriptures about false prophets, teachers, and doctrines.

The historical facts found in a variety of sources clearly show how this satanic counterfeit was enforced upon the world. It is openly admitted by most historians and religious leaders that what was enforced as truth was contrary to the scriptures and commandments of God.

Here is what Paul was inspired to write to the Corinthians concerning the other gospel:

2.Cornithians 11:3-4; 13-15 KJV

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled [deceived] Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that comes [and is] preaching another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit [an evil lying spirit], which you have not received, or another gospel, which you have not accepted. . ." (vs.3-4).

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel: for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (vs.13-15).
Another Jesus and another gospel were preached by these false apostles and deceitful workers. This same false Jesus and message is still being preached and taught today.

THE WAY OF TRUTH SPOKEN OF AS EVIL

The apostle Peter warned that people teaching heresies would rise up and that many would follow these people and their false teachings:

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who shall privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many [the majority of people] shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of " (2.Pet.2:1-2 Para.).

There are many things that people consider to be truth; however, what God reveals as the way of truth is often not what people believe as truth. It is God's way of truth that most people hate and ridicule.

The Bible defines for us what is meant by "the way of truth." "As he prayed to the Father, Jesus said, Sanctify them [true children of God] through your truth: your word is truth" (Jn.17:17 Para.). Sanctify can mean to set apart. Jesus asked his Father in heaven to set apart his followers from the way of the world. A further biblical definition of truth is revealed in Psalm 119: "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your law is the truth. . . all your commandments are truth. . . your word is true from the beginning" (vs.142,151,160 Para.).

"Jesus said, God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jn.4:24 Para.).

The way of truth is the word of God that is revealed through the Bible and taught by true servants of God. This truth, if believed and acted upon in a positive manner, will result in one living the way of truth (Lk.4:4; Matt.19:17; Jn.14:15; Rev.12:17; 14:12; 22:14).

This is the way of truth that is spoken of as evil. The message of the false ministers of Christ is this: Christ has released humanity from the obligation to keep the law of God. This deception is preached as freedom from the harsh law of God. But this deception leads to bondage, because the message is a lie that encourages sincere people to disobey God and practice lawlessness—lawlessness is sin; sin is bondage.

CAN ONE WORSHIP THE GOD OF TRUTH WITH LIES?

There are many sincere and dedicated people who have been mislead by false prophets and teachers who teach a counterfeit of God's way of life. They have been taught that these heretical practices are acceptable by God and have believed it. But, only truth is truth! Sincerity and dedication do not equal truth! Sincerity only shows the attitude with which people do what they do. It is apparent that many are truly
dedicated to their religious precepts, but it does not mean that they are
dedicated to the truth of God.

There is a vast difference between worshiping God the Father in spirit
and truth and zealously doing what is thought to be righteous. Only God
can determine what is righteousness. The Bible teaches that "There is a
way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of
death" (Pro.14:12 KJV).

Would God the Father who is a God of love and truth, and whose holy
spirit is called "the Spirit of Truth" ever accept a satanic counterfeit and a
lie as a means of worshiping him? Never!

There are literally hundreds of thousands who preach against the truth
of God by not teaching what the Bible reveals as truth. Jesus said that you
will know them by their fruits (Matt.7:15-20). The apostle Paul said that
if a person teaches things that are against truth, they will receive the
wrath of God:

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungod-
liness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unright-
eousness" (Rom.1:18 Para.).

Like the apostle Paul foretold, the vast majority changed the truth of
God into a lie and worshiped and served the creature more than the
Creator (Rom.1:25). Thus was the truth of God exchanged for a lie.

REJECTION OF TRUTH

"Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be
saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that
they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who
believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness"
(2.Thes.2:10-12 Para.).

When people reject the truth of God's Word, the truth of his com-
mandments, and the truth of his laws, they believe a lie.

It is very clear what a Christian should do in order to please the Father
and Jesus Christ. A Christian must love God, love his truth, and believe
and live by his truth. As simple as this seems, most people refuse to
believe or live by the truth of God's Word.

It is a fact that most people believe in God, a form of God, or a higher
power, but most do not believe God. On the surface, it may seem
religious to believe in God or have a mental concept of a higher power,
but such a concept places most people in a perilous situation.

The apostle James, a brother of Jesus, explains it very clearly for us:

"Do you believe there is one God [the Sovereign God, God the
Father]: You do well: the demons also believe, and tremble"
(Jms.2:19 KJV).
Those who believe in the Sovereign God of the Bible and refuse to obey him by keeping his law and worshiping him as he instructs are in the same category as evil spirits—they are adversaries of God.

Because most people believe what they want to believe or what they are told, rather than searching for and believing the truth of God as they should, this prophecy of believing a lie has been fulfilled for centuries. The vast majority of those who profess to be of the Christian faith have accepted and believed the lie that those under the New Covenant are no longer required to keep the law of God.

A GOSPEL PARABLE

Although there are many variations of the other gospel, the other gospel usually contains a perversion of the truth concerning Jesus Christ and his relationship with God the Father prior to his human existence. It also usually contains perversions of the truth concerning Jesus' physical life, his death, and his resurrection. Moreover, the other gospel contains lies about how to obtain salvation and the way to the Kingdom of God.

In the parable of the good shepherd, Jesus reveals the basic elements of the other gospel:

"Jesus said to them again, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: If anyone enters through me, he shall be saved, and will go in, and will not go out, and will find pasture. The thief does not come except that he may steal, and to kill, and destroy: I came that they might have life, and may have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn.10:7-12 Para.). Please read the entire chapter and parable in order to place this parable in its proper context.

Although there are many things that can be learned from this parable, there are three things to take note of:

1. Jesus shows that the only way to enter into eternal life is through him. All other philosophies or religions that offer a way to escape eternal death and enter the Kingdom of God are false and will lead to eternal death instead of eternal life.

2. Anyone who teaches that there is any other way to enter into eternal life than the way Jesus taught present a false message in order to steal people's opportunity for eternal life.

3. Jesus gave his life in order for humanity to have eternal life.

This third point is extremely important because false religions and philosophies do not truly teach this awesome truth about the God who died to save his creation.
Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things (Jn.1:1-3). Prior to being human, he was an immortal spirit-being who inherently possessed the highest form of existence: life that springs forth from itself, never dying or decaying. The Creator God emptied himself of his glory, power, and immortality to become a mortal man subject to death. Then, he allowed his creation to murder him. He voluntarily gave up his life and for a short time he completely ceased to exist as a living entity:

"Who, being in the form of God [the Sovereign God], thought it not robbery to be equal with God [the Sovereign God]: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross" (Phil.2:6-8 KJV).

Jesus died; he ceased to exist. All that remained of his life was the physical and spirit record of his existence which could have been completely destroyed and erased if the Father had not resurrected him from the dead. See Matt.10:28; Lk.12:4-5; Gal.1:1; Acts 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30.

In the first chapter of the Book of Revelation, the apostle John records his encounter with Jesus Christ who calls himself the God Alpha and Omega:

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying to me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev.1:17-18 Para.). See also Rom.6:8-10; Acts 2:24-32; 3:15, 26; Heb.2:9; Rev.2:8.

THERE IS ONLY ONE TRUE GOSPEL

The gospel, the good message, or the good news that Jesus commanded his followers to teach and proclaim is actually only one message for humanity; however, the message does have two distinct divisions: 1) the good news about the coming Family and Kingdom of God to rule the earth; 2) the good news about how a person can become a part of the Family and Kingdom of God through the sacrificial blood and authority of Jesus Christ.

Today, just before the return of Jesus Christ, the true gospel that was taught by Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the early church is again being taught by those who are truly the elect of God.

Although there is only one gospel message there are many parts to the message; therefore, some things in this chapter will need to be repeated in order to clearly explain the totality of the good news message from God the Father to humanity.

By B.L. Cocherell
CHAPTER
FOURTEEN

THE GOOD NEWS OF GRACE AND PEACE

The Father's grace and peace are two wonderful aspects of his message to humanity. The grace and peace that the Father offers to those who will hear and heed his message are not only for this day and age, but also for the time after the return of Jesus Christ and for all eternity.

GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE

The Creator God had always offered grace, mercy, and peace to his people; however, after he came to earth as Jesus Christ, he made known and offered a different kind of grace, mercy, and peace. This grace, mercy, and peace was spiritual, as well as physical and was offered by his heavenly Father.

In many of the apostle Paul's letters we find greetings and blessings containing the phrase 'grace and peace' and 'grace, mercy and peace be upon you':

"To Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord" (1.Tim.1:2 KJV). See also 2.Tim.1:2; Tit.1:4; 2.Jn.3.

"To the church of God [God the Father] that is in Corinth, to those having been set apart for a holy purpose in Jesus Christ, called to be saints, with all others who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, both theirs and ours: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (1.Cor.1:2-3 Para.). See also 2.Cor.1:2.

"To all that be in Rome, beloved of the Sovereign God, called to be saints: Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son" (Rom.1:7-9 Para.).

THE GOOD NEWS OF GRACE

"And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Except that the holy spirit witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither do I count my life dear to me, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:22-24 Para.).
After Paul had preached and taught the Father's message for many years, he knew that his ministry was drawing to a close; thus, he went to Jerusalem knowing that he was about to lose his freedom and perhaps his life. Nevertheless, he went because he was thoroughly committed to the task he had been given. Notice that Paul calls this message the good news of the grace of God.

The good news message that Jesus, the apostles, and the early church proclaimed and taught concerning God the Father's grace is crucial to the gospel message, because God's grace, mercy, and compassion toward humanity is the foundation upon which salvation is based. It is because of the Father's grace, mercy, and compassion toward humanity that there is a good news message. It is because of the Father's grace, mercy, compassion, and great love for humanity that he allowed the Creator to come to earth in human form to save humanity from eternal death.

**WHAT IS GRACE?**

The English word *grace* is derived from the Greek word *charis*, which has two basic meanings in the New Testament: favor shown to one who is undeserving of favor and being favored with divine spiritual influence from God.

The word *grace* is used in regard to those who are called to salvation, and it refers to the divine favor of God toward these people. In some instances, it refers to being favored with God's spiritual influence in their lives.

When the word *grace* is associated with the Father and Christ, it always has the implication of being given from them as a free, undeserved gift to the recipient.

**Three Facts About Grace**

1. Before or after Adam and Eve disobeyed the Creator's instructions not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the Father was not obligated to favor humanity with forgiveness of sin and salvation.

2. The Father's favor cannot be earned and is not something that one deserves because of one's own effort.

3. The Father extends his favor to humanity because it is what he wants to give those for whom he has great concern, compassion, and love. See Jn.3:16.
THE FATHER'S GRACE AND MERCY

There is only one Sovereign God who is above all else that exists and he is the one who allowed the Creator to come to earth and sacrifice himself for humanity. When the decision was made concerning the method through which humanity would be able to have their violation of the law of God forgiven and receive redemption and salvation, there were only two immortal beings in existence—the Sovereign God and the Creator God.

The decision to allow the Creator God to divest himself of his immortality and become human not only placed the Creator's future existence in great jeopardy, but also had a tremendous impact upon the Sovereign God's future. If the Creator had failed in his mission, he would have died and ceased to exist forever, and the Sovereign God would have lost his closest friend and companion. The Father would have been the only immortal being in existence. He would have had no one like himself with whom to share eternity. The Sovereign's decision to allow the Creator to attempt to save humanity was a selfless act and shows a love of awesome proportions for humanity.

Human words or emotion cannot begin to adequately express the grace, mercy, compassion, and love that God the Father and Jesus Christ have for humanity. And words cannot adequately describe the price that the Father and his Son were willing to pay for our redemption and salvation.

Divine Favor Through Christ

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John bare witness of him, and cried saying, This was he of whom I spoke, He that comes after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fullness have we all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man has seen the Father at any time; however, the only begotten Son, that is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him" (Jn.1:14-18 Para.).

It is only through Jesus Christ that the good news of the Father's favor toward humanity is revealed, and only those who truly believe the message that Jesus brought from the Father have any hope of having the Father's favor bestowed upon them. This is because it is only through Jesus Christ that the Father's good news message is revealed:

"For God [the Sovereign God] so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God [the Sovereign God] sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (Jn.3:16-17 KJV). See Heb.2:6-10.
Paul Explains God's Grace

In his letter to the elect of God at Ephesus, the apostle Paul spoke of the great favor that the Father bestows upon all whom he calls to salvation.

Ephesians 1:1-9 Paraphrased

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, to the saints being in Ephesus, and being faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (vs.1-2).

Paul greets the elect at Ephesus with the blessing of the grace and peace that was being bestowed upon them from the Father through Jesus Christ who is the administrator of the Father's grace and peace to his earthly children.

Predestination

"Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens with Christ: According to his choosing of us through Christ before the foundation of the world, for us to be holy and without blemish before him [the Father] in love" (vs.3-4).

What Paul says to the Ephesians concerning being chosen before the foundation of the world is a very difficult concept to explain to anyone who does not have the spirit of God dwelling within them; nevertheless, it is true. God the Father has favored some people above others, calling them to participate in a better resurrection with better rewards than the rest of humanity and to have a special relationship with him that is not afforded to others.

"Having predestinated us to adoption [sonship in his family] through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he favored us in the beloved [Jesus], In whom we have redemption through his blood, that is the forgiveness of sins, according to the richness of his grace [favor]; that he caused to abound toward us in all wisdom and understanding; making known to us the mystery of his [the Father's] will, according to his good pleasure which he proposed in himself" (vs.5-9).

Everyone deserves to die for their sins. No one deserves eternal or immortal life in the Family of God just because they are one of God's creations. It is only because of the Father's grace and great love for humanity that he extends his forgiveness and salvation to us.

Not only has the Father shown great favor to those he has predestined to be his sons before the foundation of the earth, but also he blesses them with spiritual knowledge and understanding and allows them to know his will concerning the salvation of and the purpose for humanity.
GRACE THROUGH CHRIST

"The Father worked in Christ, raising him from the dead—yes he seated him at his right hand in heaven, Far above all principality, authority, power, lordship, and every name being named, not only in this age, but also in the coming age: and the Father put all things under his feet, and made him head over all things to the church, Which is his body" (Eph.1:19-23 Para.).

It is the Father who has the power to raise the dead and give positions of power and authority to those he calls to salvation. The Father has placed his Son, Jesus Christ, over all things except himself (See 1.Cor.15:25-27). It is the Sovereign Father who favored some with a call to salvation during the age of the Patriarchs, during the existence of ancient Israel, and during the age of the early church. And it is the Father who favors some today with the opportunity to understand his message of good news and participate in the first resurrection of the dead (Jn.6:44,65).

Ephesians 2:1-9 Paraphrased

"And he worked in you who were once dead because you disobeyed him and violated his law, as a way of life according to the ways of this world, and according to the ruler and authority of the air [Satan the Devil], the evil spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience: Among whom we also conducted ourselves in the past in the lusts of our flesh, doing the things willed of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as the rest" (vs.1-3).

Paul said to the elect children of God at Ephesus that, before they were saved, they were under the death penalty awaiting execution for the violation of the law of God. This is the exact situation which all who are not spiritual sons of God are in. All of humanity past, present, and future are condemned to death and will die for all eternity unless they accept the Father's grace and mercy that is offered through the sacrificial blood of his Son Jesus Christ:

"But the Father, being rich in mercy, and because of his great love for us, who were dead in our sins, made us alive together with Christ—by his grace you are being saved—and he has raised us up, and has seated us together in heaven in Christ Jesus: That he might show in ages to come the exceedingly great riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (vs.4-7).

In his great mercy, the Father has favored a few undeserving individuals in the past and is favoring a few today with forgiveness of sin and witnesses of his great love and compassion for his creatures, in order for them to serve him in his plan for the salvation of all humanity:
"For by grace you are saved through faith; and not of yourselves; it is a gift from the Father; and comes not through your own efforts. ." (vs.8-9). See also Acts 15:10-11; Rom.3:22-25; Tit.3:5.

Paul also said that it is not because of a person's own efforts that the Father extends the opportunity for redemption during the gospel age of salvation; he does so for his own purpose:

"Then do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God; he having saved us, and having called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, given to us in Jesus before eternal times" (2.Tim.1:8-9 Para.).

THE GIFT OF GOD'S GRACE

"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded to many" (Rom.5:14-15 KJV).

"And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences to justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Rom.5:14-17 KJV).

Here Paul reveals that before Moses people had no hope of life after death, because there was no method by which a person could obtain salvation. Moses came as a type of Christ as a deliverer and law giver (Acts 7:35-38). Through Moses, God revealed his plan for the salvation of humanity through the prophetic meaning of his sacrificial worship system and commanded observances.

Paul also shows us that Adam's disobedience brought the penalty of eternal death upon all his descendants, and that it is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that one has the opportunity to have one's death penalty removed and obtain eternal salvation.

The Father caused humanity to come into existence (the gift of life). Another great gift from the Father is his grace toward us in wanting to save us from eternal death. If it were not for his grace toward us, we would be executed for the violation of his law and cease to exist forever. But because of his gift of grace, we have the opportunity to exist forever as a son in his divine family.
THE PROMISE OF GRACE

"For God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your cares upon him; for he cares for you" (1.Pet.5:5-7 KJV). See also Jms.4:5-6.

The Father is extremely concerned for humanity and it is his intention to offer salvation to all people. He promises to place those who respond in a positive manner to his message of grace under his care and protection and reward them for their obedience to him at the appropriate time.

THE GOOD NEWS OF PEACE

Most people want to live a peaceful life. Most want to have peace of mind and peace and harmony between themselves and other people. However, in order to have true peace of mind and harmony between themselves and others, people need to feel secure from harm (have personal safety), have the necessities of life supplied (food, clothing, and shelter), and have love and respect for and from others.

In all of human history there has been very little true peace. The search and struggle for a peaceful existence is one of the most elusive and seemingly unobtainable goals of humanity. Instead of peace, humanity has lived most of its history in great anxiety and conflict, never obtaining true peace. Why is this so?

Long ago, the prophet Isaiah was inspired to reveal the reason why there has been very little peace in the past and why there is no true peace today:

"The way of peace they do not know: and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whoever goes therein shall not know peace" (Isa.59:8 KJV). See also Rom.3:10-18.

Simply put, the vast majority of people do not know how to obtain true personal peace of mind or peace between themselves and other people. "They do not know the way to peace." Part of the good news message from the Father concerns how to not only have peace of mind (inner peace) but also how to live in peace with other people.

TWO GREAT OPPOSITES

There are two great opposites in the world today concerning most people's desire for love, joy, and peace in their lives, and the stark reality of the world that we live in. The apostle Paul mentioned these two opposites—the natural way of life and God's way of life—to the church at Galatia as he encouraged them to continue in their progress toward spiritual maturity.
The Natural Way of Life

"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal.5:19-21 NIV).

We could also add to this list of sinful things; war, famine, disease, destruction of the family, and many, many other things that are the opposite of what people really want to be a part of their life experience. The things noted above are all the result of human behavior that is in opposition to God's laws.

God's Way of Life

"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Gal.5:22-23 NIV).

Notice that the fruit (the result) of having God's spirit provides the things that most people want in their life. However, in order for these things to become a reality in one's life, one must truly believe the good news message from the Father concerning how to come into conformity with his perfect laws. Then, one must act upon this belief in a positive manner. Once this happens, all of the benefits that are promised by the Father can become a reality in one's life.

ENEMIES OF GOD

It is extremely important to understand that anyone who violates the law of God is considered an enemy of God the Father. Unless reconciliation and peace are made between the violator of the law and God the Father, the violator must and will be put to eternal death according to the law of God:

"Do you not know that friendship with the world is the same as hatred of God? Whoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jms.4:4 Para.).

"But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be like the beauty of the pastures: they are consumed; like smoke they are consumed away" (Psa.37:20 Para.).

"For, lo, your enemies, O Lord, for, lo, your enemies shall perish; all the workers of lawlessness shall be scattered" (Psa.92:9 Para.).

"For the wages of sin is death; . . ." (Rom.6:23 KJV).

THEN AND NOW

A very important aspect of the good news of peace concerns peace between former enemies—God the Father and the sinner.
Prior to the advent of Jesus Christ, there was no way to gain forgiveness of sin and no way that a person could make lasting peace with God the Father. All stood condemned under the law; all were doomed to eternal death, because there was no method by which a person could petition God the Father for forgiveness of sin in order to make peace with him.

Because of the Father's great love for humanity, he has extended his grace and mercy to us and offered to make peace with us through the sacrifice of his Son. Now, lasting peace can be made between a sinner and God the Father. When a person is reconciled with the Father and at peace with him, that person is entitled to eternal life through the life of Christ. See Rom.5:10.

God The Father and Jesus Christ knew that humanity would eventually come under the dominion of the law and have to pay the penalty for its violation; therefore, their plan for humanity included a method by which people could escape eternal death, become a part of the Family of God, and live forever:

"For whoever shall call upon the name of the lord shall be saved. How then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the good news of peace, and bring good news of good things!" (Rom.10:13-15 Para.).

The good news message of peace that Jesus brought from the Father, is the Father's offer to have mercy on the violators of his law, forgive their sins, and remove their death penalty through the sacrificial blood of his Son. This offer of reconciliation and peace is not the same as the one that was offered by the Creator God to the Patriarchs and to national Israel at Mount Sinai. This offer of peace, if accepted and honored by the recipient, will last during this physical life and for all eternity.

THE GOD OF PEACE

The Sovereign Father is a God of peace. It is his earnest desire to have peace between himself and people. It is also his desire for people to live in peace with each other and reap the benefits that only true peace brings to those who are peaceful:

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb.13:20-21 KJV).
The Sovereign Father (the God of peace) who resurrected Jesus from the dead is the one who is working to perfect those he calls to salvation. Also notice what Paul said about the peace that comes from the God of Peace:

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say again, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything; but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ. ... Whatever you have learned, or received, or heard from me, or seen in me—put into practice. And the God of peace will be with you" (Phil.4:4-9 NIV).

One of the reasons the peace that comes from God transcends all understanding is that this peace has a spiritual and eternal quality. This peace from God transcends the temporal physical realm. The Father's peace gives one an assurance of well being and tranquillity that reaches beyond this life into eternity. This peace is perfect peace and harmony with the Father and his Family and Kingdom forever. This is the kind of peace that God the Father promises those who will believe the good news that he sent his Son to proclaim.

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the holy spirit" (Rom.15:13 KJV).

"Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen" (Rom.15:33 KJV).

The good news of peace from the Father has great meaning in today's reality where there is very little mental or physical peace. The peace that comes from the Father is a dynamic peace that has the potential to change one's life for the better when it is internalized into one's thought process and behavior toward God and people.

PEACE FROM THE FATHER THROUGH CHRIST

Isaiah, Ezekiel, David, and Micah all spoke of Jesus Christ as being a peacemaker sent from God. Isaiah said that among his other titles and responsibilities, Jesus Christ would be the Prince of Peace:

Isaiah

"For to us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isa.9:6 KJV).

The prophets also foretold that, after Jesus Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth, he will make a covenant with national Israel to ensure their national and personal safety within their land.
Ezekiel

"Therefore I will save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; . . . And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods" (Ezk.34:22-25 KJV).

David

"The Lord will give strength to his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (Psa.29:11 KJV).

"For evildoers shall be cut off: but those who wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yes, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psa.37:9-10 KJV). See also Psa.128:1-6; 147:11-15; Isa.26:1-3, 10-12; 32:17-18.

Isaiah

"And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people. . . And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [government], says the Lord" (Isa.65:21-25 KJV).

Micah 4:1-4 Paraphrased

"But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the government of the house of the Lord shall be established above all great governments, and it shall be exalted above all lesser governments; and people shall come to it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the government of the Lord, and the house of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (vs.1-2).

The covenant of peace that God will make with Israel will also be extended to other nations as they submit themselves to the rule of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace (Isa.9:6; Rom.16:20), who represents God the Father, the God of Peace in heaven (Rom.15:13; Phil.4:7,9).
"And he [Jesus Christ] shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords [weapons] into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But every one shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken" (vs.3-4).

RECONCILIATION WITH THE FATHER

While encouraging the elect of God at Rome, Ephesus, and Colosse, Paul spoke of reconciliation with God the Father, redemption of humanity, and access to the Father through the blood of Christ:

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely will a person die for a righteous person: and perhaps for a good person some would might dare to die. But God [the Father] commends his love to us, that while we were living in sin, Christ died for us. Much more, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved through him from God's wrath. For if, being enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom.5: 6-10 Para.). See also Jms.4:4.

There are a number of things that Paul said here that are extremely important to understand:

1. When Paul spoke of us being without strength, he was saying that prior to the advent of Jesus Christ we were powerless to escape the death penalty that hung over our heads as a result of our being guilty of breaking the law of God.

2. Even though humanity was living in sin (violation of God's law) and rebellion against all that Jesus Christ held to be good and sacred, Jesus extended his love to us and gave his life to save us from eternal death.

3. Jesus paid the price for our violation of God's law; he substituted his own life for ours and provided for our release from the death penalty. Any who will believe in what Christ did for them and ask for his blood to be applied against their sins will be made innocent before the Father; they will become sinless before the Father.

4. Even though we were the Father's enemy because of our violation of his law, he allowed his only Son to die in our place in order to reconcile us to himself.

5. Not only did Christ die for us, but also he holds the keys to our salvation (i.e., eternal life instead of eternal death).
It is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (the Creator God) that we are reconciled to God the Father and have our death sentence removed:

"And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1.Cor.15:14 KJV). See also 1.Cor.15:3-4.

If Christ had not risen from the dead, we would be lost without any hope of salvation. This is also a very important point because it shows that not only did Christ have to die for our sins but also he had to be brought back to life in order for us to be saved.

**The New Creation**

"So that if anyone is in Christ, that one is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new! And all things are of God [God the Father], the one having reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ... Whereas the Father was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not charging their trespasses to them; and putting the word [the word of God i.e., Christ] of reconciliation in us" (2.Cor.5:17-19 Para.).

Because of Christ's sacrifice, we are reconciled to the Father and have eternal peace with him in his Family and Kingdom. Moreover, we are made into a new creature at the time of our adoption as his spiritual son.

**National Israel and Other People**

Another thing that the sacrificial blood of Christ did through the reconciliation aspect of his blood was remove the barrier that was erected between national Israel and other people as a result of the Mount Sinai covenant.

**Ephesians 2:11-18 Paraphrased**

"Therefore remember, that you were in the past Gentiles after the flesh, who are called the Uncircumcision [not Israelites] by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands [other nations did not have a national covenant with God]; That at that time you were without Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants [agreements] of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (vs.11-12).

The ancient nation of Israel were God's chosen people. They were considered his children and were to be a nation of priests that would represent him to other nations. Because of this, they were given preferential treatment as a nation and as individuals before God. They had direct access to God because of who they were. Although other nations and individuals were allowed to worship God and receive the benefits from this relationship, they did not have a national agreement with God like the Israelites did.

"But now in Christ Jesus you who were far off are made near by the blood of Christ" (v13).
Through his sacrifice as the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ canceled many of the restrictions that were placed between God and people other than Israelites.

"For he is our peace, he made us both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; and canceled through his flesh the enmity [hostility, the barrier between], the law of commandments in decrees; that he might in himself create one new man, out of two, making peace: And might reconcile both in one body [the body of Christ, i.e., the church] to the Father through the cross, killing the enmity [hostility, the barrier between] in himself. And when he came he preached peace to you, the ones afar off, and to the ones near. For through him we both have access by one spirit to the Father" (vs.14-18). See also Eph.3:1-6).

Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, all who desire to worship God in truth now have direct access to the Father through the power of the holy spirit that is placed within them regardless of national or racial origin. The extremely good news is that now, during the gospel age, those called by God to salvation not only have access to Jesus Christ (the Creator God) but also to God the Father (the Sovereign God).

**Colossians 1:12-23 Paraphrased**

"Always be thankful to the Father, who has made us fit to share all the wonderful things that belong to those who live in light: For he has rescued us from the power of Satan's darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption in his blood, through which we receive forgiveness of all our sins" (vs.12-14).

Paul encourages those who have had the wonderful truth of the redemptive power of Christ's sacrificial blood revealed to them to be thankful, because they have been rescued and given the opportunity to enter the Kingdom of God. It is very important to understand this aspect of the gospel message, because it is only through the blood of Christ that these things are possible.

"Christ is the exact likeness of the unseen God, [God the Father] and he is the first born of all the Father's creatures: Christ existed before the Father made anything at all, and, in fact, Christ is the Creator who made everything in heaven and earth, the things we can see and the things we can't; whether they are thrones, or dominions, or rulers and authorities: all were made by Christ for the Father's use and glory' (vs.15-16). See also Eph.3:9.

"Christ was before all else began and it is his power that holds everything together. He is the head of the body, made up of his people [that is the church]: he is the beginning, the first to arise from the dead; so that he is first in everything; for the Father wanted all that is good of himself to be in his Son' (vs.17-19).
To understand Christ and his love for us is to understand the Father and his love for us. He who was the Creator God of all that exists for the Sovereign God came to earth as a human in order to reconcile us to the Father so that we might have eternal life:

"It is through his Son's blood that drained from his body on the cross, that the Father reconciled all things whether they be in heaven or on earth to himself and has made peace with us. This includes you who were so far away from God. You were once the Father's enemies and you hated him, and were separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions, yet now you are reconciled to him" (vs.20-21).

The good news is that those who are now enemies of the Father can make peace with him and become his friend and his son through true belief in the redemptive power of the blood of his Son Jesus Christ:

"He has done this through the death of his Son who lived in the flesh in order to present you to himself in a pure and righteous condition. As a result you stand before the Father's presence holy, sinless and blameless of anything. If you continue to believe and practice the truth, firmly standing in it and refuse to be moved out of the hope that is in the good news [Christ], that you have heard. . ." (vs.22-23).

The grace and peace that is offered by the Father to humanity is indeed good news. What better news could there be than to know that one can have their sins forgiven and have life after death? There would seem to be no better news than this; however, there is even more good news from the Father about his Son and the salvation he offers humans.

**SUMMARY**

The apostles often spoke of the unmerited grace and peace that both the Father and Christ bestow upon those who believe and accept the opportunity that they are being offered to participate in the first resurrection and become kings and priests in the divine Family of God.

The apostles Peter and Paul summarize the tremendous blessing provided through the Father's grace and mercy and encourage the elect of God to avail themselves of these awesome and wonderful gifts from the Father:

**2 Peter 1:2-10 KJV**

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. According as his divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue.' (vs.2-3).

"Whereby are given to us exceedingly great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (v4).
"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity' (vs.5-7).

"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ' (v8).

"But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Therefore, rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall" (vs.9-10).

Do Not Be Anxious

"Do not be anxious about anything; but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving let your request be known to the Father. And the peace of the Father, that surpasses all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil.4:6-7 Para.). See also Rom.8:31.

By B.L. Cocherell
CHAPTER
FIFTEEN
THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

It is only through an understanding of the good news message about Jesus Christ and the salvation that comes through him that one can begin to realize the great love and concern that the Father and his Son have for humanity.

In his lengthy greeting to the elect at Rome, Paul specifically states that he is in the service of Jesus Christ and God the Father for the express purpose of proclaiming the Father's good news concerning his Son and the meaning of his being made flesh.

Romans 1:1-3, 8-9; 15-16 Paraphrased

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the good news message of God the Father. That he promised, by his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, that was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (vs.1-3). See also 1.Thes.3:1-2.

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the good news of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers" (vs.8-9).

"I am also ready to preach the good news to you that are at Rome. For I am not ashamed of the good news of Christ: for it is the power of God the Father to give salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (vs.15-16). See also 1.Cor.9:18; 2.Cor.9:13; 10:14; Phil.1:27.

An extremely important point to note in verses 15 and 16 is that it is through Christ's successful performance of his mission contained in the good news message that the Father now has the power (i.e., the means) through which he can save those who truly believe what they are told about Christ.

Christ the Crucified

The apostle Paul summarizes the good news about the meaning of Jesus Christ's life and death in relation to salvation to the elect of God at Corinth:
"The Jews demand miraculous signs, and the Greeks look to wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified; a stumblingblock to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles; But to those whom the Father has called to salvation, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power and wisdom of the Father" (1.Cor.1:22-24 NIV).

"When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquent or superior wisdom, as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you, except Jesus and him crucified..." (1.Cor.2:1-2 NIV).

Why did Paul make the crucifixion of Jesus Christ the central theme of his ministry? Why did he feel that the crucifixion of Jesus outweighed all of the other things that could be said about the gospel message concerning Christ?

Paul knew that to understand the meaning of the crucifixion of Jesus is to understand the plan for the salvation of humanity, because it is through understanding the events and prophecies surrounding the sacrificial death of Jesus that one can truly understand the Father's grace and mercy toward humanity, the way by which we may have our sins forgiven, the way to make peace with the Father, and the way to obtain eternal life.

WHO WAS JESUS?

Today there is almost a total misconception about Jesus Christ, including who he was, what he is now, why he came, what he taught, and what he accomplished. History clearly shows that Jesus was not the subject of myth or legend; he did exist. He was a real human being who preached and taught God's word with great power and zeal, but very few truly know the truth about this man.

The God Who Became Man

John 1:1-5;10-14 KJV

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God" (vs.1-2).

John said that in the beginning there was a God-being he described as the Word, and this God-being was with another being that was also a God.

"All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shined in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (vs.3-5).

"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came to his own, and his own received him not" (vs.10-11). See also Heb.1:1-2.
There can be no doubt that the God whom John spoke of as being the Word was the God who created all things. And there can be no doubt, if one diligently searches the scriptures, that this same God was the Creator God who became Jesus Christ:

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwell among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (vs.12-14).

The immortal God, the Creator of all things, possessed the highest form of existence (life that springs forth from itself, never dying or decaying) emptied himself of his glory, power, and immortality to become a mortal man who was subject to death. Then, he gave his life as a ransom and sacrifice for all people. Jesus knew that he had come into this world for the express purpose of dying for the sins of humanity. He also knew that, if he failed in his mission, humanity would be without hope of eternal life. See Jn.12:27; 18:37.

The death of God (the Son) was such a profound and awesome event that almost a third of the four gospels are devoted to this one subject. The apostle John alone uses almost half of his entire gospel narrative to explain the details surrounding the meaning of the Passover and the sacrifice of God.

The God Who Died

"But now in these days he [God the Father] has spoken to us through his Son [Jesus Christ] to whom he has given everything, and through whom he made the world and everything there is. God's Son shines out with God's glory, and all that God's Son is and does marks him as God. He regulates the universe by the mighty power of his command. He is the one who died to cleanse us and clear our record of all sin, and then sat down in highest honor beside the great God of heaven" (Heb.1:2-3 LBP).

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb.2:9 KJV). See Lk.24:1-7; Acts 2:24-32; 3:15,26; Rom.6:8-10; Phil.2:6-8; 1.Pet.3:18; Rev.2:8; 1:4;17-18.

The Creator God who made all that exists for the Sovereign God voluntarily gave up his immortality to come to earth in human form, live a sinless life as an example for us to follow, and sacrifice his life in an agonizing death as payment for the sins of all humanity. He did this so that each of us could be saved from eternal death, which we earned as a result of our violation of his Father's perfect law. See 1.Cor.6:20; 7:23; Ezk.18:4,20; Rom.6:23.
Included among the many things that Jesus came to accomplish was the initiation of events that would lead to the final fulfillment of the promises and covenants that he had made as the Creator God:

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant [agreement], whom you delight in" (Mal.3:1 Para.). See also Mk.1:2.

Through the prophet Malachi, the Creator God foretold that he would send a messenger before his arrival on earth and that he himself would come as the messenger of the covenant (agreement). The phrase "messenger of the covenant" cannot be understood without having an understanding of the different covenants that God made with Adam and Eve, the Patriarchs, and ancient Israel; therefore, it is important to make a short review of these covenants.

The First Covenant

After God had questioned Adam and Eve concerning why they had hidden themselves from him and what they had done wrong, God said to the serpent:

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it [literally, 'he' the woman's seed] shall bruise [crush] your head, and you [the serpent] shall bruise his [Christ's] heel" (Gen.3:15 Para.).

The Hebrew word for seed is zera and is a collective noun that can be used either in the singular or the plural form. Understanding the context in which the word seed is used is the only way one can know if it is singular or plural. In Genesis 3:15, there is evidence that the word is used as singular and masculine, because it's modifying pronouns are he and his.

Here, we see that the first recorded covenant that the Creator God made with humanity contained a promise to destroy the serpent who had deceived them and a promise of salvation through the birth, life, and death of Christ—the woman's seed.

After God promised that he would send a savior who would become the supreme sacrifice in order to forgive and remove the sins of Adam and Eve and those of their descendants, he covered them with the skin of a sacrificial animal—symbolically covering their sin, as well as literally covering their naked bodies. This act shows that God had instituted a sacrificial system whereby people could have their sins atoned for in order for them to maintain a good relationship with him.
The promises made to Adam and Eve concerning the crushing of the serpent and the death of the woman's seed (Christ) are at the foundation of all of the agreements that God made with the Patriarchs, national Israel, the elect of God, and the rest of humanity for the forgiveness of sin and salvation from eternal death.

**The Promise to Abraham**

"And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed my voice" (Gen.22:18 Para.).

As we will see, this promise is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ who is the God of peace and the Son of the God of peace. How can God have a son? Jesus was not fathered by a descendant of Adam, he was fathered through the impregnation of a virgin by the spirit-power of God the Father who is also a God of peace (See Heb.13:20-21).

"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly..." (Rom.16:20 KJV).

Paul reveals to us that the seed of the woman is Jesus Christ—the God of Peace. It is Jesus Christ who crushes the head of the serpent and fulfills the promises given to Adam and Eve.

**The Agreement With National Israel**

After being freed from the bondage and slavery of Egypt, the Israelites camped at the foot of Mount Sinai where they made an agreement with God to do whatever he told them. In return for this obedience, God promised to give them tremendous physical and spiritual blessings that included eternal salvation.

Moses wrote this agreement in a book, read the agreement to the people, and the people again agreed to do whatever God required of them. Then, Moses sprinkled the book and the people with the blood of an animal that was sacrificed for the specific purpose of ratifying and sealing the agreement.

The blood that was sprinkled upon the people and the agreement were symbolic of the blood of Jesus Christ that would forgive their sins and ratify and seal the new agreement between God the Father, national Israel, and the rest of humanity. See Acts 20:28; Eph.1:5-7; Col.1:12-14, 20; Heb.10:19-22.

"O Lord God of Israel, there is no God like you in the heaven, nor in the earth; which keeps covenants, and shows mercy to your servants, that walk before you with all their hearts" (2.Chron.6:14 Para.).

"He [God] will ever be mindful of his covenant" (Psa.111:5).
Although national Israel broke their agreement with God, he had no intention of forgetting his unconditional promises to the Patriarchs and their descendants, among whom the Israelites are only one nation. Because of these prior commitments to the Patriarchs, especially the Patriarch Abraham, God will continue to work with the nation of Israel until his purpose for humanity is accomplished.

A New Agreement Promised

"Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new agreement with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the agreement that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them out of the land of Egypt; and that agreement they broke, although I was as a husband to them, says the Lord (Jer.31:31-32 Para.).

"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob [Israel]: For this is my covenant to them [Israel], when I shall take away their sins" (Rom.11:26-27 KJV). See Jn.4:42; 1.Tim.4:10; 1.Jn.4:14.

It is clear from the writings of the prophets and the things recorded in the New Testament that the first agreement with national Israel has been canceled. It is also clear that a new agreement with national Israel was initiated by Jesus Christ and will be formalized with them after his return to establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth. See Ezk.20:38; 34:12-13.

Jesus Established the New Agreement

In chapter 10 of Hebrews, we see the two primary reasons for the coming of the Messiah: the bringing of a perfect sacrifice and the establishment of a new and better agreement.

Hebrews 10:5-10 Paraphrased

"Wherefore, when he comes into the world, he says, Sacrifice and offering you do not want, but a body have you prepared for me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have had no pleasure" (vs.5-6).

God the Father is not interested in the killing of animals just for the sake of killing. Neither he nor Jesus Christ gain pleasure from the death of sacrificial animals. They would not have required animal sacrifices if they were not necessary for the atonement of people's sins and teaching the lesson that the penalty for the violation of God's law is death (Rom. 6:23):
"Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do your will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offerings for sin you do not want, neither had pleasure in them; which are offered by the law" (vs.7-8).

The problem with all humans is that by ourselves we do not have the ability to continually live in obedience to God’s basic laws of behavior. Therefore, the sacrificial system was necessary in order to put people back into right-standing with God so that they could have a harmonious relationship with him.

"Then he said, Lo, I come to do your will, O God. He takes away the first, that he may establish the second. By who’s will [i.e., the Father’s will] we are set apart and made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time" (vs.9-10 quoted from Psalm 40:6-8).

Verse 9 refers to the agreement that the Creator God had first made with the Patriarchs and national Israel concerning how to atone for the violation of God’s law. The Creator God came in the person of Jesus Christ to remove the first agreement and establish another that had far better terms and conditions along with a far better method for the atonement of sin.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST AND THE NEW AGREEMENT

During the Passover ceremony and just prior to his crucifixion, Jesus made some very profound statements concerning his impending death and the blood that would drain from his body. These statements were made in relation to his new testament, the remission of sins, and the new agreement with national Israel, the elect of the Father, and the rest of humanity:

"And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt.26:27-28 KJV). See also Eph.1:7.

"After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1.Cor.11:25 KJV).

"This cup is the new covenant [agreement] in my blood, that is being poured out for you" (Lk.22:20 Para.).

At this point, there are several important things that should be understood concerning the three scriptures above in order to help in understanding the five major points of the new agreement that Jesus established at his death:
1. The New Testament

"After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood..." (1.Cor.11:25 KJV). See also Matt.26:28.

Within the new agreement with national Israel is the new testament that contains the various benefits for those who have lived or will live during the different ages of salvation.

In order to bring the new agreement containing his new testament into force, Jesus had to fulfill the prophetic symbols concerning the Passover and the prophecies concerning the Messiah. He did this through his righteous life and his sacrificial death:

"In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living" (Heb.9:16-17 KJV).

2. The Remission of Sins

"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt.26:28 Para.).

The scriptures say that all have sinned and are under a death sentence waiting to be executed (Ezk.18:4,20; Rom.6:23). In order to escape execution, a person must have their sins forgiven and be justified (made innocent) before God the Father. Prior to the new agreement, the Creator God allowed the life of an animal to be substituted for the life of the violator in order to cover the violator's sins and temporarily hide them from his sight.

In order to form a new and better covenant (Heb.8:1-10), the Creator God became the man Jesus Christ and sacrificed his own life as a substitute for the life of sinners (Isa.43:11; 45:21).

It is through the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ and his intercessory authority with the Father that we can have our sins forgiven and forgotten (See Psa.103:8-13; Isa.1:18-19.

"And almost all things are cleansed by blood according to the law; and apart from shedding of blood no remission occurs" (Heb.9: 21-22 KJV).

Jesus Christ, the Creator God and Son of God the Father, holds the key to our salvation because he is our Savior (Isa.43:11; 45:21). It is of great importance for anyone who is seeking salvation to understand and believe who Jesus Christ was and is, and that he gave his sinless life to pay the penalty for the sins of humanity. It is only through his sacrifice and his intercessory authority with the Father that we can have our sins forgiven:
"John to the seven churches in Asia: Grace to you, and peace, from the One who is, and who was, and who is coming; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; Even from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us, and frees us from our sins by his blood" (Rev.1:4-5 Para.). See also Eph.1:7; 1.Pet.1:18-19; Rev.7:13-14.

3. The New Agreement
"This cup is the new covenant [agreement] in my blood, that is being poured out for you" (Lk.22:20 Para.).

The events surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ were the literal fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the cancellation of the first agreement with national Israel and the ratification of a new agreement with Israel and the rest of humanity.

"By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear" (Heb.8:13 NIV).

Ratified and Sealed With Blood
"The first agreement was not dedicated without blood. Moses spoke every command to all the people according to the law, and according to the law he took the blood of the calves and goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and he sprinkled both the scroll, and the people, Saying, This is the blood of the covenant that God has given to you as a charge" (Heb.9:18-20 KJV).

"To the general assembly the church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel" (Heb.12:23-24 KJV). See also Isa.52:15.

The sacrificial blood of dedication under the first agreement with ancient Israel was symbolic of the purifying nature of the blood of Jesus Christ. Because the holy spirit resides within the children of God, the purifying blood of Christ's sacrifice is applied to them before they become holy people dedicated to God's service.

A NEW AND BETTER AGREEMENT
While speaking of God's first agreement with national Israel, the writer to the Hebrews says that the ministry of Christ is more excellent than that of the priesthood who offered sacrifices that were only examples and shadows of what was to come from heaven. He says that Christ (the Creator God) has instituted a much better agreement than the first agreement (Heb.8:5):
"But now has he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better agreement, which was established upon better promises" (Heb.8:6 KJV).

Here, we are told that the new agreement is better than the old one, because it is based upon better promises (i.e., better terms, conditions, and benefits). As we will see, these promises are indeed far better than those in the first agreement with national Israel.

**FIVE MAJOR CHANGES**

There are many differences between the first and second agreements with national Israel; however, there are five major changes that make this agreement better than the first:

- A perfect sacrifice
- A perfect high priest
- The forgiveness of sin
- The law placed within God's children
- The holy spirit dwelling within God's children

1. **A Perfect Sacrifice**

"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb.10:1-4 KJV).

Here, we read that the sacrifices had to be given year after year, yet they could never save the people from their sins. Why? Because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. The reason for this is that an inferior animal cannot pay the penalty for a superior being's violation of the law, and a human life is superior to that of an animal. Humans were created inferior to the angels, but with the potential to become a superior being. Neither angels nor animals have the potential to become literal sons of God the Father, but humans do.

The inadequacy of the sacrifices is another reason for the first agreement being inferior to the new one. Animal sacrifice could only provide a temporary stay of execution for the violator of God's law. Under the sacrificial system before the advent of Messiah, the penalty for a violation of the law could only be temporarily set aside by the blood of a sacrificial animal. Therefore, there was a need for a perfect sacrifice and a new agreement.

Notice what the writer to the Hebrews says about the sacrificial blood of Christ being the ultimate and final sacrifice for the purging of physical and spiritual defilement (i.e., sin):
"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb.9:14-15 KJV).

"Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Heb.10:18 KJV).

"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb.10:12 KJV).

Because of Christ's righteous and sinless life, he could not be put to death for his own sin; therefore, he was the perfect sacrifice for the sins of others. And since he was the Creator of all things, his life was worth far more than anything he had created. Moreover, his blood, which contained his life, could be substituted for the life of a sinner.

The blood of Christ is not only the blood that atones for and purges the sins of a repentant sinner, but also the blood by which a new agreement is ratified and sealed with the nation of Israel and the rest of humanity.

2. A Perfect High Priest

Hebrews 7:11-16 KJV

"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (vs.11-12).

Under the first agreement with national Israel, the High Priest was to act as a bridge between God and his people. Because the High Priest himself was guilty of sin and under the death penalty, he was also in need of a perfect sacrifice and a perfect high priest to act as an intermediary between him and God:

"For he of whom these things are spoken pertains to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there arises another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" (vs.13-16).
Because of the imperfection of both the sacrifices and the High Priest of Israel, no human could pass beyond the Creator God and into the presence of God the Father. But why wasn't this possible? The reason is that the Father dwells in heaven, and any human who is allowed to come into his presence must be totally sinless, holy, and righteous. No human could qualify or had the authority to go before him before the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, because before the advent of Christ, all were sinners and under the death penalty for the violation of the Father's law. Therefore, a new spiritual priesthood was established after the Melchizedec order of priests. See Gen.14:18; Psa.110:4.

Hebrews 7:11-16 shows a change in the conditions of the agreement with Israel. This change allows the elect of God during the gospel age of salvation to go directly before God the Father without going to a physical priest and having him speak to God on their behalf, which was done under the first agreement with ancient Israel:

"Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, O God . . . He sets aside the first to establish the second. . . Day by day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God" (Heb.10:5-12 NIV).

Jesus Christ is now the High Priest who sits at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. And because of his sacrifice and the new agreement, a new and life-giving way to gain access to the very presence of God the Father has been opened up:

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; And having a high priest over the house of God" (Heb.10:19-21 KJV).

"But now has he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better agreement, which was established upon better promises" (Heb.8:6 KJV).

Our High Priest

Jesus Christ now holds an extremely important position that is vital to our salvation. This position is that of our High Priest. It is because he lives that he is able to be our High Priest and intercede on our behalf before the Father:

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb.4:14-15 KJV). See also Heb.2:14-18; 9:7-28.
Jesus Christ is our High Priest and Mediator, he understands our weaknesses as human beings. And because he has been human, he understands our proclivity to sin (Heb.2:14-18). Therefore, when we petition the Father, Christ intercedes on our behalf.

Jesus knows how weak the flesh is and he can explain to the Father who has never been human how difficult it is to dwell in this flesh. Then, the Father can also understand and have mercy on us and forgive our sins, because all of us sin, even after we are baptized. We still need forgiveness on an ongoing basis, so that we can always stand before the Father as righteous individuals.

When we go before God the Father in prayer, we are supposed to go in the name of Jesus and ask for all things in his name, which is the same as going and asking by his authority as our High Priest. Why is this necessary? It is necessary because Jesus alone has the authority to intercede on our behalf. See Acts 4:12; Heb.7:25.

Notice what is said about the intercessory power and authority of Jesus:

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them" (Heb.7:25 KJV).

"For there is one God [one Sovereign God], and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1.Tim.2:5 KJV).

Through his sacrifice, Jesus Christ is now the immortal high priest and the mediator of the new and better agreement built upon new and better promises from God the Father to his people.

3. The Forgiveness of Sin

"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant to them, when I shall take away their sins" (Rom.11:26-27 KJV).

Until Jesus Christ came and offered himself as a perfect sacrifice, all of Israel and the rest of humanity were without hope of eternal life. All faced the cessation of existence at death, because there was no adequate sacrifice to pay for the sins of humanity. Therefore, if the Messiah had not come or if he had come and failed in his mission to offer himself as the perfect sacrifice, all humanity would be doomed because there would be no way to be saved from eternal death.

"And every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb.10:11-12 KJV).

"If the plan that leads to doom was glorious, much more glorious is the plan that makes men right with God" (2.Cor.3:9 LB̲P̲).
The reason that the first agreement with the nation of Israel could lead to death, as well as life referred to a problem with the people and not the agreement. Therefore, God corrected this problem with a new agreement.

The first agreement failed because of the inherent weakness of the human spirit that resists the law and will of God. The new agreement with national Israel offers Jesus Christ, the Righteous, as its atoning power. It also offers the transformation of the human spirit through the power of the Father's holy spirit.

Although the law revealed what sin was, and the sacrificial system showed how to have sin temporarily set aside, the flesh was weak, and the people found it difficult to keep the law. They knew what sin was but they were not able to keep the law, so they had no hope of being saved from eternal death, because the penalty for breaking the law is death (Rom.6:23).

**Righteousness and the Law**

The law of God also defines righteous behavior. If a person keeps the law and practices it, they are counted as being a righteous person:

"And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us" (Deut.6:25 Para.).

When speaking of the benefits of the new agreement over the old, the apostle James says that if a person who is seeking to be justified before God by keeping the law breaks any one of these laws, that person is guilty of breaking them all:

"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of breaking the whole law" (Jms.2:10 Para.).

Humans can forgive but they have great difficulty forgetting an offense against them. However, the Father's forgiveness is total; he will not only totally forgive our sins but also totally forget them:

"He has not dealt with us according to our sins; or punished us according to our lawlessness. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, this is how far he has removed our transgressions from us" (Psa.103:10-12 Para.).

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawlessness I will not remember" (Heb.8:12 Para.).

A person forgiven under the terms and conditions of the new agreement will never have to worry about being punished for past violations of God's law; their sins are gone as if these sins never existed.
The Blood of Christ

As stated earlier, the law of God requires that a violator of the law must be put to death (Ezk.18:4,20; Rom.6:23). However, under all of the old agreements, the Creator God allowed the life of an animal to be substituted for the life of the violator in order to temporarily set sins aside.

In order to form a new and better agreement (Heb.8:1-10) and provide a way through which violations of the law could be totally forgiven, the Creator God came to earth as a human and sacrificed his own life as a substitute for the lives of those who violate his Father's law (See Isa.43:11; 45:21.

It is only through Jesus Christ's perfect sacrifice and intercessory authority with the Father that all who avail themselves of the new agreement can have their sins forgiven and forgotten by the Father (See Psa.103:8-13; Isa.1:18-19).

The writer to the Hebrews said that the sacrifice of Christ is the ultimate and final sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin:

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb.9:14-15 KJV).

As human beings, we cannot begin to comprehend or understand the enormous sacrifice the Creator made when he became a human. The price he paid was worth more than the sum of all that exists, because he was and is the Creator of all that exists for the Sovereign God.

The perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ removes the sins of those under the new agreement and because of Christ's perfect sacrifice, the Father forgets those sins forever, and his children stand before him as innocent and righteous individuals.

Once Christ made the perfect sacrifice, there was no longer a need for any other sacrifice to ever be made again for the atonement of spiritual/moral sin, which was done under previous agreements with the Patriarchs and national Israel.

4. The Law Placed Within

"But this shall be the agreement that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer.31:33 Para.).
"For this is the covenant [agreement] that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:" (Heb.8:10 KJV).

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Heb.10:16-18 KJV).

Because people before the second agreement did not have the law of God as a part of their mental and spiritual make-up, they found it very difficult to obey and worship God properly. Because of this innate problem with people, God decided that he would form a new agreement and include a provision to change what was wrong with people by placing his law in their minds and spirits.

Because God has only one set of laws that show people how to behave toward each other and how they should worship him, it seems logical that the law being spoken of in Jeremiah, chapter 31 and Hebrews, chapters 8 and 10 is the same law that he gave to the nation of Israel as a part of his first agreement with them. This is the same law that is written in the hearts and minds of people under the new agreement. In other words, he will write these laws in their very beings, thereby making the law a part of the thinking process of individuals he calls to salvation.

5. The Holy Spirit

After Christ came, anyone who accepts the terms and conditions of the new agreement has no excuse for not being able to successfully obtain salvation, because under the new agreement, each person has the tools that will guarantee success if they are used properly.

The most important tool that God gives people to help them in their effort to please him and to obtain salvation is the holy spirit.

Understanding the importance of this tool, King David asked God not to take his holy spirit from him. David did this because he knew that this was the tool that God gave him to help him obtain salvation and secure eternal and immortal life:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit in me. Cast me not away from your presence; and take not your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with your free spirit" (Psa.51:10-12 KJV).

Prior to and during the first agreement with national Israel, various attributes and functions of the holy spirit were given to a few people, but with limitations placed on the kinds of attributes, functions, qualities, and power that were given. The scriptures also show that many of these individuals who had this spirit-power within them will be in the first resurrection.
The holy spirit that David had is the same tool that is given to those called during the gospel age of salvation. In order to help them secure eternal life, this tool will also be given to those who will live under the new agreement with national Israel (See Lk.11:9-13; Rom.8:26-27; Eph.4:21-32; 6:17-18).

Under the new agreement with national Israel, there is now a better method by which a person can secure salvation and eternal life. This new method will succeed where the old one failed because it has a perfect sacrifice, a perfect High Priest, the forgiveness of sin, the law placed within our minds and spirits, and the indwelling of the holy spirit.

**AN EVERLASTING AGREEMENT**

The new agreement with national Israel, the elect of God, and the rest of humanity concerning how to obtain salvation will never fade away; it will continue to exist after the return of Jesus Christ until God's plan for the salvation of humanity is accomplished.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant [agreement], Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb.13:20-21 KJV). See Matt.26:27-28; Rom.16:20.

After the return of Jesus Christ, all people will have an opportunity to receive the spirit of God; moreover, they will have spiritual strength available to successfully obey God (Jer.50:19-20).

Today, prior to Christ's return, the New Agreement brings with it an opportunity to be among the first of humanity to be made a part of the Family of God as a son of God the Father like Jesus Christ is. It offers an eternal inheritance of the earth and all that exists in this physical dimension of time and space and a spiritual inheritance so fantastic that it cannot even be comprehended by the human mind. All of this and more is offered by God the Father to those he calls and extends the new agreement to in this age of human existence.

**SUMMARY**

Jesus Christ was the Creator God before his human birth, he lived a righteous life in perfect obedience to his Father's law, and he unselfishly substituted his life for our lives in payment for our sin; therefore, there is now a new and better agreement between God the Father and humanity.

The good news message concerning Jesus Christ and the New Agreement ensures that humanity is now guaranteed an opportunity for salvation with a much simpler and easier method to maintain a harmonious relationship with God the Father and obtain eternal life in the Family and Kingdom of God.

By B.L. Cocherell

185
The reality of death is one of the most terrifying realities of this human existence. Moreover, no matter what we do or how hard we try to preserve our life, the inevitable will happen; we will die. But will we remain dead? Is there life after death? In the following passage, Job answers this question:

“If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come [Job knew he would be resurrected]. You shall call, and I will answer you: you will have a desire to the work of your hands” (Job 14:14-15 KJV).

God the Father grants salvation to those who believe the good news message about Jesus Christ. But what exactly is salvation; why do humans need it; and how can it be acquired?

The saving from eternal death and being given eternal life is defined in the Bible as salvation. The prophets, Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the early church all proclaimed the good news message of salvation as the only hope of life after death.

In the introduction of his letter to the elect at Rome, the apostle Paul talked about the Gospel of Salvation through Jesus Christ:

“So, for my part, I am ready to preach the good news to you that are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the good news of Christ: for it is the power of God the Father to salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God the Father revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom.1:15-17 Para.).

GOD WANTS ALL TO BE SAVED

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2.Pet.3:9 KJV).

The desire to save humanity was so great and so important to the God family, that Jesus Christ, the Creator God, came to earth and became the perfect sacrifice in order to remove our death sentence.

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1.Tim.2:4 KJV).

“For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost” (Lk.19:10 KJV). See also Matt.18:11.
The Choice is Ours

Whether or not we die for eternity or live again forever after our physical death is entirely our choice, but God the Father and Jesus Christ earnestly desire that all people be saved from eternal death and become spirit-beings in the God family. However, the choice of life or death has been left up to each person individually. See Deut.30:19; 15-19; Rev.22:14-15.

Paul explains that, because of Adam's violation of God's instructions, the death sentence through the law was imposed on all of humanity:

"Because of this, even as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, so also death passed to all men, inasmuch as all sinned; for sin was in the world until the law, but sin is not charged where there is no law. But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even on those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's transgression. . ." (Rom.5:12-14 Para.).

THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN

God the Father and Jesus Christ consider the violation of God's law a very serious matter. The violation of God's law at the time of Noah caused the destruction of the earth along with all of humanity except for eight individuals:

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him in his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy whom I have created from off the face of the earth; . . . for I am sorry that I made them" (Gen.6:5-7 Para.).

The Father and Jesus Christ are righteous beings who inhabit a dimension of existence that they have designed as a perfect environment that provides conditions for perfect peace, harmony, and happiness. Because these are the conditions of their existence, they will not tolerate, for very long, evil that brings the opposite of peace, harmony, and happiness anywhere in their vast kingdom. Herein lies the seriousness of evil behavior; it is repugnant to the Father and Jesus Christ and it is in opposition to their very existence.

Their solution to maintaining the purity of their dominion and their lifestyle in order that they may accomplish their goals is the removal of all who exhibit evil behavior and will not conform to their righteous way of life. Because humans are not immortal beings, they have only two options: 1) Conform to God's perfect law and lifestyle and live eternally as happy productive individuals; 2) Continue to violate the law of God and be terminated as a life-form through death by fire.
Death Sentence

"Do you not know that the unjust ones will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be led astray, idolaters, nor fornicators, nor adulteress, nor abusers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous ones, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor plunderers shall inherit the Kingdom of God" (1.Cor.6:9-10 Para.). See also Gal.5:19-21; Eph.5:3-5; Jms.5:19-20; 2.Pet.2:1-22.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Rom.3:23 KJV).

"For the wages of sin is death. . ." (Rom.6:23 KJV).

Unless there is a way to escape the righteous judgment of the law there is no hope of life after death and all are doomed to die by fire:

"He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev.21:7-8 Para.).

A WAY OF ESCAPE

"But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.6:23 Para.).

Because God the Father and Jesus Christ knew that humanity would eventually come under the penalty of the law, their plan for the salvation of humanity included a method by which people may escape the death sentence.

Humanity was created with the ability to reason and weigh alternate courses of physical and mental action. In other words, humans were created with the ability to choose to do as they please, whether good or evil. Before God created humanity, he knew that they might choose evil over good and that after choosing evil and seeing the results of such behavior, some would want to change and establish a positive relationship with him. Therefore, long before creating human beings, God formulated a sacrificial system in order to give humanity a way to be placed back into a harmonious relationship with him.
The Sacrifice

"Then Abel brought the first lamb born to one of his sheep, killed it, and gave the best parts of it as an offering. The Lord was pleased with Abel and his offering, but he rejected Cain and his offering. Cain became furious, and he scowled in anger. Then the Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry? Why that scowl on your face? If you had done the right thing, you would be smiling; but because you have done evil, sin is crouching at your door. It wants to rule you, but you must overcome it. Then Cain said to his brother Abel, Let's go out in the fields. When they were out in the fields, Cain turned on his brother and killed him" (Gen.4:4-8 GNB).

God told Cain that if he had done the right thing, he would be smiling. But what was it that Cain should have done?:

"We must not be like Cain; he belonged to the Evil One and murdered his own brother Abel. Why did Cain murder him? Because the things he himself did were wrong, and the things his brother did were right" (1.Jn.3:11-12 GNB).

Here is what the writer to the Hebrews says about what Cain did wrong and what Abel did right:

"It was by faith that Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain. Through his faith he won God's approval as a righteous man, because God himself approved of his gifts. Because of this act of faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead" (Heb.11:4 GNB).

Cain failed to show love and respect for God by not offering an appropriate sacrifice. But, through a more excellent sacrifice Abel obtained the witness that showed he was a righteous individual (i.e., in right-standing with God).

Why was Abel's sacrifice more excellent than Cain's? And how did the act of offering the correct sacrifice cause Abel to continue to speak to us?

THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD

Without the shedding of blood there can be no atonement for sin; unless a life is sacrificed to pay the penalty for violating the law, sin can neither be set aside nor forgiven:

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it for you upon the altar to make an atonement for your lives: for it is the blood that makes an atonement for one's life" (Lev.17:11 Para.).

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb.9:22 KJV).
Cain was unwilling to diligently follow God's instructions, which made him a sinner before God. However, Abel was willing to obey God and therefore was righteous in God's eyes. Cain would have been smiling if he had given the proper sacrifice (Gen.4:7).

Abel's sacrifice was more excellent than Cain's because Abel offered a firstling of his flock. Abel knew that someday the Creator God would come to earth and offer himself as a perfect sacrifice and through this perfect sacrifice he would have his sins taken away forever. Abel offered the proper sacrifice, which was symbolic of Christ's sacrifice. His sins were then covered and he was put back into a harmonious relationship with God. Through his faith in this sacrifice (a type of Christ), Abel still speaks to us.

Prior to Christ, when someone violated God's law, their fellowship with him was interrupted and their access to him was barred. In order to deal with this situation, God designed the priesthood and the sacrificial system. The priest functioned as a mediator and bridge-builder between people and God by means of the sacrificial system. By offering a correct sacrifice, the breach of the law was repaired and fellowship with God was restored.

The Ancient Israelites

In the agreement that God made with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai, he promised that, if they would keep his law (Deut.5:29-33; 30:15-20), they would be righteous and sinless before him. However, as we have already shown, it was impossible to maintain a perfect relationship with God before the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is very important to understand how those who lived prior to Christ maintained a good relationship with their Creator, because it is a good relationship with God the Father that ensures salvation under the terms and conditions of the new agreement.

SALVATION THROUGH JUSTIFICATION

A major part of the good news message that Jesus Christ brought concerning salvation has to do with the new method by which a person can establish and maintain a harmonious relationship with God the Father.

There are many scriptures that speak of the necessity to be justified before God in order to obtain salvation. But, what does being justified mean? Because being justified is necessary in order to obtain salvation, it is vital to understand exactly what justification is and how to obtain it.
The Word Justify

The English word *justify*, as it is used in the Old Testament, is translated from a Hebrew word that means *to render just or innocent, free, justify, or to be righteous*. The words *justification* and *righteousness* connote being made free from sin and being placed in right-standing with God.

This aspect of the gospel message in clearer when it is understood that the words *justification* and *righteousness*, as they are used in the New Testament, are derived from the same Greek word and are used interchangeably.

Both the Hebrew and the Greek words for *justification* and *righteousness* are used to convey the same basic meaning of being made right with God and being sinless before him.

God is Our Salvation

"Look to me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa.45:22 KJV).

"Lead me in your truth, and teach me: for you are the God of my salvation; on you do I wait all the day" (Psa.25:5 KJV).

In order to obtain salvation, we must have our sins forgiven and our death sentence removed. Because it is impossible for us to forgive our own sins or remove our own death sentence, it must be done for us. The only being who can forgive sins and remove the death sentence is God the Father because he is the Sovereign of all that exists. Therefore, it is he who must declare us sinless and worthy of saving. The question is not, "Will he save us." Rather, it is "How does he save us"?

The Righteousness to be Revealed:

"So says the Lord, Keep justice and do righteousness: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed" (Isa.56:1 Para.).

Jesus the Righteous

Jesus was the only truly righteous human who has ever lived. He perfectly kept all the commandments, precepts, and principles of God for his entire life without ever sinning. He did not deserve to die, but he chose to die for us so that we could have our sins forgiven and live (see 1.Pet.2:21-24):

"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? No: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom.3:27-28 KJV).
Is it because of a person's efforts to obey God's law that they are declared righteous before God? Absolutely not! All that is required to become righteous is that a person truly believe the things concerning Jesus and the message that he brought from the Father, because Jesus met all the righteous demands of the law for us:

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

When a person has had their sins forgiven, their death penalty removed, and declared righteous through faith in Jesus Christ, does the law cease to apply to that person? Does the sacrifice of Christ eliminate that person's requirement to practice the law? The answer is an emphatic NO! After one is declared righteous before the Father and guiltless under the law, the law still exists in its totality. What has happened is that the penalty for the violation of the law has been satisfied by the death of Christ for the one who has faith in Christ.

The law has been shown to be valid through the death of Christ. After one is justified, the law is made a part of one's very being and must be obeyed. The law is still valid. Violation of the law will still bring eternal death if repentance is not forthcoming and the blood of Christ is not applied to wipe away the sin and its penalty. The elect of God establish the law; in that, they show its validity through their acceptance of and faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as their salvation from the penalty for their violation of the law of God. See Rom.6:15-16.

A careful study of the Bible reveals how to become righteous and be saved from eternal death. The righteousness Isaiah foretold was the righteousness of the life and sacrifice of Christ. It is through belief in the perfect sacrifice of Christ and his righteousness that a person may obtain righteousness and salvation.

As we have read, righteousness is defined as the obeying of God's law. What is the righteousness that Isaiah foretold would be revealed (Isa.56:1)? The answer to this question is found in the writings of Paul:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For in it is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom.1:16-17 KJV).

Romans 3:20-26 KJV

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;" (vs.20-21).

Paul said that a person cannot be justified by their efforts to keep the law, because God has revealed a method to become righteous apart from the deeds of the law.
"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ to all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:"
(vs.22-24).

Under the New Covenant, the way to become innocent of any wrongdoing and to be justified is through faith in the redemptive power of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ:

"Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus" (vs.25-26).

It is through the righteousness of Jesus Christ that a person may be declared righteous before God the Father. It is because Jesus Christ sacrificed his life blood that we can have our sins forgiven, our death sentence removed, and be made innocent before the Father.

JESUS, THE ONLY WAY TO SALVATION

The Bible tells us that the only way to obtain salvation is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Creator, Redeemer, and Savior. Without belief in Jesus Christ, no one can be saved from eternal death.

"I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no savior" (Isa.43:11 KJV).

"Thus says the Lord, your redeemer, and he that formed you from the womb, I am the Lord that makes all things…" (Isa.44:24 KJV).

"I the Lord am your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob" (Isa.60:16 KJV). See also Isa.45:21; Hos.14:4.

"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost [i.e., humanity]" (Matt.18:11 KJV).

"For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. . ." (Lk.9:56 KJV).

"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned [condemned]" (Mk.16:16 KJV).

The apostle Paul said that Jesus Christ holds the key to our salvation:

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1.Tim.1:15 KJV).
The apostle Peter said that our salvation comes through Christ:

"Be it known to you all, 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, even by him does this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:10-12 KJV).

Jesus Christ holds the key to our salvation because he is our Savior. It is through his sacrifice and intercessory authority with the Father that we can have our sins forgiven. It is through his sacrifice that all of humanity past, present, and future may obtain salvation:

"For God [God the Father] has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1.Thes.5:9 KJV).

Jesus Christ was not only sent to pay the penalty for our sins but also to save us from eternal death and show us how to obtain eternal life:

"Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me" (Jn.14:6 KJV).

"This parable spoke Jesus to them: but they understood not what things they were which he spoke to them. Then said Jesus to them again, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep" (Jn.10:6-11 KJV). See Jn.6:39-40; 11:25-26; Rom.1:16-17.

Note:

Please read John 14 and 15 before reading the rest of this chapter, because these two chapters contain very important information about how to obtain salvation.

SALVATION IS A GIFT FROM THE FATHER

God the Father is expanding his family (Jn.1:12; 1.Jn.3:1-2, 2.Cor. 6:1; Heb.2:10) and his intent is to share all he has throughout eternity with beings just like himself (1.Cor.2:9). To accomplish this, he has set in motion a plan through which he will give eternal life within his Family and Kingdom to all who will accept his way of life.

Salvation cannot be earned, purchased, or otherwise obtained by our own power or efforts. The power to save a person from eternal death and impart eternal life and immortality is God the Father's alone (1.Sam.2:6), and this he will freely do through Jesus Christ for those who meet his terms and conditions:
"For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph.2:8-9 Para.).

JESUS THE GIVER OF LIFE

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give to them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (Jn.10:27-28 KJV).

"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that sees the Son, and believes on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn.6:40 KJV).

The apostle Paul also spoke of the hope of life after death and a resurrection from the dead:

"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.6:22-23 KJV).

Paul understood that the material things of this life are worthless and that the real prize to be sought in life is the knowledge of how to obtain eternal life and immortality:

"Yes doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. And be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead" (Phil.3:8-11 KJV).

JESUS CHRIST IS THE HOPE OF THE DEAD

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (Jn.3:16-17 KJV). See Mk.16:16; 1.Jn.4:9-10; Rom.8:7-18.

After Christ's death and resurrection, the apostles taught the hope of the dead through the sacrifice of Jesus and a resurrection:

"And as they spoke to the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Saddees, came upon them. Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold [i.e., jail] to the next day: for it was now evening" (Acts 4:1-3 KJV).
"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1.Cor.15:20-22 KJV).

"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that does not believe shall be condemned" (Mk.16:16 Para.).

"For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1.Thes.5:9 KJV).

SUMMARY

Prior to the coming of Jesus, all of humanity were awaiting the death sentence to be carried out as punishment for the violation of God's law. But now we may have our sins forgiven and be made totally innocent before the Father through the sacrifice of Christ.

Because Jesus Christ offered his life as the final and supreme sacrifice for the sins of mankind, there is no longer a need for animal sacrifices to be performed for justification; however, there is still a need for the forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ:

"But God commends his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom.5:8-10 KJV).

Escape The Death Sentence

All people need the Father's intervention in order to live again after physical death, because all will eventually die a physical death. Furthermore, unless there is forgiveness of one's violation of the Father's physical and spiritual law, one must die the eternal death as the penalty for breaking his law. Therefore, there is no hope of eternal life unless it comes from the One who has the authority and the power to remove the death penalty.

The good news from the Father is that he has both the authority and the power to remove one's death sentence. He has the authority because he is the Sovereign of all that exists and he has the power (i.e., the means) through which forgiveness may be accomplished in order to satisfy the righteous demands of the law.
The Means Of Forgiveness

The extremely good news is that forgiveness of sin can be accomplished by going directly to God the Father through the authority of Jesus Christ. All we have to do is ask to be forgiven. The Father will then forgive and forget the sin because of the supreme sacrifice of his Son. This is the way God has chosen to give us salvation from eternal death. For those who accept the call of God during the gospel age of salvation and follow his way of life, the reward is eternal life, immortality, and tremendous joy and happiness forever in the Father's family and kingdom.

God the Father wants everyone to repent of sin and obtain salvation. He has set before humanity the choice of life and death and each person must eventually choose which they desire (Deut.30:15-20):

"In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory" (Eph.1:11-12 NIV). See Rom.8:24; Gal.3:1-8;1.Cor.9:18; 2.Cor.9:13; 10:14; Phil.1:27

Now that you have this knowledge, may God give you the wisdom and strength to act upon it in a positive manner.

To those who are being called to salvation during this age, the apostle Peter was inspired to give the following instruction:

"Repent, and be baptized...and you shall receive the gift of the holy spirit" (Acts 2:38 KJV).

By B.L. Cocherell
The message from God the Father through Jesus to humanity is about the fantastic future in store for humanity when God's government is brought to earth by his Son. Most of what people hear about the gospel is focused solely on Jesus Christ, and as a result, millions do not believe what Christ taught. They only believe certain things about him because they do not understand the message that he brought about salvation and the Kingdom of God.

Mankind in general has been greatly deceived, they simply do not believe what the biblical record teaches about how to live forever:

"Look to me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa.45:22 KJV).

"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that sees the Son, and believes on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn.6:40 KJV).

**BECOME IMMORTAL THROUGH REPENTANCE, BAPTISM AND CONVERSION**

**To Become an Immortal**

God the Father offers much more than eternal life to those he calls to salvation in this age. The angels have eternal life and are sustained by God's life-giving power, yet they can be destroyed if they disobey him. The life God offers to the elect during this gospel age of salvation is immortal life, which can never be destroyed.

The quality of life promised by the Father is comparable to that which he himself has. God is a spirit-being who inherently possesses the highest form of life: immortality on the divine plane of existence. Immortal life springs forth from itself and is not dependent on any other source to sustain it, because it is self-sustaining:

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (1.Cor.15:51-54 NIV). See also Rom.2:7; 2.Tim.1:9-10; 1.Pet.4:6; Rev.20:6.
It is abundantly clear from studying the Bible that God the Father intends to share immortality with those he calls to repentance, baptism, and conversion prior to the first resurrection. It is the acquisition of immortality that allows a person to pass beyond this physical existence into the Family of God as a son of God.

Although immortality represents the highest reward that is granted for faithfulness to God, there are many more. The reward for being righteous is not to float around heaven playing harp music for eternity. God the Father and Jesus Christ have something far more spectacular in store for those who are found worthy to take part in the first resurrection.

The following list contains some of these rewards:

- Becoming an immortal spirit-being
- Becoming a son of God
- Becoming a joint-heir with Christ
- Becoming a co-ruler with Christ
- Becoming a King and a Priest
- Inheriting the Kingdom of God
- Inheriting all things

These are only a few of the awesome rewards that are promised to those the Father calls to salvation through his message of the good news.

An Awesome Opportunity

The magnitude of the opportunities and rewards that God the Father offers to those called to salvation through repentance, baptism, and conversion during this age are almost beyond the ability of human comprehension. What God offers can be obtained by those who are willing to repent and become obedient to his way of life:

"But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him. But God has revealed them to us by his spirit: for his spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" (1.Cor.2:9-10 KJV).

HOW TO OBTAIN SALVATION

It is one thing to understand what salvation is; however, obtaining salvation is an entirely different matter. Obtaining salvation is a process that involves the following seven steps:

1. Being called to salvation by God the Father
2. Proving that God does exist and that the Bible is his written word put to print
3. Believing in Jesus Christ and his perfect sacrifice
4. Repenting of violating God's law and way of life
5. Asking for forgiveness of sin and being baptized
6. Receiving God's spirit that transforms a person into a son of God
7. Growing in the grace and knowledge of God's truth, while overcoming the temptations of the flesh

THE CALL TO SALVATION

The call to salvation during this age (just before the return of Christ) is a truly unique and awesome opportunity. This opportunity is not pure chance, but has been carefully planned and directed by God the Father for a very special purpose:

"For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39 KJV). See also Rom.8:29-30, 1.Cor.1:9,23-28; Eph.1:5-9; 1.Thes. 5:23-24; 2.Tim.1:8-9; Heb.9:14-15.

Only God the Father has the prerogative to call a person to salvation, and he gives everyone he calls the opportunity to either accept or reject this call. There can be no neutral response to the call of God, either a person becomes a son of God or they do not!

Jesus himself confirms that the call to salvation is only made by God the Father:

"No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn.6:44 KJV).

"And he said, Therefore said I to you, that no man can come to me, except it were given to him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (Jn.6:65-66 KJV).

Paul also adds to the understanding of the uniqueness of the Father's call:

"Or despise you the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance" (Rom.2:4 KJV).

"Then do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner. But suffer hardship with the gospel, according to the power of God, he having saved us and having called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace given to us in Jesus Christ before eternal times" (2.Tim.1:8-9 Para.).

Paul was inspired to record that it is not because of a person's effort that the Father extends the call to sonship; it is because God the Father has a purpose for the one called. Also, notice that the Father made the decision to offer this opportunity to these specific individuals before they were born.
It is God the Father who opens a person's conscious mind and begins to direct the thought process toward the physical and spiritual knowledge that will bring a person into an awareness of God and his Son and the opportunity that is being offered:

A Special Calling

The scriptures clearly show that God is not calling everyone to salvation at this time in history. Although many are called to salvation, only a comparative few of those called (past and present) are chosen to participate in the first resurrection. Those called prior to Christ's return have been selected for a special purpose before and after his return. On the surface, this may seem unfair but it is not. The God family has a plan for all humanity and is being extremely fair and logical in the execution of this plan.

If God the Father and Jesus Christ have been trying to save all of humanity from the time of Adam to this present age, they have failed, and the scriptures concerning the requirements for salvation cannot be reconciled with the facts of history or the rest of the Bible. This is not a very popular teaching, nonetheless it is true. Today is not the only day of salvation. It is 'a' day of salvation. God was not in the past, nor is he in this age, calling all of humanity to salvation. It is only the day of salvation for those called in this age for a special purpose.

God the Father personally calls each person to salvation and then leads them to repentance. This process may take years or a very short time and it requires that enough knowledge and understanding of God's truth is given to a person to enable them to understand the following:

- They are a sinner and under a death sentence
- They have an opportunity to have their sins forgiven
- They have been offered eternal life as a child of God

Called and Chosen

*Jesus said: "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen" (Matt.20:16; 22:14 KJV).*

Those who are chosen to have their minds opened and are called to repentance, baptism, and conversion during this age have not been called by chance, each person has been called for a special reason.

One reason a person is called to salvation during this age is to fulfill a purpose or function within the body of Christ (the church). See 1.Cor. 12:18,27-28; 2.Cor.5:20.

Another reason God is calling people in this age is to prepare a people for future responsibilities in his kingdom as kings and priests who will rule the earth and teach God's truth. Those called to the first resurrection are to be role-models, leaders, and teachers for those who have never had an opportunity for salvation. See Rev.2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6.
"Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God [God the Father] raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:10-12 KJV).

In order to obtain salvation and become a son of God, we must have our sins forgiven and our death sentence removed. And as stated earlier, the only being who can forgive sins and remove the death sentence is God the Father, because he is the Sovereign of all that exists and has the power to remove and forgive sin through the sacrificial blood of his Son Jesus Christ. See Rom.1:15-16.

BELIEF IN THE FATHER AND IN HIS SON

John 5:24-29 Paraphrased

"Truly, I say to you, He that hears my words, and believes in him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death to life" (v24).

Jesus said that one must have belief in the Father in order to have eternal life. One of the primary reasons that Jesus came was to reveal the Father. Therefore, a person must believe the things that Jesus said about the Father being the Sovereign God of all that exists and Jesus being his Son that was sent from heaven to proclaim his message to humanity.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (v25).

Jesus said to those of his day and ours that, if those who are dead in their sins (those awaiting eternal death by fire if they do not repent) will truly listen to the message that will free them from their death sentence and anyone who truly understands the message acts upon it in a positive manner, they will escape eternal death and live forever.

"For as the Father has life within himself: so he has given the Son to have life within himself; And has given him the authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" (vs.26-27).

The scriptures say that Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven and administers all things for him in heaven and earth. Verses 26 and 27 tell us that the Father has also given Jesus Christ authority over life and death—Jesus holds the key to eternal life.

"Do not be astonished at this: for the hour is coming, that all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall rise, they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation" (vs.28-29).
The good news for all humanity is that each individual will have an opportunity for salvation. If a person will truly believe in the Father and Jesus Christ and accept the opportunity that is offered, that person will be rewarded with eternal life. But if one rejects the opportunity that is offered, that person will be executed in the Lake of Fire and cease to exist for all eternity.

Many people believe that Jesus Christ existed. Many also acknowledge that he is the Savior of humanity and many accept him as their personal Savior; however, there are very few who believe to the point that they are willing to follow his teachings and examples as a way of life. To those of shallow belief he says, “And why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do the things that I say?” (Lk.6:46 Para.).

History clearly shows that Jesus was neither a myth nor a legend. He did exist; he was a real human being. However, there is more to gaining salvation than just believing that Christ existed. Even Satan and the demons believe in God (Jms.2:19).

Believing is more than just an acknowledgment that Jesus did exist and was the Son of God. Belief in Jesus Christ is manifested in one's life through a deep commitment to God that is evidenced by the righteous fruit of that belief.

REPENTANCE, BAPTISM, AND CONVERSION

Prior to the beginning of Christ's ministry, John the Baptist preached that people should repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins:

"As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, which shall prepare your way before you. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mk.1:2-4 KJV). See also Matt.3:1-7; Mk.1:14-15; Lk.3:3.

The Redemptive Process

Any who desire to become a son of God must do so through the redemptive process contained in the good news message concerning Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, and the receiving of the holy spirit.

On the first festival of Pentecost, after the death and resurrection of Christ, the apostle Peter preached the gospel message to a great assembly of people:

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the holy spirit" (Acts 2:37-38 KJV).
There can be little doubt that some of those whom Peter addressed understood that they had participated in the murder of their Messiah, Savior, and Redeemer just as the prophesies had foretold. In great fear and shame, they ask Peter, "What shall we do?"

There are four very important things to learn from these verses:

1. Peter began to fulfill the great commission to proclaim the good news message of the redemption and salvation of humanity through Jesus Christ.
2. Through the preaching of the gospel by Peter, God the Father revealed the prophetic significance of the Passover that had just been observed and the events that were happening at that moment in time.
3. Peter told them the process whereby they could have their sins forgiven and be transformed into sons of God:
   - Repent
   - Be baptized
   - Receive the holy spirit
4. On this festival day, through the proclaiming of the good news of Jesus Christ, the new process by which a person could be saved and obtain eternal life was formally announced.

**REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION**

"Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19 KJV).

What Peter was inspired to preach about repentance on the festival of Pentecost was nothing new, because God has always required repentance of sin in order for a person to be in harmony with him. What was new was the process through which one could establish and maintain a harmonious relationship with the Father for all eternity.

Many feel that to repent means to feel sorry for being a sinner and ask God to forgive one's sins. Others feel repentance is just a matter of going through the ritual of baptism. Still, others feel that it is a matter of the heart and they believe that all one must do is give one's heart to the Lord. However, to truly repent, be baptized, and be converted comprises far more than just being sorry about the fact that you have sinned, feeling remorseful, saying a few words, and participating in a ritual.

True repentance is extremely important because it is the first step in the process of receiving salvation. If a person is not truly repentant, they will not receive God's spirit and will not be saved.
The Word Repent

The English word *repent*, used in Acts 2:38, comes from the Greek word *metanoia* and is a very complex word because it deals with the mind and its thought processes. In the context of Acts 2:38, the word *metanoia* clearly refers to changing from that which is evil, to that which is good.

The repentance that Peter speaks of is not the *metanoia ametameletos* (repentance) that Paul speaks of in 2.Cor.7:8 KJV, which means regret or sorrow. Although a person should regret violating God's law and way of life, to truly repent means to do much more than just feel sorry.

True repentance requires a total change in a person's life, a change that leads away from all aspects of evil, and leads toward that which is of God. True repentance also requires a total commitment and an unconditional surrender to the rule and authority of God.

Repent of What?

If a person does not first know and understand exactly of what to repent, how can they accomplish repentance? Obviously they cannot. Repentance involves knowledge and understanding. A person must know of what to repent and understand why they should repent.

Repent of Sin

God inspired the prophet Isaiah to encourage the people of Israel to repent of their sins so that he could bless them:

"Wash yourselves, purify yourselves, put away the evil of your doings from my sight, stop doing evil. Learn to do good; seek justice; reprove the oppressor; judge the orphan; strive for the widow. Come and let us reason together, says the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing to hear, you shall eat the good of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken" (Isa.1:16-20 Para.).

James speaks very bluntly to Israel about the cause of their current problems:

"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded" (Jms.4:8 KJV). Please read verses 1 through 11 for background information concerning this admonition from James. See also Matt.9:10-13; Jn.8:1-11.
WHAT IS SIN?

Sin is the violation of the physical and spiritual law of God. Sin is any deviation from God's righteous laws, precepts, and principles that define how a person should live their life and worship God. It is this deviation from the law of God for which a person must ask forgiveness. See Rom.14:22-23; Jms.4:17; 1.Jn.3:4; 1.Jn.5:17.

A person cannot be a true child of God by the biblical definition unless they are in obedience to God's ten commandments and other laws, precepts, and principles. A person cannot pick and choose which of God's laws they will or will not obey; all must be obeyed:

"For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom.2:13 KJV). See also Psa.119:172; 2.Jn.5-6.

Keep the Commandments

Just as the question of eternal life is on the minds of people today, it was on the minds of people during Jesus' day:

"And, behold, one came and said to him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said to him, Why call you me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if you will enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt.19:16-17 KJV).

Why did Jesus tell this young man to keep the Commandments? The answer is simple. The young man had a choice; he could either obey God's law and gain eternal life, or he could disobey and pay the penalty for disobedience (Rom.6:23):

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev.22:12-14 KJV).

A Change of Heart

For a person to truly repent there must be an intense desire and effort to have a change of heart. This change of heart is a change in one's attitudes, state of mind, priorities, and lifestyle; a change that will lead away from the things that are against God and toward the things that are of God.

True repentance is much more than an emotional feeling of sorrow or remorse; a person who is truly repentant must not only regret having sinned but also no longer make a practice of sinning. One who is seeking to please God should strive with all their being to love and obey God. True repentance requires a change of heart, mind, attitude, and physical actions.
Lip Service

Just saying one is sorry for violating God's laws and asking for forgiveness of one's sins is not enough. For a person to truly repent, there must be a change in one's life. True repentance is not just a fleeting emotional experience; true repentance requires a real change in a person's attitude, thought process, and lifestyle. Yes, words are important; however, words must be backed up with action:

"Hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying, This people draws near to Me with their mouth, and with their lips honor me; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the ordinances of men" (Matt.15:7-9 Para.).

See Isa.29:13; Ezk.33:31-32.

The overall plan of God for salvation has not changed from the foundation of the world. Part of this plan is that humans must come into conformity with God's laws of worship and behavior. A fundamental teaching of both the Old and the New Testaments is that one must put forth a serious, heartfelt effort to change from disobedience to obedience before being granted salvation.

**A CHANGE IN LIFESTYLE**

"Therefore also now, says the Lord, Turn you even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repents him of the evil" (Joel 2:12-13 KJV).

Accepting Jesus Christ involves a change of heart, mind, attitude, and lifestyle; it involves a change in what we are and it involves a change in the direction of our lives.

"For all those things has my hand made, and all those things have been, says the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word" (Isa.66:2 KJV).

Very few in today's world tremble at God's word. In fact, most people today ridicule God and his word. Many also say that his law has been done away and they simply do not believe the good news message that Jesus brought.

"The Lord is near to them that are of a broken heart; and saves those who have a contrite spirit" (Psa.34:18 Para.).

True repentance and conversion is an event of monumental proportions. It is not just a philosophical change and it is not only a change in attitude. It is also a change in what a person 'is,' physically and spiritually.
"And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said to them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Lk.14:25-26 KJV). See Matt. 10:34-38.

Jesus says in order to follow him, a person must be willing to put him first above everything and everyone else. Nothing else can have a higher priority than obedience to God's way of life. The phrase "hate not" is a powerful Greek expression meaning, "to love less by comparison." Any person who considers anyone or anything, including their own physical life, more important than their commitment to God, cannot be a son of God.

"And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (Lk.14:27 NIV).

What Jesus said in Luke 14:26-27, is not some ethereal or philosophical analogy. It is an integral part of the good news message. This message contains information that Jesus brought about himself, his Father, and the way to secure salvation and enter the Family and Kingdom of God:

"He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Lk.9:59-62 NIV).

Once a person understands the good news message of the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ, God the Father requires a total commitment. There can be no turning back once a person commits to becoming a part of the God family. See Heb.2:1-3; 6:4-6; 8:10:26-29; 2.Pet.2:20-21; Ezk.18:24,26.

**BAPTISM**

"Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the holy spirit" (Acts 2:38 KJV).

The baptismal ceremony with its various steps is the process by which the Father makes and ratifies an eternal agreement between an individual and himself. Upon completion of the final ritual of the baptismal ceremony, a person becomes a son of God the Father and a brother of Jesus Christ in the holy and divine Family of God.

Baptism is not only a symbolic representation of our death, burial, and resurrection to a new life in Christ, it is in fact a physical and spiritual transformation. Notice how Paul uses the baptismal ceremony in his exhortation to the elect at Rome to live a sinless life before God and man:
"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom.6:1-2 KJV).

Here, Paul reminds the elect at Rome of their baptism and their sinless condition before God:

"Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Rom.6:3 KJV).

As a person is submerged in the baptismal waters, their old life symbolically dies and is buried. The baptismal water symbolizes a grave and truly would become a grave if the person being baptized were held under the water for very long:

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism to death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:" (Rom.6:4-5 KJV).

When a person is raised out of the water, they are symbolically and literally raised to a new life. The repentant person is now pure and sinless, no longer under the penalty of death for violating God's law, because their spirit and body have been purged of all sin and defilement:

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him" (vs.6-9).

Dead to Sin

"For in that he died, he died to sin once: but in that he lives, he lives to God. Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.6:10-11 KJV). See also Rom.7:6; Heb.9:13-14.

As Christ is dead to sin, so are those who have God's spirit dwelling within them. They are free from the penalty of sin and can look forward to being immortal spirit-beings that can never die:

"For in baptism you see how your old, evil nature died with him and was buried with him; and then you came up out of death with him into a new life because you trusted the Word of the mighty God who raised Christ from the dead. You were dead in sins, and your sinful desires were not yet cut away. Then he gave you a share in the very life of Christ, for he forgave all your sins, and blotted out the charges proved against you, the list of his commandments which you had not obeyed. He took this list of sins and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross" (Col.2:12-14 LBP). See also Col.3:1-4.
Sins Washed Away

Baptism is much more than a symbol of a physical death and a resurrection. During this ceremony, the person being baptized is washed clean and purged of all sin by the power of God's spirit through the sacrifice of Christ. At that moment, the baptized person, devoid of sin, becomes righteous before God. Under the first agreement with national Israel, washing with water as an act of purification was a part of the sacrificial system. The good news is that now, through the sacrificial blood of Jesus and through the baptismal ceremony, we are washed clean of all physical and spiritual defilement and forgiven of our sins that would otherwise prevent us from coming before the Father.

The writer to the Hebrews, Paul, and John all spoke about the washing away of sin with pure water, the blood of Jesus, and the cleansing power of God's spirit:

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb.10:22 KJV).

"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, Not by works in righteousness which we had done, but according to his mercy he has saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the holy spirit, which he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ, our Savior" (Tit.3:4-6 Para.).

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev.1:5 KJV). See also Rom.5:9; Eph.2:13; Heb.13:12; 1.Jn.1:1-7; 3:5-6; Rev.5:9; 7:13-14.

RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

Receiving the holy spirit is the most important event that can ever happen to any human, because it is at this point in time that a person is transformed into a son of God and their body literally becomes a temple of the living God:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the holy spirit" (Acts 2:38 Para.).

"And we are his witnesses of these things, and also the holy spirit, whom God gives to those obeying him" (Acts 5:32 Para.). See also Acts 8:9-24; Gal.3:1-2.

THE CONTINUING PROCESS

In order to secure salvation, a person must truly believe the gospel message concerning God the Father and his son Jesus Christ; then, they must have their sins forgiven, their death sentence removed, and have the holy spirit and the laws of God placed within them.
After the above things are accomplished by God the Father through the sacrificial blood of Christ, it is very important to understand that the process of salvation continues until one's physical death. This is because it takes physical effort, as well as a righteous attitude to maintain a harmonious relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

In order to worship and please the Father as we should, one must study God's word, communicate with the Father, fellowship with those of like mind, if possible, and make and follow through on righteous decisions. It takes both faith and works in order to truly believe in and follow the way of God. It is through good works that we grow toward spiritual maturity and show the Father our faith in him and his Son.

Some falsely believe that all one has to do to obtain salvation is to have an intellectual belief in Christ, ask for repentance and receive the holy spirit. This may sound good on the surface; however, it is not the kind of belief required for salvation. If one does no more than these things and does not follow through with the instructions given in the word of God for the manifestation of true belief in their life, that person does not truly believe. True belief is more than an intellectual exercise, true belief requires both faith and works.

FAITH AND WORKS

"Dear brothers, what's the use of saying that you have faith and are Christians if you aren't proving it by helping others? Will that kind of faith save anyone? If you have a friend who is in need of food and clothing, and you say to him, "Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat hearty," and then don't give him clothes or food, what good does that do? So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. You must also do good to prove that you have it. Faith that doesn't show itself by good works is no faith at all—it is dead and useless" (Jms.2:14-17 LBP).

James said that it is not enough to just have faith (belief). He said this because faith that does not show itself through good works is no faith at all; it is dead and useless:

"But someone may well argue, "You say the way to God is by faith alone, plus nothing; well, I say that good works are important too, for without good works you can't prove whether you have faith or not; but anyone can see that I have faith by the way I act." Are there still some among you who hold that "only believing" is enough? Believing in one God? Well, remember that the devils believe this too—so strongly that they tremble in terror! Fool! When will you ever learn that "believing" is useless without doing what God wants you to? Faith that does not result in good deeds is not real faith" (Jms.2:18-20 LBP). The King James Version renders verse 20 as: "Faith without works is dead."
"Don't you remember that even our father Abraham was declared good because of what he did, when he was willing to obey God, even if it meant offering his son Isaac to die on the altar?" (Jms.2:21 LBP).

Abraham was willing to trust (have faith) in God no matter what God instructed him to do. Therefore, because of his physical works, his faith was complete. Thus, without the manifestation of works, faith is not complete:

"You see, he [Abraham] was trusting God so much that he was willing to do whatever God told him to; his faith was made complete by what he did, by his actions, his good deeds" (Jms.2:22 LBP).

A part of Abraham's faith was the knowledge that God had the power to fulfill his promises through Isaac; therefore, Abraham's physical works, based on knowledge, resulted in a faith that was complete:

"And so it happened just as the scriptures say, that Abraham trusted God, and the Lord declared him good in God's sight, and he was even called "the friend of God." So you see, a man is saved by what he does, as well as by what he believes" (Jms.2:23-24 LBP).

Doing and Believing

James concludes that one is made righteous by what is done, as well as by what is believed. It is very important to understand what James says about faith and physical works. It takes physical effort, as well as a right attitude to fulfill God's laws, precepts, and principles:

"For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified (or declared righteous)" (Rom.2:13 KJV).

Righteousness is imputed (given as a gift) to us because of our belief in God the Father and Jesus Christ, his sacrificial blood and all that he did for us through his life and sacrifice.

SUMMARY

In his letters to the elect of God, the apostle John wrote the following concerning the awesome opportunity that is offered to those whom the Father calls to salvation during the gospel age:

"Beloved, now we are the sons of God the Father, although it is not yet revealed what we shall be like: we do know, that when he appears, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1.Jn.3:2 Para.).

The elect of God are destined to be born into the Father's family and kingdom as his immortal spirit sons. Almost no one today understands the profound nature of the teaching that the Father sent his Son to proclaim so many centuries ago as a part of the good news message.
The extremely good news is that today, during the gospel age of salvation, if anyone truly believes the Father's good news message without reservation and accepts and performs the method that he has designed in order for humanity to be saved from eternal death, that person can be saved and enter into the Family and Kingdom of God as an immortal being.

By B.L. Cocherell
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Centuries ago Jesus Christ came teaching things that literally changed the course of human history. A major part of his teaching concerned the coming Kingdom of God to rule the earth.

It is indisputable that the future establishment of the government of God upon the earth is a clear teaching of both the Old and New Testaments. Herein lies an enigma that raises many questions in the mind of anyone seeking the truth.

Following the acknowledgment of the greatness of the Sovereign God (God the Father) in Matthew 13:9-13, the Kingdom of God was given the most prominent place in Jesus' model prayer. At least thirty of Jesus' parables are devoted to teaching about the Kingdom of God, its establishment on earth, and its relationship to the spiritual and physical realms of existence:

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt.6:10 KJV). See also Matt.9:35.

For centuries, most professing Christians have been repeating these words and praying for the Kingdom of God to come, without having the slightest understanding of the awesome implications of what they are asking. It is truly remarkable that Jesus spoke so much about the Kingdom of God, yet those who professed to teach his message over the centuries have said so little about this world altering doctrine. An earthly kingdom under heavenly control! Divine intervention in the affairs of men! What a strange and unfamiliar ring these words have.

A NEW GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM

A number of years ago a documentary was presented on national television in the United States about the past, present, and future of world governments as seen through the eyes of a well-known educator, scientist, and author who stated that the governments of today just do not work in today's world with today's people. He said that the rules that our ancestors made for their time are impractical and would not work in today's world and because our current systems are wrong for us, we need a new system.

Was this man correct in his view of the world's governmental systems? Will a new system of government save humanity from all its ills and its march toward oblivion?
Centuries of Struggle

Throughout the centuries, humans have endeavored to fulfill their desire for life, liberty, and happiness with very little success.

Statesmen have endeavored to bring about peace and good will among nations. Government heads have striven for political independence and economic and social benefits for their nations. Champions of civil liberty have fought for individual needs and rights.

Scientists and inventors have produced time and labor-saving devices and products. Medical researchers and practitioners have waged a continual battle against disease and sought ways of improving human health and longevity.

Noble men and women of every walk of life have sought to elevate the position of the human race; however, their lofty aspirations to improve the human condition and solve its monumental problems have amounted to very little.

It is true that recent centuries have witnessed a gradual rise in the economic living standards of some people. But has anything constructive been achieved in attacking the basic cause of man's problems? Has the greed, hatred, selfishness, or other loathsome characteristics of human behavior been erased, or even lessened? In the thousands of years of human history, has the overall quality of life for the entire human race substantially improved? Sadly, the answer to these questions is no.

No one can deny that all the basic evils that have plagued humanity in the past still continue to plague the human race today.

Doomed to Failure

One thing that the voice of history tells us loudly and clearly is that humans cannot govern themselves fairly and equitably. All governmental systems, regardless of whether they are cruel and restrictive or have high ideals of personal freedom, are all devised and administered by humans and are doomed to failure.

History is replete with examples of governmental systems, some good and some bad. All of these past governmental systems have had one thing in common—they have failed. They did not endure; they did not pass the test of time. Nation after nation has come and gone and none have endured for very long. But why not?

The reason is quite simple when we look into the hearts and minds of people. By nature, people are the opposite of selfless. We are basically selfish and some are more selfish than others. Most seek only to satisfy their own desires and priorities. This human trait of selfishness is one of the major reasons why governments designed and administered by humans will never survive the test of time.
People can devise or be given the best of governmental constitutions, laws, rights, privileges, and freedoms, but if they do not maintain a high standard of ethical, moral and spiritual character and respect the rights and freedoms of others, the system will fail.

Governments do not fail because of the governmental system, they fail because of the human factor, a factor that is so capricious and destructive that no physical force has been able to tame it.

RELIGION—PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Many feel that religion or a certain philosophy of life holds the key to the elimination of humanity's problems. Although this can be true, the past and present religions and philosophies, as practiced by the majority of humanity do not provide the right solutions. If they did provide the right solutions, the world would not be in the horrible condition it is in today.

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit" (Matt.7:15-17 KJV).

Look at the fruit (the results) of this world's popular religions, philosophies, and political systems today: crime, hunger, poverty, squalor, religious bigotry, racism, hatred, broken-homes, permissiveness, promiscuity, sexual perversion, war, and disease.

This is the pathetic situation that the majority of the world's population lives in today; this situation is the result of religions and philosophies that influence the way people think and behave. If this were not true, then the results of past and present popular religions and philosophies would be far different—their fruit would be good, not evil.

Because all religions, philosophies and political/governmental systems have failed and are failing to remove the ills of humanity and to bring about a better world, is humanity doomed to destruction by its own hand? The logical and realistic answer is YES!—unless there exists a force greater than humanity that has the power to stop the inevitable.

A One World Government

For many years sociologists, economists, military leaders, behavioral and political scientists and myriads of scholars who deal with human behavior have said that the only thing that will save humanity from certain annihilation is the formation and implementation of a one world government.

Others are of the opinion that a one world government would restrict and totally take away any personal freedom that individuals now have within their respective governments. This seems to be a valid concern when we consider the lessons of history.
Regardless of people's beliefs and opinions, the answer to the problems of humanity is truly a one world government that will rule with fairness and justice for all. But from where will such a perfect government with selfless civil servants and leaders come? The only place from which such a government can come is the Sovereign God (God the Father).

There is a one world government coming in the near future. The Father's government is a government of peace where unfairness and inequity will not be condoned nor tolerated. It is a government not of the people nor by the people, but for the people. This government will not be ruled by human beings; instead, it will be ruled by humans that have been made into spirit-beings. Yes, that's right, spirit-beings: beings that are perfect in judgment and rulership ability will govern the earth under the direction and authority of Jesus Christ.

Believe it or not, at this very moment there are individuals who have been and are being trained to be benevolent rulers of a one world government. These individuals have been and are being trained in religion, law, human and marital relations, agriculture, economics, criminology, education, and many other professions that will benefit humanity. These individuals have been specifically chosen by God the Father and have been required to put aside many of their own personal pursuits in order to prepare to take over the reigns of world government.

This coming one world government will provide the correct religion, philosophy, and governmental system that, when correctly practiced, will eliminate all human ills and bring people all the right and good benefits that they need and want.

**A PERFECT GOVERNMENT**

Carefully note what is to follow, because it is one of the best kept secrets of the ancient world concerning a people and a governmental system.

Centuries ago, a tiny nation of slaves were given the gift of a perfect government; a government unparalleled in world history; a governmental system in which there were no inequities; a government of perfect freedoms, laws, and judgments.

Ancient Israel had its beginnings as a nation in slavery. Upon being set free from their slavery by the Creator of humanity, they were given a perfect governmental system that was tailored to provide abundant happiness and prosperity: a perfect government from a perfect being given to a nation of free people.

**The Human Factor**

If the governmental system given to the Israelites was so perfect, why is it not in existence today? It would exist today except for one gigantic problem: the human factor. Human beings are imperfect and governments in today's world are administered by humans.
When the ancient people of Israel obeyed the perfect laws of this perfect government, they were protected by the Creator God and received great blessings. On the other hand, when the people broke the laws of this perfect government, they received abundant curses. See Deut.30:15-19.

An overview of the laws and rules of this perfect government still exists and can be found easily in the most published and read book in the world, the Holy Bible. The problem is that hardly anyone truly believes or understands the words recorded in this book and very few of those who profess to live their lives by this book actually do.

THE KINGDOM MESSAGE

The good news about the Kingdom of God has been almost totally misunderstood and misrepresented since it was first proclaimed by Jesus Christ and the early church. This situation exists because most who study the Bible have been deceived into thinking that the Kingdom of God is not a real tangible kingdom, but rather a philosophical way of thinking. However, nothing could be farther from the truth. The Kingdom of God is a real tangible kingdom with the Sovereign Father as its supreme ruler and Jesus Christ as its chief administrator.

One of the primary reasons that the Creator God left his heavenly throne and became Jesus Christ was to proclaim the good news about the government of God that he will bring to rule over all the earth.

John the Baptist

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea. And saying, Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matt.3:1-3 KJV).

The primary message of John the Baptist was a warning to repent because the Kingdom of God was coming. After John the Baptist was put in prison, Jesus Christ (The Creator God) who represented his Father's Kingdom came with the following message:

"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached. . ." (Lk.16:16 KJV).

Jesus Proclaimed the Kingdom

"Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe the gospel" (Mk.1:14-15 Para.).

Notice that Jesus' message was the same as John's; both proclaimed the coming Kingdom of God.
One of the very first things that Jesus taught after he began his ministry concerned the Kingdom of God, because he was the representative of that government and its future head of state:

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matt.4:23 KJV). See also Matt.4:12-17; 9:35; Lk.8:1.

"And he said to them, I must preach the Kingdom of God to other cities also: for this reason I am sent" (Lk.4:43 Para.).

Others Also Proclaimed the Kingdom

"Then he called his twelve disciples together... and he sent them to preach the Kingdom of God..." (Lk.9:1-2 KJV).

Jesus taught the twelve disciples the good news about his Father's kingdom; then he taught seventy others and sent them all to preach the same message:

"After these things, Jesus appointed seventy others also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, where he would go. And he said to them... heal the sick that are there, and say to them, The Kingdom of God is come near to you" (Lk.10:1,2,9 KJV).

Notice that Jesus told these men to say that the kingdom was close to them. In a real sense, the Kingdom of God did come near these people. Those who were sent out to proclaim the kingdom were its ambassadors. Those who were sent were also given authority to use the power of the Sovereign Ruler of the Kingdom of God. They healed the sick as an act of compassion and to get people's attention in order to show some of the benefits of being under the protection and care of the government of God.

WHAT IS A KINGDOM?

A kingdom basically consists of four things: a King or Supreme Sovereign who rules over a territory having defined boundaries within which are citizens or subjects who are subordinate to the Sovereign's laws and governmental structure.

The Kingdom of God belongs to God the Father who is its Supreme Sovereign and has given the administration of his Kingdom to Jesus Christ who now rules this kingdom from heaven. See 1.Cor.15:25-28; Heb.10:10; Rev.1:1-6.
Is the Kingdom of God Within?

Because of a conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees, a popular belief has evolved, which teaches that the Kingdom of God is only a philosophical ideal. Many today believe that the Kingdom of God is a philosophy, a way of thinking, a concept of perfection to be striven for, but it is not a tangible reality:

"And when the Pharisees demanded that Jesus tell them when the Kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said: The Kingdom of God does not come with an outward show: Neither shall people say, Here it is! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you" (Lk.17:20-21 KJV).

If the Kingdom of God was within these Pharisees, humanity is truly without hope, because these are the same men that Jesus called hypocrites and a generation of vipers. It is evident from the many times that he condemned these men and the other religious leaders of the Jews that the righteous Kingdom of God was not within the hearts and minds of these men.

The English word within that is used in many translations of Luke 17:21 is translated from the Greek word entos, which in this context, means among or in the midst of. The Kingdom of God was among them because Jesus, the ambassador of the Kingdom of God, was among them; it was definitely not within the Jewish leaders of Christ's time.

Christ came as a representative of his Father's kingdom to explain what the kingdom was and how to enter into it. He also came to proclaim that the kingdom would be established over all the earth's nations at some time in the future. Because Jesus did not come as a conquering king as these men were expecting, they did not understand what Jesus taught in regard to the kingdom coming without observation.

The term Kingdom of God pertains to the spiritual, as well as the physical planes of existence, because the Kingdom of God is a sovereign kingdom, which has absolute power and authority in the spiritual and the physical realms of existence.

Those who are called to participate in the first resurrection and have accepted this call, are already a part of the Kingdom of God; that is, they have been transformed into sons of God having the spirit of God and the laws of God as a part of their being. Although the Kingdom of God is not yet physically present on earth, the elect of God who are alive today are subject to both its physical and spiritual laws.

"For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the holy spirit" (Rom.14:17 Para.).

"Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col.1:13 KJV).
After Christ's Death

After Christ's death and resurrection, those called to participate in the Family and the Kingdom of God continued to proclaim the good news of its coming as instructed by Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul

"And he went into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the Kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8 KJV).

"I have kept back nothing that was profitable to you. . . Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. . . And now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no more" (Acts 20:20-21,25 KJV).

"And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in to him, Preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 28:30-31 KJV).

The Evangelist Philip

"When they believed Philip's preaching concerning things of the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12 Para.).

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

During the time that national Israel existed under the rule of the Creator God's worship system and civil governmental system, it was clearly understood how this religious and civil system functioned and how it was to be administered. However, relatively few today understand the inner-workings of this ancient religious and civil system. Almost no one even begins to understand the inner-workings of the spiritual Kingdom of God that is in heaven.

In order to understand the good news about the Kingdom of God, we should review what is known about the physical and the spiritual Kingdom of God after Jesus Christ returns and establishes it on earth.

National Israel

Many puzzle over the prophecies concerning the future of national Israel and wonder if such prophecies are simply analogies or if they have some other meaning that has not yet been discovered. In the near future, the world will see that prophecies concerning national Israel are literal and will have a dramatic impact on all of humanity just before and after Jesus Christ's return to earth.
The Creator God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, because he had a job for them to do and a purpose for their existence as a nation. These people were called to be a nation of priests who would represent God and his plan for the salvation of humanity to the world as they practiced his way of life to perfection.

After Christ's return, the descendants of Israel will be brought to the land of their inheritance. There, they will be formed into a world power in order to fulfill their national destiny.

During this future age, the nation of Israel will again assume its responsibility of being an example of God's way of life to the world. The city of Jerusalem will again become the focal point of the worship of God. From Jerusalem, Jesus Christ will administer his Father's religion and government to Israel and other nations while offering the opportunity of salvation to all humanity. See Deut.30:1-6; Mic.4:1-7; Joel 3:16-21; Zech.8:1-3.

The Physical Kingdom

Throughout the Bible, there are many prophecies that clearly show the new agreement with national Israel and the rest of humanity being administered through the Kingdom of God on earth. These prophecies also show that this kingdom has a civil governmental system combined with a sacrificial system of worship with commanded observances and festivals similar to those of the first agreement with national Israel.

There are also many scriptures showing that after this kingdom is established, all nations will eventually come under its civil and religious system.

Scriptural Facts

1. After Christ returns, the earth will still be inhabited by physical people who will eventually come under the rule of the government of God.

2. The prophecies of Ezekiel and Zechariah clearly show that a temple worship system with a priesthood and animal sacrifices will exist during Christ's rule on earth. See Ezk.chps.40-46; Zech.14:16-20.

3. During Christ's rule, the temple system will be officiated over by the male descendants of Zadok, the priest, and sacrifices will be performed similarly to the way they were performed under the first agreement with ancient Israel.

4. The prophecies of Ezekiel show that, during Jesus Christ's reign, the same relationship between the commanded observances, the holy convocations, and the sacrificial system will exist. However, there will be significant changes to fit the people, times, and circumstances of the new agreement with national Israel and the rest of humanity.
The Bible gives few details regarding the temple worship system, the sacrifices, the offerings, and the governmental system after the return of Christ. However, it is not silent when it comes to documenting the fact that all of the laws, precepts, and principles that God has ordained for the purpose of worshiping him and regulating human behavior will be in effect during Christ's rule.

CHRIST TO RULE THE EARTH

Notice what the prophets Isaiah and Micah were inspired to write concerning the physical Kingdom of God on earth and Jesus Christ as its head of state:

Isaiah

"For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; and the government is upon his shoulder... that the government may be increased and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it through justice and through righteousness from henceforth even for ever" (Isa.9:6-7, Jewish Publication Society). See also Lk.1:30-33.

Micah

"But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain [government] of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains [governments], and it shall be exalted above the hills [nations]; and people shall flow to it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain [Zion] of the Lord, and to the house [temple] of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us from his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Mic.4:1-3 KJV). See also Psa.72:8-11.

Although Jesus Christ was born to be the King over all the earth, he obviously did not establish his rule during his lifetime. He only taught about his Father's kingdom and foretold that it would surely come. When Jesus Christ does return with all power and glory, he will establish his Father's kingdom. Only then will people begin to experience true peace, prosperity, joy, and happiness.

A BRIGHT AND WONDERFUL FUTURE

The Scriptures are replete with references about the coming Kingdom of God and clearly show that those who live under its benevolent rule will enjoy great blessings.
"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called . . . The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end . . ." (Isa.9:6-7 KJV).

"In his [Christ's] days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth " (Psa.72:7-8 KJV).

"The Lord will give strength to his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (Psa.29:11 KJV). See Lk.2:14.

Personal Safety

"Therefore I will save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey: . . . And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods" (Ezk.34:22-25 KJV).

"And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people. . . . And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [government], says the Lord" (Isa.65:21-25 KJV).

"But every one shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken" (Mic.4:4 Para.).

Abundant Food

"Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the grape crusher him that sows the seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine" (Am.9:13 Para.).

Abundant Health

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. . . . And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa.35:5,6,10 KJV).
No More War

"And he [Jesus Christ] shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords [weapons] into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Mic.4:3 Para.). See Hag.2:7.

Perfect Justice

Those who live under the judicial system of God's government will receive the benefit of fair and just resolution to any civil or interpersonal problems that may arise:

"I will restore your judges as at the first . . ." (Isa.1:26 KJV).

"Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isa.32:16-18 KJV).

When God organized the nation of Israel, he gave them a judicial system that was to relieve oppression and execute perfect justice in a fair and equitable manner (Jdg.3:9-11). A similar system will be established and administered by the government of God upon the return of Christ.

A Perfect Religion and Government

"But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the government of the house of the Lord shall be established above all great governments, and it shall be exalted above all lesser governments; and people shall come to it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the government of the Lord, and the house of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Mic.4:1-2 Para.).

"Let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein. Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the Lord, because he comes to judge the earth" (1.Chron.16:32-33 KJV).

"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise . . . Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for he comes to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity" (Psa.98:4,8-9 KJV). See also Acts 17:30-31; 1.Cor.6:2.
The end result of the Kingdom of God on earth will be universal peace, freedom for all, and the elimination of all the ills that plague humanity today. Under the government of God, the hopes and dreams of people for a happy and productive life can be realized. Obedience to the perfect precepts and principles of God's perfect law is the key to lasting happiness and eternal life for all who are willing to comply with them.

THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM

The spiritual Kingdom of God is the Sovereign God's government in heaven (the Kingdom of Heaven) and it belongs to and is under his authority. It is through this government comprised of spirit-beings that God governs the physical and spiritual realms of existence.

In order to begin to understand the spiritual aspects of the Kingdom of God that will rule the earth, it is necessary to have an understanding of the rewards and responsibilities of the elect of God after the return of Jesus Christ. It is those who participate in the first resurrection who will have an important role in the administration of the spiritual Kingdom of God that will rule the earth in the near future.

Many hold the popular belief that heaven is the reward of the saved. To even question this time-honored teaching is thought of as blasphemy to those who believe in it. However, what is found in the Bible about the rewards and responsibilities of the elect of God is far more exciting than the nebulous idea of going off to heaven without a clue as to what one would do there for eternity.

REWARDS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Believe it or not, the reward for being righteous is not to float aimlessly around heaven playing harp music for eternity. There is something far more spectacular in store for those who are accounted worthy of salvation prior to the return of Christ:

"But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him" (1.Cor.2:9 KJV).

Some of the rewards for righteousness are as follows:

- Becoming a king and a priest (Rev.1:4-6)
- Becoming a son of God (Jn.1:12; Rom.8:14)
- Becoming a joint-heir with Christ (Rom.8:16-18)
- Being in the first resurrection (Rev.20:6)
- Being a co-ruler with Christ (Rev.2:26-27)
- Having eternal life (Lk.18:29-30)
- Having one's name in the Book of Life (Phil.4:3)
- Having access to New Jerusalem (Rev.22:14)
- Inheriting all things including the earth (Rev.21:7; Psa.37:9)
- Inheriting the Kingdom of God (Matt.25:31-34)
This list contains only a few of the awesome rewards and responsibilities that have been promised to the elect of God. The magnitude of the rewards for those who participate in the first resurrection is so far beyond our imagination and dreams that it defies human comprehension.

**IMMORTALITY**

The quality of life that is promised to the righteous in the Family and Kingdom of God is comparable to that which the Father and Jesus Christ have. God the Father and Jesus Christ are spirit-beings who inherently possesses the highest form of life: immortality on the divine plane of existence. This kind of life springs forth from itself; it is not dependent upon any other source to sustain it because it is self-sustaining:

"Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1.Cor.15:51-54 KJV). See also 2.Tim.1:9-10; Rev.20:6.

"To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life:" (Rom.2:7 KJV).

It is abundantly clear that God intends to share immortality (the highest reward that is granted for faithfulness to God) with those he has called to the first resurrection.

"Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature . . ." (2.Pet.1:4 KJV).

**JOINT-HEIR WITH CHRIST**

"The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom.8:16-18 KJV).

"But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore you are no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal.4:4-7 KJV). It is through Christ—through his righteous sacrifice—that we are heirs.
INHERIT ALL THINGS

"In many times and in many ways of old, God spoke to the fathers by the prophets; in these last days He spoke to us in the Son, by whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He indeed made the ages" (Heb.1:1-2 Para.).

"He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev.21:7 KJV).

What an amazing reward! Not only are those called to the First resurrection righteous heirs but also joint-heirs with Jesus, and they will share in the inheritance of all that exists, now and forever.

INHERIT THE EARTH

Part of the promise that God gave to Abraham was that he and his descendants would inherit the earth and would be a blessing to all nations forever. See Gen.12:2-3, 13, 15-16, 15:7, 18:18; 26:1-5; Rom.4:13.

"And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal.3:29 KJV).

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt.5:5 KJV).

"For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth" (Psa.37:9 KJV). See also vs.11, 22, 29, 34; ch.72:8.

The scriptures clearly show that when the righteous become spirit-beings, they will inherit the earth. But, what possible use could they have for a physical earth? It seems that the earth would be of no use to them unless God is not finished with his plan for humanity after Christ's return. Therein lies one of the purposes of the earth as an inheritance; it will be inhabited by both spiritual and physical beings as God's plan for the salvation of humanity continues to unfold.

INHERITORS OF THE KINGDOM

"But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever" (Dan.7:18 KJV).

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt.5:3 KJV). See also Matt.25:34.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt.5:10 KJV).

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk.12:32 KJV).

Jesus said that those of a humble spirit will obtain the ultimate joy of sharing the rewards of the Kingdom of God.
Three undeniable facts of the Bible are that there is a Kingdom of Heaven (government of God), the Kingdom of Heaven is the property of God the Father, and the righteous are to inherit this kingdom:

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King [Jesus] say to them on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father [God the Father], inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:"
(Matt.25:31-34 KJV). See also Jms.2:5.

When Jesus spoke the parable of the shepherd dividing his sheep from the goats, he revealed that the Kingdom of God had been prepared as an inheritance for the righteous even before mankind was created.

CO-RULERSHIP WITH CHRIST

Jesus foretold the time when the elect of God would be co-rulers with him in his Father's kingdom:

"And he that overcomes, and keeps my works to the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron . . . " (Rev.2:26-27 KJV).

Jesus is coming to set up the government of God, which will rule the earth and all nations with the help of the elect of God who have qualified to rule with him:

"To him that overcomes will I [Jesus] grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev.3:21 Para.).

All who participate in the first resurrection will administer the Kingdom of God over the nations of the earth under the authority of Jesus Christ.

TO BECOME A KING AND A PRIEST

"John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be to you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And has made us kings and priests to God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev.1:4-6 KJV).
John spoke in the future tense, when he said that the elect are kings and priests. This indicates that, as far as the Father is concerned, this reward and responsibility has already been given. But why are the elect to be kings and priests? They are to be kings and priests as a part of their reward and responsibility to help in the salvation of the rest of humanity.

"And [Jesus] has made us to our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev.5:10 KJV). See also 1 Thes.3:13; Rev.3:21; 20:4-6.

BORN INTO THE KINGDOM

It is important to review a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in order to begin to understand the awesome implications of what it means to be given an opportunity to become a son of God during the gospel age of salvation.

John 3:1-10 Paraphrased

"Nicodemus, who was a Pharisees and a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus at night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you have come as a teacher from God. For no one is able to do the miracles that you do, except God be with him" (vs.1-2).

Like most Jews of his day, Nicodemus was looking for the Messiah to come to deliver the Jews from Roman rule and restore Israel as a nation under the government of God. However, he did not expect what Jesus said in regard to being a participant in the Kingdom of God.

"Jesus said to him, Truly, truly I say to you, if one does not receive birth from above, he is not able to see the Kingdom of God" (v3).

There are many scriptures that say a person must be born of the spirit in order to participate in the Kingdom of God, but what Jesus said to Nicodemus in verse 3 is something entirely different. The English to see is translated from the Greek word 

eddo, which literally means to see. By implication, it means to consider, know, perceive, or understand.

Jesus said that, unless a person is literally born from above, they cannot comprehend or perceive the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. Many scriptures show that it is only after the resurrection that the sons of God will be given authority as rulers in the government of God. However, it is through a literal spiritual birth that a person is given the ability to comprehend spiritual matters concerning the Kingdom of God. See 1 Cor.2:9-16.

"Nicodemus asked Jesus, How is a man able to be born, when he is old? Can he enter into his mother's womb a second time and be born?" (v4).

Nicodemus thought that Jesus was referring to the human birth process; however, Jesus was not speaking of a physical rebirth, he was speaking of a new and different kind of birth process—a spiritual birth:
"Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly I say to you, If one does not receive birth by water and spirit, one cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That receiving birth from the flesh is flesh; and that receiving birth from the spirit is spirit'" (vs.5-6).

Jesus spoke about the process by which a person may participate in the Family and Government of God. This process necessitates being born again through a birth and transformation process within the spirit dimension of existence:

"Do not wonder because I told you, You must receive birth from above. The spirit breathes where it desires, and you hear its voice; but you do not know where it comes from, or where it goes—so it is with everyone having received birth from the spirit. Nicodemus then asked Jesus, How can these things come about? Jesus answered, You are a teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things" (vs.7-10).

Even though Nicodemus was a teacher of the law, he did not understand the writings and prophecies that foretold being born into the Family and Kingdom of God.

Jesus clearly states that, in order for a person to participate in the Kingdom of God, they must go through a birth process that requires both water and spirit. This is the process whereby a person may become a son of God.

What Jesus said to Nicodemus about being born of water and spirit can only be understood in the context of the children of the New Creation, because they are the only ones, up to this point in history, who receive a birth from the Father through water and spirit.

THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT

The Water

The water of spiritual birth under the New Covenant is the water of baptism. When a repentant person rises out of the baptismal waters, they are symbolically and literally dead to the old life and raised as a new person free from sin. See Rom.6:1-11, Col.3:1-4.

The Spirit

The spirit of spiritual birth under the New Covenant is the Father's holy spirit, which is given by the laying on of hands. It is through this power that the Father transforms a repentant person into a son of his New Creation. See Mk.1:8, Lk.3:16, Jn.1:33; Acts 11:15-16.

Through his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus clearly reveals that it is through a transformation process, which takes place through water and spirit, that one is allowed to understand spiritual matters and enter the Family and the Kingdom of God.
A New Creature

The old human life-form containing only the spirit of man symbolically dies in the baptismal waters; then, it literally dies and ceases to exist when God the Father merges his holy spirit with the human spirit. The person who has been immersed in the Father's holy spirit is a literal son of God. Although still dwelling within the physical human form, a person with God's holy spirit is a new creature.

All Things Become New

"So that if anyone is in Christ, that one is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new!" (2.Cor.5:17 KJV). See also Gal.6:15.

There are basically two things that become new when a person becomes a child of God:

1. Their attitude and goals become spiritually orientated.
2. Their old self (which has only the spirit of man) dies and they become a new and different spirit-being, with new and different power and potential.

These are the things that Paul speaks of as being new and different. When a person is transformed into a child of God, that person becomes a different being. From that moment forward, things take on a new and different importance, because the old person is dead to this world. Those born of the Father's holy spirit are a different creation from the rest of humanity who do not have the holy spirit dwelling within them; therefore, "all things have become new":

"It doesn't make any difference now whether we have been circumcised or not. What really counts is whether we really have been changed into a new and different people" (Gal.6:15 Taylor).

Children of God are different from other humans; they are beings that have never existed before in either the physical or spiritual dimensions. They are beings that have only existed since Jesus Christ came and died for the sins of humanity. The elect of God are born from above; that is, they have been transformed from one type of creature into another type of creature.

Adoption as a Son of God

"For as many as are led by the spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery again to fear; but you received a spirit of adoption by which we cry, Abba! Father! The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom.8:14-16 KJV).
Here is proof that when a person having the spirit of man is transformed from the original human creation into the New Creation having the spirit of God, that person is not just conceived, they are literally transformed by God the Father into one of his children. Thereby, they become a literal son in the Family of God and a citizen in the Kingdom of God.

GOOD NEWS, A ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT

In the world today, what we continually read and hear is mostly bad news. We live in a troubled, chaotic world. The very best news possible is the Good News of the coming government of God to rule mankind and bring peace and happiness to an evil and dying world.

As Jesus went about teaching the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, he also taught those who would continue to proclaim his message to ask the Father to establish his government on earth so that his will would be done on earth:

"Our Father that is in heaven, holy is your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:9-10 Para.).

Jesus taught his followers to pray for the Father's kingdom to come, because it is only through the Kingdom of God that humanity can be saved from itself. It is only through true worship of the Father and the enforcement of his laws and governmental system on earth that humanity will ever find the things they seek: true peace, prosperity, security, and happiness.

When we look at the conditions of this present world, we see a world of unending chaos where righteous, ethical, and moral behavior is rare. The world is in turmoil. There are wars, famines, disease epidemics, environmental pollution, crime, poverty, squalor, religious bigotry, racism, hatred, broken-homes, permissiveness, promiscuity, sexual perversion, upset weather conditions, and natural disasters.

The pathetic situation in which we see the world today is the result of centuries of practicing the wrong kinds of religious and political systems. If this were not true, we would live in a far different world than exists today.

HUMANITY CANNOT GOVERN ITSELF

It is painfully obvious from history that humans cannot govern themselves correctly. Therefore, the hope of survival does not lie in human hands. Nation after nation has risen and then fallen into decay, whole civilizations have come and gone, multitudes of governmental systems, political philosophies and religions have failed. History is replete with humanity's failure to govern itself and bring lasting peace.
History's lesson to humanity is that humans are unable to manage their own affairs in a fair and equitable manner for the good of all. Left to our own devices, we will ultimately destroy ourselves and vanish from the earth unless we find the way to peace and faithfully practice it.

It should be obvious to anyone who follows world events, that humanity is on the brink of destruction, and that we are living in the final chapter of human existence at this moment.

**THERE IS HOPE**

Will humanity survive the monumental problems that it is now experiencing?

Yes, there is hope for the survival of the human race from a source that very few truly believe. This source predates the human race. In fact, this source of survival has actually existed for eternity. Our only hope for survival is in God the Father (the Supreme Sovereign) and his Son Jesus Christ (the Creator God). These two beings are so powerful that by their very thoughts and words they can create or destroy all things. These two great, powerful, and immortal beings have planned that humanity will survive in spite of its apparent determination to destroy itself.

Yes, humanity will survive; however, survival will not come easily, nor without great pain, suffering, and anguish.

**THE ONLY SOLUTION**

Jesus Christ has already taught the only solution to all of humanity's problems. The message that he taught was about the Kingdom of God, its Sovereign ruler, its citizens, its laws and structure, and when it will exert its rule over the earth.

The GOOD NEWS is that the Kingdom of God is coming as an all-powerful, world-ruling government to solve all of humanity's problems in a fair and equitable manner with true justice and liberty for all: a government not ruled by selfishly motivated humans, but a government ruled by the righteous, all-powerful, Family of God. The GOOD NEWS Jesus Christ brought was an advance announcement about the soon-coming Kingdom of God and how to participate in it as a son of God.

Although the good news message concerning the Kingdom of God is one of tremendous hope, peace, prosperity, and abundant blessings for humanity, it is also a message that foretells the violent conquest of nations and the destruction and dismantling of all current governmental systems on earth by Jesus Christ.
JESUS AND THE KINGDOM

When Jesus was on trial for his life, Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?", and Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this age: if my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but my kingdom is not of this age but is of the world to come. Pilate then asked again, Are you a king? Jesus said, You said it, I am a king, and for this purpose was I born, and for this cause I came into the world to bear witness to the truth" (Jn.18:33-37 Para.).

Most people who read the scriptures in John, chapter 18, do not truly believe what Jesus said about his being born to rule over physical humans as a king and that his servants would go to war to establish and maintain his kingdom. However, this is one of the primary reasons for people being called to salvation prior to the return of Jesus Christ. When this war comes, Christ's servants will go forth to make war and conquer the nations of this world. See Jude v.14-15; Rev.17:14; 11:15.

Soon Jesus Christ is going to rule the earth as King of kings and Lord of lords. He is coming back in supreme power and glory to conquer the nations of earth and establish his Father's government over all peoples. Yes, he and his servants are going to make war against the nations of earth and conquer them.

WHEN WILL CHRIST RETURN?

When Jesus was asked how people would know when he was coming back and when the end of this world would be, he answered:

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should be no flesh saved . . ." (Matt.24:21-22 KJV).

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great ruler that stands for the sons of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as has not been since the existence of a nation until that same time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone that is found written in the book of life" (Dan.12:1 Para.).

In Daniel's prophecy, this period of world history is described as "A time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time" (Dan.12:1 Para.). The time of its occurrence is fixed by the additional statement, "But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end . . ." (Dan.12:4 KJV).

Unknown to most people yet clearly revealed in the Bible, the plan of God for the salvation of humanity has been progressing steadily in an orderly and systematic manner.
Centuries ago, Jesus Christ said to watch for certain world events, because they would foreshadow his intervention into world affairs to save humanity from certain destruction.

Can the events that precede the coming Kingdom of God be identified with accuracy? Yes they can! There are many unusual and totally unique circumstances and events that set this period of time apart from any other time period in human history.

**Increase of Knowledge**

"But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan.12:4 KJV).

Daniel was told that the sudden increase of knowledge was one of the major indications that the end of human rule on earth was very near. Today knowledge is increasing at an extremely rapid rate in both the physical and spiritual realms. Just look at the emergence of the computer age and the declaration of this age as "the information age" in which access to knowledge is increasingly limitless.

**Distress of Nations**

"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth will be anxiety of nations, with bewilderment; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Lk.21:25-26 KJV).

Among the signs of the end of this age is a great anxiety and bewilderment within nations. Sociologists around the world today agree that there is great anxiety and bewilderment among the peoples of all nations. People far and near are distressed and perplexed over the many major social, political, economic, and environmental problems of this generation.

Humanity has always been beset by problems, but in many respects, there is no precedent for the problems that vex the world today. The Bible alone has prophecies that provide a vivid preview of these troublesome times and their final outcome.

**War and Natural Disaster**

"You shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that you be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilence, and earthquakes, in different places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matt.24:6-8 Para.). See also Mk.13:8-13.
Wars and rumors of wars, food shortages, disease epidemics, and earthquakes are all on the increase throughout the world. The Bible says that all of these things will continue to increase in magnitude and violence until the day of Christ's return.

**Extreme Wickedness**

"But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it" (2 Tim. 3:1-5 RSV).

On the surface, human behavior today seems to be much as it has been for centuries. However, this is not so. What Paul records as great wickedness is the behavior of people just prior to the return of Christ. Evil behavior today is on the increase; exceptionally evil behavior is the norm in today's world, not the exception. The behavior of people today is the same as it was just prior to the great flood when God destroyed humanity for their wicked behavior:

"For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark. And they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:38-39 KJV).

Allowing evil to frustrate human efforts to find true and lasting peace and happiness throughout the centuries is part of the human experience that will continue until the return of Christ.

Look around! The world is in great turmoil. There are wars, famines, disease epidemics, and environmental and natural disasters on a worldwide scale.

You are living in the time just prior to the destruction of most of the human race. Do you want to survive and live or would you rather suffer pain, starvation, and mental anguish? Now is the time to prepare for your personal survival and avoid many of the horrors that will surely come upon all mankind at the end of this age.

**The Proclamation of the Gospel**

Jesus proclaimed the Good News of the coming government of God and commanded his people to preach the same Good News. Notice what these scriptures say about preaching the coming government of God:

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14 KJV).
One of the major signs that Jesus is about to return will be the proclamation of the true gospel message throughout the world as a warning and witness to all nations. When this is accomplished, the practice of this world's evil religions, philosophies, and oppressive political and governmental systems will come to an end, and the righteous and benevolent Kingdom of God will begin to be established over all people.

Because most people do not know what the gospel message is nor the God that is sending it, this sign will not be recognized by most who hear it. It will be ignored by the majority of the earth's inhabitants. But to those who are willing to truly believe the truth contained within the gospel message, it will be their salvation.

Jesus warned: "When you see these things come to pass, know you that the Kingdom of God is near at hand" (Lk.21:31 KJV).

Yes, Jesus is coming back and he is coming back in supreme power and glory to conquer the nations of the earth and establish his Father's government over all peoples.

**THE COMING INVASION OF EARTH**

The apostle Paul and the prophet Zephaniah gave us a very narrow view into the great day when Jesus Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to conquer the earth:

"The day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1.Thes.5:2-3 KJV).

"The great day of the Lord God is near, it is near, and is coming quickly... the mighty man shall cry out bitterly there. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of waste and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord God..." (Zeph.1:14-17 KJV). See Hag.2:6-7.

Far beyond the star of Polaris, the northern constellations, the Milky Way, and our dimension of time and space, the army of Jesus Christ is marshaling its forces and making preparations for galactic war. His powerful angelic forces already control all that exists, except for one seemingly insignificant planet orbiting around a relatively small red star—the earth. See Lk.19:11-27; 20:9-16.

Not only is his army preparing for war, his enemies have also been preparing for many centuries. When these two powerful armies clash, the outcome will be unimaginable devastation.
Does this sound like science fiction? Well, this is not science fiction. This great battle is coming! It is not a question of "if" it will happen, it is only a question of "when" it will happen.

For centuries, God has warned people of this impending invasion and its consequences. Prophets and Ambassadors of the Kingdom of God have been sent and are still being sent to warn of this coming battle for control of the earth. The events just prior to and during this war of conquest will be catastrophic and strike terror in the hearts of all humanity:

"Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt.24:30 KJV).

"And in the days of these kings [rulers of governments of this age] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan.2:44 KJV). See also Dan.4:3; Psa.145:13; Psa.103:19.

The vast majority of people do not want to be ruled by anyone, regardless of whether they are evil or good. And the descendants of Abraham, whether Arab or Israelite, above all other peoples and nations have shown that they do not want God's rule in their lives. It is upon these people that most of the wrath of God will be poured out just prior to and during the return of Jesus Christ.

THE INVASION BEGINS

Revelation 19:11-16 Paraphrased

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon it was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; . . . and he was clothed with a garment that had been dipped in blood: and his name was called The Word of God" (vs.11-13).

In a vision John sees Jesus Christ in battle dress ready to invade the earth and make war with the nations who have not heeded the warning to repent of their wickedness.

"And the armies that were in heaven followed upon white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and pure. And out of his mouth goes forth a sharp sword, that with it he might smite the nations: and he will shepherd them with an iron rod: and he treads the winepress of the wine of the anger of God Almighty. And he has on his garment and on his right thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (vs.14-16).
SUMMARY

The good news is that Jesus Christ is coming to extricate humanity from its plight. The Father has not forgotten his earthly creation and his master plan to increase his family and expand his kingdom. Although there are great evils that plague humanity today, things will get better because God the Father and Jesus Christ have promised that they will get better. However, things will only get better after humanity has learned a lesson that only time and experience can teach:

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt.24:14 KJV).

Jesus said that after the good news of the Kingdom of God was preached, something would end; this "something" is human rule on earth.

The prescription for human survival and success is contained in the good news message of the Kingdom of God. And those who have read it and understand it (the servants of God the Father and Jesus Christ) look forward with great expectation and pray for the Kingdom of God to come quickly.

"Our Father that is in heaven, Holy is your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt.6:9-10 Para.).

By B.L. Cocherell
CHAPTER
NINETEEN
THE PROCLAIMING OF THE GOSPEL

THE GREAT COMMISSION

"Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen" (Matt. 28:19-20 Para.).

The assignment that Jesus gave to his followers to proclaim the gospel is often called the Great Commission, because it should be a priority in the life of a Christian in this age. However, there are a few questions that a follower of Christ should be able to answer in order to carry out this great commission:

- Exactly what is this Great Commission?
- To whom is this gospel message to be directed?
- What is to be accomplished by proclaiming the gospel message?
- Who is to proclaim the gospel message?

There are a great number of specific questions that could be asked in regard to the Great Commission; however, in this section we will confine our discussion to these four questions and a general overview of the subject.

The Assignment

The first thing that we notice about the Commission is that it is not a request, it is a command to proclaim the gospel.

The English word gospel comes from the Greek word enaggelion which means a good message. Today, we would say that gospel means the good news or the good news message.

Who Will Receive the Gospel?

During Christ's ministry, he confined his proclamation of the gospel to a very small geographical area where there were mostly Jews. However, after his death and resurrection the gospel was to be proclaimed to all nations until his return at the end of the age.

The apostle Paul tells us that the gospel was to be preached to the Jews first and then to the Greeks (i.e., other people):
"So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom.1:15-16 Para.). See also Rom.2:9-10.

When Jesus sent his disciples out to proclaim the gospel, he specifically sent them to the house of Israel:

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, do not go into the way of the Gentiles [those not of the covenant people, i.e., non-Israelites], nor into the cities of the Samaritans: But rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of God is at hand" (Matt.10:5-7 KJV).

During the events of the healing of a woman from Canaan, Jesus said, "I am only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." See Matt. 15:21-28.

When we analyze the scriptures that concern where the gospel was first proclaimed, it becomes clear that the assignment to preach the gospel requires that the Father's message be taught to the covenant people (Israel) first, then to all other nations (this was done in part by the early church).

Once again, just prior to the end of this age, the gospel message will be primarily directed toward national Israel, which is comprised of the House of Israel (the lost ten tribes) and the House of Judah (the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi). See Isa.58:1; Rev.18:4-5.

Note:

It is not the writer's intention to point out exactly who and where the various tribes of Israel are today, because this information is readily available to anyone who wishes to research the subject.

What Will be Accomplished?

The gospel message is a warning, a witness, and an instruction to be proclaimed as follows:

- It is a witness and a warning to specific individuals who are being called to salvation. It is sent to inform them and if they do not accept the Father's call and respond appropriately, they will suffer the punishment of eternal death.
- It is an instruction to those who truly believe the Father's good news to begin to practice his ways, become his sons through repentance and baptism, and become involved in proclaiming the good news.
- It is a witness and a warning to the world at large that God the Father exists and is intervening in world affairs in order to implement the next phase of his plan to save humanity.
Who is to Proclaim the Gospel Message?

The apostles and the early church preached the gospel message with great spiritual and physical power through the written word and personal and public evangelism.

During the time just prior to the return of Christ, the elect of God will again preach the true gospel message in much the same manner as the early church. Only this time, it will be preached with even greater power than it was by Jesus Christ or the early church. During this time, the gospel message will be proclaimed not only as a means of personal salvation but also as a means of national salvation and as an announcement that Jesus Christ is coming to assume total rule over the earth and its inhabitants.

Although the primary responsibility for preaching the gospel fell to the apostles and those specifically chosen and sent to evangelize, the responsibility was not theirs alone; it was to be a task shared by all of the elect. All who believe the gospel message and have accepted its terms and conditions for salvation must participate in the preaching of the gospel. See 1.Cor.12:1-31.

What is the Message?

Jesus told his disciples to teach the things that he had commanded. This command not only referred to the things that he had taught during his earthly ministry in human form but also the things he had taught Israel as the Creator God before he became flesh. Please read Jn.1:1-11; Eph.3:9; 2.Tim.3:16.

"And he said to them, You go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; and he that does not believe shall be damned" (Mk.16:15-16 Para.).

All who hear the Father’s good news message are held responsible for their response to it. All those who hear the message with understanding and truly believe its message, then act upon it in a positive manner will be spared from eternal death. However, those who hear with understanding and turn their back on the opportunity that is presented to them will suffer eternal death.

A short review of the early church and its preaching of the gospel message clearly shows that when the early church disappeared as a powerful unified organization, the preaching of the gospel message as Jesus taught it also disappeared.

In order to teach and observe the things that Jesus taught, one must first truly understand what he taught. What Jesus taught will be referred to throughout this section. It is a biblical fact that what has been taught by popular Christianity since about 100 A.D. is not the gospel that Jesus taught. It is also a biblical fact that the true gospel will again be taught just prior to the return of Jesus Christ as Conquering King.
THE GOSPEL AND THE EARLY CHURCH

The elect went forth evangelizing and spreading the Father's good news concerning Jesus Christ, salvation and the Kingdom of God. Their spiritual zeal literally changed the course of history as they taught the Father's good news message of salvation. However, it was not in the plan of God to save the world during Jesus' lifetime nor during the apostolic era of the church; if this had been his plan, he would have done it. See Isa.6:8-10, Matt.10:34-36, 13:10-15, Mk.4:11-12; Lk.8:9-10.

Few realize the awesome power that Jesus placed at the disposal of the early church in order for them to fulfill their commission to proclaim the Father's good news message. There are at least 21 distinct authorizations of spiritual/physical gifts of power from God noted in the New Testament that were given to the organized and unified Body of Christ.

There are many accounts in the New Testament of the elect using these powerful authorizations at their discretion to perform miraculous works in order to fulfill their commission. See Acts 5:1-15; 6:8; 13:8-11; 15:12.

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new languages; They shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands upon the sick, and they shall recover" (Mk.16:17-18 KJV). See also Acts 1:4-5,8.

"And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen" (Mk.16:20 KJV). See also 1.Thes.1:4-5.

SIGNS, WONDERS AND MIRACLES

Jesus Christ had tremendous power at his disposal; he used this power at his discretion and authorize others to use this same power. Among his authorizations of power from the Father were the following:

- Power to heal the sick and raise the dead (Lk.7:20-23; Acts 5:15)
- Power to control evil spirits (Matt.17:14-18; Mk.16:17-18)
- Power to manipulate natural laws (Matt.8:23-27; 14:25)
- Power to create physical things (Matt.14:15-21; Jn.2:1-11)
- Power to destroy the physical existence (Matt.21:18-22; Lk.9:54)
- Power to bring curses (Matt.21:18-22; Acts 13:9-12)
- Power to give and take life (Jn.17:2; Acts 5:3-10)
- Power to enlist angelic help (Matt.26:53; Acts 12:6-7)
Greater Power to Come

"Truly, truly, I say to you, He that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater, than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it" (Jn.14:12-14 KJV).

As powerful as the apostolic era of the church was, they did not do a greater work than Jesus. They did perform many great acts and miracles as a powerful witness. However, the historical record clearly shows that they did not do a greater work than Jesus.

"And I will pour out my spirit on my slaves and on my slave-girls in those days. And I will give signs in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord" (Joel 2:29-31 Para.).

Just prior to the return of Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords, the prophecies show the dynamic power of the holy spirit again being manifested through the elect of God. During the time of the end, the church of God will have all of the spiritual and physical authorizations that Jesus and the early church had and more. There will be a unified dynamic body of the elect of God who will be filled with tremendous spiritual and physical power with which they can defy the very laws of the physical universe. No spiritual or physical power will be able to stop them from performing their God-given task to proclaim the entire gospel message, teach the truth of God, and announce the good news of the coming Kingdom of God.

Their is a greater work because their task is greater than that of the early church. Therefore, they require greater power to proclaim the gospel and warn a sinful and rebellious world that it is about to meet its Creator.

The Prophet Habakkuk

"Behold you [the various tribes of Israel] among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days, you will not believe, though it were told" (Hab.1:5 KJV). See also verses 1-4.

The apostle Paul issued a prophetic warning to those of his day and the future in regard to Habakkuk's prophecy:

"Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it to you" (Acts 13:40-41 KJV). See also Isa.29:9-14.
THE OPEN DOOR

In the last years of the apostle John's life and during the time when the once powerful and dynamic church of God was disappearing from the world scene, Jesus Christ revealed to John the major events that would take place and the conditions that would exist at the time of the end. One of the major things that will be happening during the time of the end is the proclaiming of the gospel to the world with great physical and spiritual power:

"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have a little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them to come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you" (Rev.3:7-10 NIV).

At the time of the end, centuries after the door through which the early church preached the gospel had been shut and locked, Jesus Christ will open another door through which the gospel will be preached. This time, the door will remain open and cannot be shut by anyone except Jesus Christ who has opened it. During the time of this prophetic open door, the gospel will be preached to the world and the great commission will be accomplished by the powerful, unified elect children of God:

- It is through this open door that no one can shut that the elect of God will perform a powerful work and witness to the world.
- It is through this door that great numbers of people will come to repentance and obtain salvation.
- It is through this door that the elect of God, through the power of the holy spirit, will send forth the wrath of God upon the religions and governments of this world just prior to the return of Jesus Christ.

The gospel message that Jesus brought from the Father and that his people preach is so dynamic, so powerful, so diametrically opposed to what has been taught by this world's religious leaders and philosophers that the vast majority of people will hate and reject it when they hear it proclaimed.

NATIONAL ISRAEL

When one does a detailed analysis of the prophecies concerning the time of the end, it becomes apparent that the fulfillment of these prophecies surrounds national Israel and the nations closely associated with them. It is primarily to these people that the gospel was preached by the early church and it is primarily to these people that the gospel will be preached during the time of the end.
In his letter to the church at Rome, the apostle Paul spoke of preaching the gospel to national Israel prior to and during his lifetime and during the time of the end.

As we review what Paul said to the elect at Rome concerning the preaching of the gospel to national Israel scattered throughout the world, we see that, indeed, Israel will have heard the gospel preached prior to the return of Christ.

**Romans 10:11-21 Paraphrased**

"For the scripture says, Whosoever believes on him [Jesus Christ] shall not be ashamed. . .For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (vs.11-13).

Paul opens his comments about national Israel and their salvation by affirming that salvation only comes through Jesus Christ and no other.

"How then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without one to teach them? And how shall one teach unless one is sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those that preach the good news of peace, and bring good news of good things" (vs.14-15).

It is a fact that one cannot believe in God the Father or Jesus Christ if one has never heard of them; therefore, someone must be sent to convey this information in order for there to be belief. Paul also spoke about the fact that it is a great honor and blessing to be one who brings the good news to others.

"But they have not all obeyed the good news. For Isaiah said, Lord, who has believed our report? So then faith comes by hearing and hearing, by the word of God. But I say, Have not they heard? Yes truly, their sound went into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the habitable world" (vs.16-18). See Isa.53:1; Psa.14:4.

Here Paul speaks of both a fact of history and prophetic events of the future. The ancient nation of Israel did not, as a whole, believe or obey the good news message that they were given by the Creator God through his priesthood, prophets, and servants prior to his coming to earth as the Messiah. The majority of the Jews and other Israelites who lived during the time of Christ, the apostles, and the early church did not believe the Father's gospel message either, and the majority of the house of Israel and the house of Judah who are scattered among the nations of today's world will not believe the Father's gospel until after the return of Jesus Christ.

How did the nation of Israel hear the gospel after the death of the apostles and the disappearance of the early church? And how will they hear it just prior to the return of Jesus Christ?
Since the death of the apostles, Israel has heard the gospel message preached throughout the centuries through the publishing of the Bible—the most published and read book ever written. Wherever you find racial Israelites throughout the world, you will find the Book of the Law and/or the Old and New Testament being taught. You will also find one or both of these books in almost every home, business, library and lodging place in an Israelitish nation.

Just prior to the return of Jesus Christ, all of Israel, wherever they have been scattered throughout the nations of the world, will hear the gospel loud and clear through a powerful and dynamic witness, but they still they will not believe and repent:

"But I said, Did not Israel know? First Moses said, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a nation of no understanding I will anger you. But Isaiah is very bold, and said, I was found of them who did not seek me; I was revealed to them that did not ask about me" (vs.19-20). See Deut.32:21; Isa.65:1.

The people and nation that Moses and Isaiah spoke of are those whom God the Father has called to salvation through Christ during the gospel age—a royal nation of king-priests drawn from among national Israel and other nations of the world. These are called to salvation outside of the covenant relationship with national Israel and are called to proclaim the Father's good news message to the houses of Israel and Judah and the world at large prior to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings.

"But to Israel he [God] said, All the day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and contradictory people" (Rom.10:21).

God has sent many prophets, preachers, and teachers of his word to Israel since he made a covenant with their ancestors centuries ago at Mount Sinai. And today, he is still stretching out his hand to this disobedient and rebellious people.

A DECEIVED WORLD

Many who profess to believe in the God of the Bible do not truly believe in the reality of Satan the Devil; however, this evil being is real. It was he who first deceived Adam and Eve. And it is he, along with other evil spirits, who is actively deceiving the entire world with evil worship systems, philosophies, political/governmental systems, and false messages of peace, prosperity, and salvation:

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, that deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev.12:9 KJV).
Jesus clearly taught that the whole world is being deceived by this powerful evil spirit and those who were cast out of heaven with him. The Bible also shows that the only ones who have not come under the deceptive influence of this incredibly powerful and evil being are the elect of God.

The major reason for so many different religions, philosophies, and political/governmental systems in the world today is Satan's deception. Satan began his master plan to destroy the work of God with the deception of Adam and Eve and he has been going about his devious business ever since.

Jesus revealed to the apostle John that, prior to his return, the whole world would be in a state of deception. The whole world including the vast majority of those who profess to follow the true God have been deceived into believing false concepts and philosophies that are supposed to bring peace, prosperity, and salvation, but in reality, they eventually bring just the opposite:

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2.Cor.11:13-15 KJV). See also Deut.13:1-5; Jer.23:21-22.

Yes, Satan has many ministers (servants) and organizations, both religious and political, disguised as messengers of light (Rev.2:9; 3:9). His servants are in every strata of society, from common people to leaders of religions and nations. If you were to ask these people if they were evil servants of Satan, they would most likely become very offended. Deceived people do not know that they are deceived, otherwise they would not be deceived.

The Bible shows that Satan is the god of this world (2.Cor.4:4). The whole world, including the vast majority of Christianity, has come under the deceptive influence of this incredibly powerful, evil spirit-being. They look to his false religions, philosophies, and political/governmental systems for salvation from their social and spiritual ills.

**Jesus Warned:**

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (Matt.24:11 KJV).

It is the majority of people in today's world who are deceived into thinking that the way to peace and happiness can be obtained through human effort alone:

"Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and there will be many who will go through this gate: Because difficult is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads to life, and few will find this gate and way" (Matt.7:13-14 Para.).
It is to a world that has been deceived for thousands of years into thinking that they can solve their own problems that the gospel will again be proclaimed with tremendous and awesome power. It is to this deceived world that the plan of God is again being revealed as the only means of personal and national salvation.

The gospel of the Kingdom of God is a far cry from what has been taught over the centuries by a false Christianity. The true gospel is so dynamic, so powerful, so diametrically opposed to what has been taught for centuries that the vast majority will reject it when they hear it.

**SALVATION**

Before the foundation of the world, God the Father and the Creator God (who became Jesus Christ) set in motion a plan by which humans could be born into the Family and Kingdom of God. This plan requires true belief in the true Sovereign God and his Son, repentance from sin, baptism, redemption, and salvation. See Acts 2:38; 3:19.

Over 1,900 years ago, the Father sent his Son to his chosen people to explain the method by which humanity could secure an abundant, happy, and prosperous life for all eternity. Instead of being overjoyed at this good news, the Jews murdered his Son and persecuted those who continued to proclaim his message.

One would think that because the gospel message claims to hold the keys to life and death for those who hear it, the message would be well received. However, this is normally not the case at all. Most who hear this message go about their daily lives as if what they heard will not effect them.

**THE GOSPEL TODAY**

Today, just prior to the return of Jesus Christ to conquer the earth and establish his Father's religion and government over it, the true servants of God are to proclaim the good news of God the Father just as Jesus and the apostles did centuries ago.

**Believe the Gospel**

Jesus Christ said that those who truly believe the gospel message and are baptized shall be saved and those who do not believe shall be damned:

"And he said to them, You go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; and he that does not believe shall be damned" (Mk.16:15-16 Para.).

When the Creator God came to earth as the Messiah, he did not come to make this world a better place in which to live under its present leadership:
"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" (Matt.10:34-35 KJV).

Jesus came to proclaim the good news of salvation for humanity, the coming Kingdom of God, and the preparation of a people to rule the earth with him. See Matt.24, Mk.13, Rev.5:9-10, 11:15; 20:4-6.

The sword of division and separation that Jesus brought is the Father's word and truth concerning the reason for all of humanity's ills and his solution to remove those ills—his good news message. It is this truth that cuts deep into the soul of each individual and causes a division and a separation between those who believe the Father's truth and those who do not. See Eph.6:17; Heb.4:12-13.

THE END SHALL COME

Jesus said that after the good news of the Kingdom of God is preached, something will end; this something that will end is human rule on earth:
"This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then the end shall come" (Matt.24:14 Para.).

It is obvious that the preaching of the gospel by the early church did not bring an end to human rule on earth or result in the return of Jesus Christ; therefore, this prophecy was for another time—the time of the end.

Many prophecies speak of the time of the end in the context of cataclysmic earth-shaking events that will effect the heavens, as well as the earth and all its inhabitants. It should also be obvious to anyone who studies the Bible and world events with an open mind that we are now living in the time just prior to the end spoken of by the prophets and Jesus Christ.

Death and Destruction

A question that needs to be answered is how could the preaching of anything, whether religious, philosophical, or political, precipitate an end to the world's governments? What is it about this message that will cause massive death and destruction to come upon this world?

It is not the message itself that will bring the end of human rule. The thing that will bring about the end of human rule is the wrath of God upon the earth because of people's refusal to accept the Father's good news message and respond appropriately.

The good news message is a call to repentance for the house of Israel and Judah first, then for the rest of Abraham's descendants and the world at large.
Because the vast majority of those who hear the Father's good news message will not repent, the Father is going to cause his wrath to fall upon the earth and its inhabitants. The horrible events that are coming with ever increasing rapidity are just a preview of the great devastation that will occur just prior to the Father sending his Son to conquer and rule the nations of the earth.

The Creator God first came as the Messiah to proclaim the Father's Good News of the coming Government of God and taught how to enter the Family and Government of God. Jesus commanded his Father's children to proclaim this same Good News and announce that the next time he comes to earth, he will come as a Conquering King to gather the elect of God and enforce the way of peace, happiness, and prosperity upon humanity.

It matters little whether one believes the Father's good news message or not, because the events of the future will come to pass whether or not one believes this good news.

A Warning

Both Paul and Peter were inspired to issue a warning about what is going to happen to those who will not take the gospel message seriously:

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, until the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, coming in flaming fire and taking vengeance on them that do not know God, and that do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2.Thes.1:7-8 Para.).

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables" (2.Tim.4:2-4 Para.)

"For the time has come to begin judgment at the house of God, and if it begins with us, what will be the end of the ones who disobey the Father's good news? And if the righteous are scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1.Pet.4:17-18 Para.).

B.L. Cocherell
In the very end of this age, the people of God will suffer great persecution and be hated because of their proclamation of the gospel message.

**AN UNPOPULAR MESSAGE**

The good news is a message of tremendous hope for humanity and it offers the promise of awesome physical, spiritual, and eternal rewards that are almost beyond the ability of the human mind to comprehend. However, the good news that Jesus Christ brought from God the Father, which his people now proclaim, is not a popular message.

Although the Father's good news message promises awesome and wonderful benefits of a future containing safety, security, happiness, and prosperity under his loving care and protection, it has never been a popular message. Even when Jesus, the apostles, and the early church preached the good news it was not enthusiastically received; only a few believed this awesome and wonderful truth and made it a part of their life experience.

**Four Important Questions**

1. Why is this wonderful message not accepted by all who hear it?
2. Why is it so misunderstood and maligned by those who should rejoice at hearing it?
3. Why was Jesus Christ crucified and why were most of the apostles and many of the early church murdered for preaching this dynamic and wonderful message?
4. Why will many be murdered just before the return of Jesus Christ for preaching this truly astounding message?

The answers to these four questions all have to do with true belief in the originator of the message, the original messenger, the message itself, the requirement to change from evil to righteous behavior, and the threat of punishment for non-compliance.

It is not the gospel's promise of great and wonderful benefits that most people have a problem with, and it is not this promise that causes them to dislike the message and its messengers. It is the gospel's condemnation of evil behavior, its authoritative nature, and its demand that people conform to its prerequisite terms and conditions prior to being granted its wonderful benefits. These are the things that most people cannot tolerate about the Father's message of good news.
THE NECESSITY TO CHANGE

There are many reasons why the Father's good news message is thought of by most people as bad news. However, the biggest reason for people's hatred of the Father's good news message has to do with change. In order to reap the benefits that are promised in the good news message, one is required to make many profound changes in one's attitude, behavior, and lifestyle.

The gospel message demands a change from unrighteousness to righteousness as defined by God's word in the Holy Bible. It is this demand and the threat of eternal punishment for non-compliance that is the major cause of most people's hatred of the gospel message and its messengers:

"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob [national Israel] their sins" (Isa.58:1 KJV).

"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be as crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land: But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it" (Isa.1:18-20 Para.).

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities" (Rev.18:4-5 KJV).

Believe and Repent

In order to reap the benefits of the good news message and claim the eternal promises that God made to humanity through the Patriarchs and Prophets, Jesus said that all a person has to do is "Repent" and "Believe the Gospel."

The good news message demands true belief and obedience. It demands a change in attitude and behavior. It demands that people choose good over evil, truth over lies, and righteousness over unrighteousness. It demands a change from rebellion against the Father's laws, precepts, and principles to obedience of his ways:

"Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, saying, The time is at hand: repent and believe the gospel" (Mk.1:14-15 Para.). See also Matt.4:12-17; 9:35-38; Lk.8:1.
Although there was much proof available to the Jews during Jesus' ministry that he was indeed the Messiah who came with great power and authority from the Father, there were very few who believed his message of repentance. Very few thought that they needed to change their attitude and behavior toward God and their fellow man, because most of these people thought there was nothing wrong with their attitude and behavior. As many of the scriptures indicate, the Jews were perfectly happy with their spiritual condition and were only looking to better their physical circumstances. This same condition exists today among people of all religions, philosophies, and political persuasions.

Repentance requires a person to change beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in respect to sin (the violation of God's law). A person must stop violating God's law and begin to obey its precepts and principles.

Those who truly desire to reap the eternal benefits that are offered through the gospel message will not consciously reject truth. They will be practicing the precepts and principles of God's law and endeavoring to live by every word of God.

The apostle John was inspired to record the following about sin:

"Sin is the transgression of the law" (1.Jn.3:4 Para.), and "He that says, I know him [the Father], and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1.Jn.2:4 Para.).

Human Nature

Human nature is the opposite of God's nature; therefore, it results in the hatred of the things of God. The way of God is opposite to the way most people want to live. The vast majority of people today do not love truth; they love evil. The conditions of today's world are a direct result of the disobedience of God's laws, statutes, judgments, precepts, and principles that, if practiced, would bring true happiness and prosperity.

The demand for a change from unrighteousness to righteousness contained in the gospel message is why the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day hated him—the messenger. He taught the truth of God, and because they were not obedient to this truth, Jesus' life and words condemned them as unrighteous enemies of God.

The same conditions exist today among most quasi-Christian and Jewish sects. Most will say that they either believe the teachings of Jesus Christ, the entire Bible, the Book of the Law, the Writings and/or the Prophets, yet most do not truly live in obedience to what they profess to believe:

"Hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying, This people draws near to me with their mouth, and with their lips honor me; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the ordinances of men" (Matt.15:7-9 Para.). See also Isa.29:13; Ezk.33:31-32.
Jesus called the religious leaders of his day "hypocrites, snakes, evil, and corrupt men." He called them these things because they were not teaching the total truth of God. Instead, they were teaching half truths and their own philosophies that were in opposition to the truth of God. See Matt.3:7; 12:33-34.

Rebellion and Self-Will

Mankind is rebellious by nature: Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden; the children of Israel rebelled against God in the wilderness, and they continue to rebel to this very day. It is this rebellion against God and his ways that has caused the world's great ills. See Ezek.20:12-13; Isa.30:9-10; 66:3.

"But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it" (2 Tim.3:1-5 RSV).

"For as they were in the days before the flood: eating and drinking, merry making, and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah went into the ark. And they did not know until the flood came, and took them all away—so also will be the coming of the Son of man" (Matt.24:38-39 Para.).

It is important to remember that in Noah's generation, people were so evil that God decided to eliminate the entire human race, except for Noah and his family. Noah was found to be the only righteous individual in all of humanity. Jesus said that this same condition would prevail at the end of the age. Just as the people in Noah's day did not listen to the call to repentance and the warnings of God's wrath, neither will the vast majority of people listen to God's servants in the end of this age. See Gen.6:5-13.

Rebellion comes in many forms and always separates the rebellious from God the Father and Jesus Christ. Today's multitude of religions, philosophies, and political/governmental systems are examples of people's desire to obey their own self-will rather than the will of God.

Freedom of Choice

Since the rebellion of Adam and Eve, God has allowed humanity to go its own way in order to teach the lessons that can only be taught through time and experience. God has also allowed the evil being who originally deceived the first humans to have limited control of the earth and its inhabitants for this same reason.
The World Today

The clear facts of history and the existing unacceptable condition of today's world speak volumes about past and present religions, philosophies, and governmental systems, and the evils that they produce. God the Father has brought all of these before his heavenly throne and found them all guilty of being the cause of all the ills of humanity. Yes, there are some good things that have been produced by various religions, philosophies, and governmental systems. However, the end result of these systems is the horrible conditions we see in the world today. The end result of humanity's effort to rule itself has been disastrous.

Humanity has experienced the results of centuries of living in rebellion to God's laws and way of life. And the next phase of God's plan for humanity is about to begin.

In the near future, humans will cease to have their own religions, philosophies and political/governmental systems, because humanity is about to meet the Creator. Jesus Christ is coming back to rule the earth with great power, in order to eliminate the barriers to peace, happiness, and productivity. When he comes, he will provide humanity with the opportunity to learn about God the Father and his way to eternal life.

"And he said to them, You go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; and he that does not believe shall be damned" (Mk.16:15-16 Para.).

All who hear the Father's good news message are held responsible for their response to it. Those who hear the message with understanding and truly believe it will be spared from eternal death; however, those who hear with understanding and turn their back on the opportunity that is offered will suffer eternal death (Rom.6:23).

PROPHECIES OF PERSECUTION

The Bible teaches that the Kingdom of God will not come peacefully. It also teaches that great persecution will come upon those who teach the truth of God prior to the return of Christ. Jesus understood mankind's nature as no other person could. As the Creator God of humanity (Jn.1:1-3; Eph.3:9), he observed human behavior for centuries and knew people would continue to oppose the way of God as long as they had a carnal nature and were influenced by evil. See Rom.8:7. The following scriptures are about this important issue:

"If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (Jn.15:20 Para.).

"I have told you these things so that you will not become shaken in your faith [by what lies ahead]. For they will put you out of the synagogue, and indeed the hour is coming when those who murder you will think that they are serving God, because they have never known the Father or me" (Jn.16:1-3 Para.).

257
"All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2.Tim.3:12 Para.). See also Mk.13:13; Lk.21:17.

NOT OF THIS WORLD

Before Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, he said some things about his disciple's existence on earth that seemed very strange to them:

"You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants: for the servant knows not what the lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known to you. You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: That whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that you love one another" (Jn.15:14-17 KJV).

Jesus expressed his deep personal affection for his disciples and their mission. He also told them of the power to which they would have access and the love that they should have for each other. After this, he revealed the kind of beings they would become after conversion:

"If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (Jn.15:18-19 KJV).

Jesus was not speaking philosophically to his disciples about their earthly status. He said they were alien to the other human life-forms on earth. He spoke of the New Creation that they had been chosen to be a part of as if it were already a reality at that moment in time. This is yet another reason that people do not understand the elect of God. The elect of God are not only different in their world view, they are different in their spiritual make-up; therefore, the world cannot relate to them as they do to their own kind.

Hated by the World

The apostle John records that Jesus said the elect of God would be hated by the world at large:

"I have given them your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth" (Jn.17:14-17 Para.). See also Matt.10:34-35; chp.24; Mk.chp.13; Rev.5:9-10; 11:15; 20:4-6.

Unless Jesus Christ was a false prophet, the world at large will surely come to hate and then persecute the people of God for preaching the true gospel message just prior to his return.

258
Why are the elect to be hated by the world? The answer is really quite simple when one understands that Satan has deceived the whole world into following his religious and governmental systems that are in opposition to the Father's religion and governmental system.

The Bible clearly shows that all of humanity, except the elect of God, have come under the deceptive influence of this incredibly powerful and evil being and his evil worship systems, philosophies, and political/governmental systems. See Rev.12:9; 2.Cor.4:4.

Most people are deceived, not because they were predetermined to be deceived; they are deceived because God has allowed Satan, evil spirits and/or their own desires to deceive them.

**Evil is Good and Good is Evil**

While recording God's condemnation of the behavior of the Israelite people throughout the centuries, Isaiah was inspired to say:

"Woe to them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isa.5:20 KJV).

People's own natural inclination for self-gratification, along with the influence of Satan and his evil cohorts has done such a thorough job of deceiving people, that in today's world, most people honestly do not know the difference between good and evil.

This is yet another reason why those who proclaim the true gospel message will be hated, persecuted, and murdered:

"And indeed the hour is coming when those who murder you will think that they are serving God" (Jn.16:2 Para.).

Sincere people who believe that they are worshiping the true God will continue to hate, persecute, and murder those who are, in reality, true sons of God. They will continue to do this because they are deceived and do not know that the god or gods that they worship are in reality evil spirits who oppose the true God.

The ways of God are opposite to the way most people want to behave toward him and their fellow man. Jesus was murdered for teaching the truth of God, and John the Baptist was beheaded because he spoke out against Herod's sin of adultery (Mk.6:17-28). It is no different today. Most people do not like to be told they are living in sin and they usually dislike people who tell them of their evil condition.

**THEN AND NOW**

There were a number of warnings that Jesus gave to his disciples as he sent them out to proclaim the gospel message. Because everything in the Bible is recorded as instructions for the elect of God, these warnings are also for our time:
"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt.10:16 Para.).

Jesus thoroughly understood the treachery and evil that people were capable of and the dangers his followers would have in dealing with humanity; therefore, he warns them to be wise. Although Jesus’ instruction to be harmless certainly pertains to the general behavior and attitude that the elect should have, it also pertains to the use of tremendous physical and spiritual power that Jesus had authorized his disciples to use at their discretion.

This instruction to be harmless does not mean that those who will be authorized to use physical and spiritual power during the gospel age cannot use this power for destructive purposes as Eliah did. (2.Kgs. 1:3-5). During Christ's ministry, it was not appropriate to destroy life and property in order to proclaim the gospel message (Lk.9:52-56). However, during the beginning of the early church, it was appropriate to use the power of the holy spirit for a destructive purpose (Acts 5:1-10; 13:8-12), and it is appropriate and necessary during the end of the age to use this power in a manner that will show the seriousness and validity of the gospel message (Rev.11:3-6).

**Beware of Men**

"Beware of men, for they will deliver you to the councils, and they will flog you in their synagogues" (Matt.10:17 Para.).

Jesus told his disciples to be especially wary of those who practiced Judaism, because they would use deceptive practices to betray them for the purpose of doing them bodily harm. Today, this warning should include people of all religions and even some within the body of Christ. See 1.Tim.4:1-2; 2.Tim.3:1-5; 4:2-4; 2.Pet.2:1-2.

**Brought Before Civil Authorities**

"And you shall be brought before governors and kings for my name sake, for a testimony to them and to the nations. But when they deliver you up, do not be anxious about what you should say or how you should say it: for the things you are to say will be given to you at that time. For you are not the one speaking. It is the spirit of the Father that speaks through you" (Matt.10:18-20 Para.).

"But when you are arrested and stand trial, don't worry about what to say when you are questioned. Just say what God tells you to. For the words will not be yours, It is of the holy spirit" (Mk.13:11 Para.).
During the proclamation of the gospel by Jesus, the apostles, and the early church, the religious leaders were no longer able to stop those who preached the gospel through their influence with the people. So these religious leaders resorted to false criminal accusations in order to bring those who proclaimed the gospel before the civil authorities. They did this with the hope of having them convicted of some crime against the government, which would silence them. This is how the Jewish leaders dealt with Jesus, Peter, Paul, and others of the early church. This is also one of the ways the elect of God will be persecuted in the time of the end.

It is easy to understand the extreme physical danger involved in this kind of treachery; however, when this happens, the occasion will be used to further the proclaiming of the gospel through the power of God the Father's spirit as noted in verses 18-20 above.

**Betrayal**

"But brother will betray brother causing them to be put to death, and the father will betray his child, and children shall rise up against their parents and kill them" (Matt.10:21 Para.). See Jer.9:1-6; Mic.7:1-6.

"And brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father the child. And children will rise upon parents, and will put them to death. And you will be hated by all on account of my name: but the one enduring to the end, that one will be saved... For there will be affliction in those days, such as has not been the like from the beginning of creation which God created until now, and never will be" (Mk.13:12-19 Para.).

It is almost unimaginable that a close family member would betray another over a religious matter and cause them to be put to death. However, this has happened in the past and will happen again. What is even more horrible is that children will murder their own parents or cause them to be murdered because of the parent's religion. Nevertheless, it has already happened and will happen again.

**Accusations**

"A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple to become as his teacher, and the slave as his master. If they call the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more those of his household?" (Matt.10:24-25 para.).

Jesus said that the elect of God can expect people to treat them in the same manner as they treated him. It is interesting to note that the word *household* in verse 25, is translated from the Greek word *oikiaikoi*, which has a technical meaning of being members of a household of a government official (i.e., the official's staff).
During Jesus' lifetime, he was the highest representative of the Kingdom of God on earth; however, the Jews accused him of being possessed of an evil spirit and even of being Beelzebub, the prince of evil spirits. Jesus said that all those who truly represent the Father and Kingdom of God as his servants would also be perceived as evil and accused of being possessed of and/or influenced by evil spirits.

It is a fact of history that after Jesus' death and resurrection, Jewish religious leaders and later quasi-Christian leaders did persecute the early church. They called them servants of a great and powerful evil spirit, just as the Jewish leaders of Jesus' lifetime had leveled this accusation against him. This is also a prophecy for the future. Only this time, it will not only be the religious leaders who level this accusation at the elect; but also all who are affected by their preaching of the gospel and the announcement of the return of Jesus Christ:

"I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. And you shall be hated of all for my name's sake" (Jn.15:19-20; Mk.13:13 Para.). See also Matt.24:8-14; Lk.21:16-17.

THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS

After listing many of the earth-shaking events that will announce his eminent return to conquer the earth, Jesus says, "And these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matt.24:8 Para.).

Verse 8 sets the time of this prophecy very near the return of Christ, which is during the time when the elect of God will be an organized body of believers who proclaim the gospel with great spiritual power.

Hated Because of Jesus' Name

"Then they will deliver you up to affliction: and will kill you; and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake" (Matt.24:9 Para.).

Notice that the reason for this hatred being directed against the elect of God is that they truly believe in the name of Christ and the authority and power behind his name. Notice also that eternal life is promised to those who endure to the very end of their physical life.

"And you will be hated by all on account of my name: but he that endures to the end shall be saved" (Matt.10:22). See also Mk.13:13; Lk.21:17; Jn.15:20.
Many assume that Jesus was loved or at least liked by most people of his day, and that he was only hated by the Jewish religious leaders. But, this is not true. Although many came to hear him teach, see him heal people, and work miracles, very few believed what he said. The general population of Jesus' day did not truly understand the word of God or the prophecies concerning the Messiah. Because of this, they were easily influenced by their religious leaders to disregard the teachings of Jesus. The evidence that the religious leaders were easily able to sway popular opinion against Jesus is found in the events that surrounded his trial and crucifixion.

Because of a lack of a true understanding of the word of God and an unwillingness to obey the truth of God, Jewish sects and quasi-Christians of today, also hate Jesus' teachings and those who teach this truth through Jesus' name and authority.

Another reason for the hatred of God's people by this evil and perverse generation is the punitive nature of the gospel message's warning and witness to the world. It is really no wonder that the elect of God will be hated by the majority who hear the message that they proclaim.

In Matthew 24:9-10 and Matthew 10:27-28, Jesus speaks of those who are hated for being his true servants. These are those who represent him and his Father's values by believing, practicing, and teaching what he taught. The vast majority of religions today are deceived and consequently have no love for God's people.

Just as the Jews of Jesus' day professed to believe in God and hated Jesus for what he taught, so is it in this age and so will it be in the future. Some of God's people will be hated, persecuted, and murdered for practicing and teaching truth as taught in the Bible and by Jesus (Jn.17:14).

The One to Fear

The Father and Jesus Christ are actively involved in the lives of the elect of God, the process of salvation for humanity, and world events: nothing is hidden from them. Therefore, one should be encouraged by the fact that all will turn out well in the end.

"Therefore, you should not fear them, for nothing is covered, that shall not be uncovered; and hidden, that shall not be made known" (Matt.10:26 Para.).

"What I tell you in darkness [lack of spiritual understanding], that speak you in light [spiritual understanding of God's word]: and what you hear in the ear, you preach upon the housetops. And do not fear them that can kill the body, but are not able to kill the spirit: but rather fear him [God the Father] who is able to kill both spirit and body in fire" (Matt.10:27-28 KJV Para.).
A child of God should not fear being killed by people for representing the Father and Jesus and teaching the truth of God (Acts 6:1-15; 7:1-60). Conversely, a child of God should fear spiritual death at the hands of God the Father for rebelling against his command to teach his way of life and proclaim his gospel.

The physical death of the elect of God is only a beginning; it is not the end, as it may be for those who reject God during this lifetime. For the elect, physical death leads to the beginning of immortal and eternal life in the Father's family and kingdom. See Phil.1:20-26.

The understanding of the good news message from the Father has been revealed to the elect of God who live in a world that is almost totally devoid of the truth of God. The elect of God are told to preach this awesome truth with zeal and without reservation, regardless of the danger associated with preaching it and the real possibility of being murdered for believing and preaching it.

Lack of Conversion

Verses 10-11 of Matthew 24 speak of those within the church (those called to salvation) who lack true conversion because of their own conceit, pride, vanity, self-will, self-importance, unrepentant attitudes, or character flaws that they have not allowed the truth of God to correct in their lives. Therefore, they fail to grow toward spiritual maturity:

"And then many will be offended, and they shall betray one another, and will hate one another" (Matt.24:10 Para.).

For whatever reason, some people will feel that they have been unjustly treated and they will become offended and allow the love they once had for God and their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ to turn to bitterness. Because of this resentment, they will seek revenge on all those of the church (the elect) who they feel are responsible for their plight.

False Prophets and Teachers

"And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness shall have been multiplied, the love of many will grow cold" (Matt.24:11-12 Para.).

Others of the elect will fail to pray, study, commune with God, and do the things necessary to keep themselves separate from the evils of the world and in good standing with the Father and Christ. Because of this many will become apathetic in their walk with God and lose the zeal that they once had for his way of life.

These people lack the strong spiritual foundation that is necessary in order to endure to the end. Many of them will fall prey to those who teach false religious concepts and they will loose out on eternal life.

Both Peter and Paul warned that people teaching heresies would rise up and that many would follow them and their false teachings:
"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many [the majority] shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2.Pet.2:1-2 Para.).

"Now the spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils: Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1.Tim.4:1-2 Para.). See also Matt.24:11,14; Gal.1:6-9; 2.Tim.4:2-4.

Even some who have embraced the good news message will be seduced into believing a false message—another gospel.

Jesus knew that the vast majority of people would find it easier to follow false teachings than to follow him and the message he brought; hence, he gave the warning to his followers who truly believe in him.

Those Who Endure

"But the one who endures to the end, that one will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the earth for a testimony to all the nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt.24:13-14 Para.).

"And you will be hated by all on account of my name. . . : but the one enduring to the end shall be saved" (Matt.10:22 Para.).

Jesus said that, during this time of trouble, his followers will be persecuted, killed, hated by all peoples, betrayed by their own families, friends, and fellow believers who forsake God and make foolish decisions concerning the truth.

HATED BY ALL PEOPLE

Hated by Popular Christianity

There are over 20,000 different groups and organizations that profess to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. All of these feel that their particular interpretation of Jesus' teachings and the Bible is acceptable to God.

Because both the Old and New Testaments record that there is only one faith and one method of worship that is acceptable to God, logic tells us that, if any one of these thousands of differing groups is correct in their worship of God, then all the others are incorrect and stand condemned as worshiping a false god(s).

Those who truly follow the teachings of God the Father and Jesus Christ teach that there is only one way to worship the true God and only one way to obtain salvation, and that those who teach another way of worship and salvation are worshiping a false god(s).
Again, it is very easy to understand why popular Christianity would hate those who truly believe in God the Father and Jesus Christ.

**Hated by Judaism**

Those of the various Jewish sects, for the most part, believe that Jesus Christ was a prophet or a good man, but none believe that he was the Creator God or the Son of God, nor do they believe that he was the Messiah. However, a major part of the gospel message teaches that Jesus Christ is the Creator God and the Son of God, and that God the Father sent Jesus to cancel the first covenant with national Israel and replace it with a new one.

The books of the law, the writings, the prophets, as well as the words of Jesus condemn Judaism as a perversion of the Sovereign God's system of worship and lifestyle he established for his people to practice. Therefore, it is no wonder that those of the various Jewish sects feel that any who believe in and/or follow the teachings of Jesus are their enemies and worshipers of a pagan god.

**Christianity and Judaism**

Quasi-Christians and people of Jewish sects who profess to worship the true God but whose lives and teachings are not harmonious with the truth of God always have a great deal of disdain and hatred for those who actually worship God in truth, love, and obedience. Jesus says these individuals who hate his followers are evil and corrupt:

"Hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying, This people draws near to me with their mouth, and with their lips honor me; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the ordinances of men" (Matt.15:7-9 Para.). See Isa.29:13; Ezk.33:31-32.

"For the tree is known by its fruit. O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? for out of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things: and out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (Matt.12:33-35 Para.). See Matt.3:7.

Jesus called the religious leaders of the Jews, "hypocrites, snakes, evil and corrupt men," because they were not teaching the total truth of God. Instead, they were teaching half-truths and their own perverted philosophy that was in opposition to God's word. The same can be said for the quasi-Christian and Jewish sects of today. Both claim to be obedient to the word of God; however, their actions and the results of their teachings are far different from what the Bible says they should be, if they were truly worshiping the true God and living according to his way.
"But I say to you, That every idle word that men speak, they shall give account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you are justified, and by your words you are condemned" (Matt.12: 36-37 Para.).

The words of those who only pretend to worship the true God condemn them for what they really are. People can fool other people as to their true beliefs and intentions, but they cannot fool God. Hence, Jesus gave his condemnation of the religious leaders of his day who were, in reality, only pretending to worship the true God:

"Why come to me and call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" (Lk.6:46 Para.) See Lk.6:43-45.

The elect of God are to speak out as Jesus did and condemn those who falsely claim to worship the true God. This is yet another reason that the elect of God will be hated and persecuted.

**Hated by all Religions**

Those who truly believe the biblical record is the printed word of God should also believe the biblical teaching that there are only two religions in the world: The religion of God the Father who is Sovereign of all that exists and the religion of God's enemies that are separated into three basic divisions: Quasi-Christianity, Judaism, and all other religions.

Because of this belief, it is little wonder that those who truly believe that they are the only true worshipers of the only true God and his Son will be hated by all religions of the world today. It is interesting that this is the same basic reason that the ancient nation of Israel was hated and persecuted by other nations.

**Hated by Governments**

Remember that Jesus was not persecuted by the Roman government; he was persecuted by those who said they were worshiping the one true God. After Jesus' death and resurrection, the early church existed for many years without being persecuted by the Roman or any other government.

During the time of the apostles and the early church, persecution always came from the Jews or other religions. It was only after the Romans and other governments perceived the followers of God as a political threat, that they began to persecute them.

During the time of the end, the elect of God will claim to be the only ones worshiping the true God, and they will also claim to be the only true representatives of the Government of God on earth, as did Jesus and the early church. The elect will believe and preach that the government of God is about to begin its rule over all the earth. This will cause them to be hated by governments, as well as the people of other religions.
Hated by all Israel

The nations of Israel have always been a rebellious people who have seldom heeded the warnings of God's prophets and servants. As the end of this age approaches, and the elect of God proclaim the gospel along with its warning and witness to the Israelites scattered throughout the world, they will respond to God in the same way that they always have in the past.

The prophet Isaiah was inspired to record the harsh reality concerning the attitudes and mind-set of the people of Israel toward God. The comments God made about his chosen people are as true today as they were when Isaiah recorded them centuries ago:

Isaiah 30:1-15 LPB

"Woe to my rebellious children, says the Lord; you ask advice from everyone but me, and decide to do what I don't want you to do. You yoke yourselves with unbelievers, thus piling up your sins. . . Now go and write down this word of mine concerning Egypt [symbolic of sin, as well as a literal nation], so that it will stand until the end of time, forever and forever, as an indictment of Israel's unbelief. For if you don't write it, they will claim I never warned them. "Oh, no," they will say, "you never told us that!" For they are stubborn rebels, They tell my prophets, "Shut up—we don't want any more of your reports!" Or they say, "Don't tell us the truth; tell us nice things; tell us lies. Forget all this gloom; we've heard more than enough about your 'Holy One of Israel' and all he says" (vs.1-11).

It should not come as a great surprise that all of the politicians, military leaders, and governmental officials of every level of the Israeliish nations scattered around the world will hate the elect of God, because the elect of God will be preaching the same message of repentance that God's prophets have always preached to Israel.

"This is the reply of the Holy One of Israel: Because you despise what I tell you and trust instead in frauds and lies and won't repent, therefore calamity will come upon you suddenly, as upon a bulging wall that bursts and falls; in one moment crashes down. God will smash you like a broken dish; he will not act sparingly. Not a piece will be left large enough to use for carrying coals from the hearth, or a little water from the well. For the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, says: Only in returning to me and waiting for me will you be saved: in quietness and confidence is your strength; but you will have none of this" (vs.12-15).
Another reason for the Israelitish people's hatred and persecution of the elect of God in the end of the age, is that the elect of God also teach that God the Father is now punishing the descendants of Israel throughout the world for their continued rebellion against him and his physical and spiritual laws of behavior. The elect also believe that God will give them the power to bring destruction upon the Israelitish people as a witness and warning of more destruction to come if they and the world at large will not repent of their evil ways and peacefully come under his rule. See Isa.29:9-14.

SUMMARY

Why was Jesus Christ crucified for preaching the gospel message? Why were most of the apostles along with many of the early church martyred? And why will many be murdered just before the return of Christ for preaching the truly astounding message that Jesus taught?

Jesus Gives The Answer:

"If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (Jn.15:20 Para.). "And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2.Tim.3:12 Para.). See also Mk.13:13; Lk.21:17.

The persecution of the elect of God is a self-fulfilling prophecy, because of their obedience to the command of Jesus to proclaim the gospel message. The elect of God will be hated and persecuted because they will be doing as Jesus instructed. They will be preaching and teaching the good news message of repentance from evil, true belief in God the Father and Jesus Christ and the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

The gospel message that Jesus brought from the Father is a message that is so dynamic, so powerful, and so diametrically opposed to what has been taught by this world's religious leaders and philosophers that the vast majority of people will reject it when they hear it and hate and persecute those who live it and teach it.

Jesus says to let one's light shine (Matt.5:14-16). When one does this, one cannot help but bring persecution upon one's self.

Today, just before the return of Jesus Christ to conquer the earth and establish his Father's religion and government over the earth, the true servants of God must proclaim the good news of God the Father just as Christ did centuries ago.

The basic reasons for the persecution of the elect are not complex or difficult to understand. Revealing the true condition of the world and laying the blame at the feet of those who are responsible for these horrible conditions will indeed bring persecution.

By B.L. Cocherell

b1w11
Jesus instructs those who proclaim the gospel to recite the acts of the woman at Bethany who anointed him as a remembrance of her and what she did:

"I tell you the truth wherever this gospel is proclaimed in all the world, what she did will also be spoken of as a memorial to her" (Matt.26:13; Mk.14:9 Para.).

Because the account of Jesus being anointed by a woman is recorded in all four gospels, and Jesus gave a clear instruction to recite this event whenever the gospel message is presented, there must be some significant lessons to be learned from the event.

Throughout the Bible, there are a number of individuals who are called by name to be remembered for certain actions or events that they either caused or took part in. Even though the woman noted in Matthew and Mark is not mentioned by name, it seems logical that she was Mary (the one who also anointed Jesus' feet), the sister of Martha and Lazarus, and quite possibly one of the women who continually helped to support Jesus in his ministry (Lk.8:1-3).

Even if all four gospel accounts that speak of Jesus being anointed are not speaking of the same event, the profound lessons that are taught in these accounts certainly apply to the gospel message.

Passover 30 A.D.

The Passover season of 30 A.D., began much as it had in previous years as thousands of pilgrims from all over the world crowded into Jerusalem. All were concerned with preparing for the Passover and they did not realize that at this particular Passover the most important event in all human history would occur: the Lamb of God would be sacrificed on this Passover.

Because of a problem in determining the first day of the first month of the sacred calendar in 30 A.D., the Calendar Court sanctioned two Passover observances that year. This rare situation allowed Jesus to observe the Passover with his disciples and institute new rituals before fulfilling the prophetic meaning of the Passover Lamb the next day, on the second Passover.
The Tenth Of Nisan

Matthew, Mark, and John recorded that prior to the Passover, while Jesus was in Bethany having supper, he was anointed for his burial by a woman. Matthew and Mark record that she anointed his head, and Luke and John record that she anointed his feet. All except Luke, record that Jesus said he was being anointed in preparation for his burial, and only John records that this event took place six days before the Passover. See Matt.26:6-13; Mk.14:3-9; Jn.12:1-7.

It is important to understand that the events recorded in the four gospel accounts are not written in chronological order, and that the two days before the Passover noted in Matthew 26:1-5 and Mark 14:1-2 concern a separate event from the anointing of Jesus noted in Matthew 26 and Mark 14.

Remember that the Passover lamb was selected on the tenth day of the first month and sacrificed at the end of the 14th day before sunset; then, it was eaten at the beginning of the 15th day just after sunset.

The anointing of Jesus on the tenth of Nisan and six days prior to the Passover was no accident. It was very important for the fulfillment of the prophetic symbolism of the selection of the lamb at the first and subsequent Passovers.

SIX DAYS BEFORE PASSOVER

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<td>The weekly Sabbath and first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread</td>
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<td>The lift offering, Christ ascends into heaven as the first-born son of God the Father</td>
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Note: Biblical days begin and end at sundown.
When John recorded that it was six days before the Passover that Jesus was anointed for his burial, he did so with the knowledge that there had been two days of Passover that year. Jesus had kept the first Passover with his disciples, while many of the Jews (Jn.2:13; 6:4; 11:55) had kept the second Passover (i.e., the one on which Jesus was crucified).

Notes:

In order to explore some of the profound meanings of the anointing of Jesus for his burial and the importance of Mary's actions to the preaching of the gospel it is necessary to harmonize all four narratives of this event.

When one reads all four accounts of this event, it becomes clear that each writer was only inspired to record what was necessary for his particular narrative; therefore, none of the narratives has exactly the same information recorded. Moreover, these events are not recorded in the exact order in which they happened.

It is impossible to know every detail of what transpired on the day that Jesus was anointed for his burial or to know exactly what each individual was thinking on that occasion. But, there is enough information presented in the gospel accounts to piece together an astounding story that is not only interesting but also rich in meaning for those who are called to understand the gospel message.

It is also important to note that some of the events will not seem to harmonize until most of what is recorded in the various accounts is combined with additional information.

Although these four accounts may at first seem difficult to reconcile with each other, as we will see, they do speak of the same event. We will also see that as the accounts are combined and separated into specific sub-topics, a story flow will begin to emerge and it will become much easier to follow the story flow and to see how the entire event fits together to make many profound statements about the gospel message.

Also note that there is a table included at the end of this chapter that shows the common references that exist in the four gospel accounts of the anointing of Jesus.

The Invitation

"And one of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to a meal" (Lk.7:36 Para.).

"Now Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper" (Matt. 26:6; Mk.14:3 Para.).

"Then six days before the Passover Jesus went to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, and whom he had raised from the dead. There they made him a supper: and Martha served: But Lazarus was one of them that reclined at the table with Jesus" (Jn.12:1-2 Para.).
Here, we see Jesus in Bethany on the day of the selection of the Passover lambs, which was six days prior to the Passover. On this day, he was invited to eat a meal at the house of Simon the Pharisee who was a leper. Although it is not stated in the verses above, we will see that the disciples of Jesus were also invited to this meal.

When one carefully reads the context of Luke 10:38-42 and John 11:1-5; 12:1-2, it seems that Martha is serving because she is the wife of Simon the Pharisee. It is also highly likely that the reason Lazarus is at the meal is because he lived with his sister and brother-in-law (Jn.12:9).

In order to more clearly understand what is happening here, we must remember that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were very dear friends of Jesus. John specifically records that Jesus loved each of them (Jn.11:5). Not only were they his dear friends, but genealogical studies indicate that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were also siblings of Jesus' mother, which makes them his relatives. Because of their friendship and the time they spent with Jesus, they knew much about him and what he taught.

Washing and Anointing Jesus' Feet

"And when a certain woman in the city, who was a sinner, knew that he was eating a meal in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment" (Lk.7:37-38 Para.).

"Then Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard [i.e., pure nard], very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment" (Jn.12:3 KJV)

There are four important things to learn from these two accounts:

1. John clearly records that the woman who did the anointing of Jesus' feet was Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha:

   "And there was a certain sick one, Lazarus from Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha. And it was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick" (Jn.11:1-2 Para.).

2. Mary is said to be a sinner, but are not all people sinners? She was also the sister of Lazarus and Martha and a person of enough importance to be allowed into the house of the self-righteous Pharisee, Simon.

3. Coming into the house, Mary sees Jesus reclining in the traditional eastern manner, at a table on a low couch with his feet stretched out behind him, while eating with his right hand. Mary comes up behind him, kneels down, breaks open the vial of ointment, and washes his feet with her tears before rubbing sweet smelling ointment on them.
4. During this time, it was a sign of great immodesty for a Jewish woman to allow her hair to flow over her shoulders in public. Mary's actions show that she was not concerned about what people thought of her, because she had more important things on her mind than the customs and prohibitions of that day.

**Simon's Indignation**

"Now when the Pharisee saw this he said to himself. If this man were a prophet, he would have known that this woman that touches him is a sinful person" (Lk.7:39 Para.).

Simon the Pharisee, who was himself a leper, was full of self-righteousness. He could not understand how Jesus would allow a person as sinful as Mary to touch him, and Simon condemned him for it. In Simon's thinking, this was proof that Jesus was not the Messiah.

Simon believed in a social cast system that there were minor and major sins. He did not understand that, whether a sin is great or small, it is still a sin. The end result is the same—all sin, unless forgiven, is punishable by eternal death (Rom.6:23).

Herein is a great truth of the gospel message. The Father and Jesus Christ have always loved their human creation who are all sinners, and it is because of and through their great love for their creation that we have hope for salvation:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (Jn.3:16-17 KJV). See Mk.16:16; Rom.5:6-10; 8:7-18; Jms.4:4; 1.Jn.4:9-10.

Jesus loved Mary the sinner. He had a special love for her because she was a close friend (Jn.11:5); however, he also loved all of the other sinners who were there that day in Simon's house, including Simon.

**The Parable of Forgiveness**

"Jesus knowing the thoughts of Simon, said, Simon, I have something to say to you. And Simon said, Tell me" (Lk.7:40 Para.).

What Jesus tells Simon goes to the foundation of Jesus' ministry and his reason for coming to earth:

"There was a certain creditor to whom two people owed money; one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty pence. And when they could not pay him, he forgave both their debts. Tell me, which one will have more love for the creditor? Simon answered and said I suppose the one that owed the most and was forgiven his debt. Jesus said to Simon, You have judged correctly" (Lk.7:41-43 Para.).
Although sin is sin and the Father will forgive all sin (except blasphemy of the holy spirit), all people do not sin to the same degree, nor do all people have the same degree of gratitude and love for the Father and Jesus when they are forgiven of their sins.

The lesson here seems to be that when a person is forgiven of sin, if that person is truly grateful for being forgiven, that person will respond toward the Father and Jesus Christ with a corresponding level of gratitude and love.

Customs of the Day

"And Jesus turned to the woman, and said to Simon, See this woman? I entered your house and you did not give me water to wash my feet: But she has washed my feet with tears and wiped them with the hair of her head" (Lk.7:44 Para.).

During Jesus' lifetime, there were three important customs that concerned an invited guest:

1. When an invited guest entered the host's house, the host would place his hand on the guest's shoulder and give him the kiss of peace.

   The kiss of peace was similar to today's shaking of hands or hugging when greeting a person. It was intended as an indication of happiness because of one's arrival, affection toward the person, or the affirmation of one's peaceful intentions toward another person.

   In Christ's lifetime, the kiss of peace was also an indication of respect that was always given to a person of importance or a notable rabbi upon their entering the host's home.

2. When a guest entered a home, the host would either supply water for his guest to wash his feet, wash the person's feet himself, or have a servant or slave wash them.

   - Guest's were given water by their host as a courtesy to provide for their cleanliness and comfort (Gen.18:1-4; 19:1-2; 24:32; 43:24).
   - Washing of another person's feet was a gesture of submission to the authority of another (1.Sam.25:41).
   - Washing of another person's feet was sometimes an expression of respect and love (Lk.1:37-50; Jn.12:3).

3. The host would either burn a small amount of sweet-smelling incense to perfume the house or place a drop of rose oil/perfume upon the guest's head.

   All of these things were done to show respect and to provide comfort and pleasure for the guest; however, Simon performed none of these common courtesies for Jesus who was the guest of honor. By this neglect we can clearly see Simon's attitude toward Jesus.
Transition Point

Although we cannot be certain, Luke 7:45-47 seems to be the logical point in the chronology of these events when Mary stops washing Jesus' feet and rubbing nard on them, and pours the rest of the ointment on his head. Why would she do this? It makes sense that Mary was also listening to Jesus' reprimand to Simon for his show of disrespect, and upon hearing Jesus comments, she responded accordingly by anointing his head:

"You gave me no kiss: but since the time I came into your house this woman has not stopped kissing my feet. And you did not anoint my head with oil, but this woman has anointed my feet with perfume" (Lk.7:45-46 Para.).

The Anointing of Jesus' Head

"And there came to him a woman having an alabaster vial of very expensive spikenard ointment, and she broke the vile and poured it upon his head, as he sat" (Matt.26:7; Mk.14:3 Para.).

After washing Jesus' feet with her tears, Mary breaks the vial and pours the remainder of the ointment over Jesus' head. As with the other things that Mary did on this day, there is great symbolism in the anointing of Jesus' head and the breaking of the vial.

Forgiveness of Sin

Jesus' reprimand of Simon for his failure to do what he knew he should have done for his guest is analogous to a person who is called to salvation through the gospel message and upon understanding what his response should be, he refuses to do what is expected. This person will not receive the forgiveness of sins, but will suffer the consequences for his lack of performance (Jam.4:17; Rom.6:23).

Notice Jesus' remark to Simon that he should pay attention to the lesson of Mary's performance of gratitude and love to him in anticipation of her salvation from the penalty of sin:

"Therefore, I say to you Simon, Her sins, that are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: But to whom little is forgiven, they are the ones who have loved little. And he said to her; Your sins are forgiven" (Lk.7:47-48 Para.).

Remember that Mary was a close friend of Jesus. According to biblical chronology, she was probably his aunt. Mary had faith is Jesus' ability to forgive her sins, because she believed what Jesus had been teaching. Moreover, she had either personally seen or known about Jesus' healing of many people and forgiving many people of their sins (Matt.9:1-11). Mary knew that she was a sinner and that Jesus loved her. And she knew that the only hope of having her sins forgiven was through Jesus, her Savior and Redeemer.
"And those who sat at the meal with Jesus began to say to themselves, Who is this who also forgives sins?" (Lk.7:49 Para.).

Those who ate with Jesus knew full well that only God could forgive sin. They also knew that there was no way under the current worship system that one could have sin forgiven and forgotten. They knew that all past and present sins were remembered by God on The Day of Atonement and had to be atoned for over and over as long as a person lived. Therefore they asked, "Who is this who also forgives sins."

"And every priest stands daily ministering and offering often times the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins" (Heb.10:11 KJV).

All those present (except perhaps Mary) did not understand that they were in the presence of the Creator God and their Savior who had been given the authority by God the Father to forgive sin in anticipation and as a promise of what would be done through his sacrificial blood:

"But this man, [Jesus] after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb.10:12 KJV).

**Faith and Works**

"And he said to the woman, your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Lk.7:50 Para.).

Mary had faith and through this faith, she received forgiveness of her sins. The question that should be answered is what did she have faith in?

Mary's faith was more than just belief; her faith was complete because her faith had works. Mary was a person of action; she knew what to do and then did it. This is the kind of faith that is required in order to truly believe the gospel message. See Mk.16:15-16; Jms.2:14-17.

A major part of the gospel message has to do with the necessity to believe in Jesus and the Father's offer to forgive sin and his offer to establish peace between himself and the one who truly believes, through the sacrifice of his Son.

Mary had true faith and works. She had faith in what Jesus had been teaching and faith that her works would be honored by him. Mary went away from this very personal encounter with Jesus with peace of mind, knowing that her sins had been forgiven, and that she was in good standing with Jesus and his Father.

**The Broken Vial**

There were two customs in the East that may have had a bearing on why Mary broke the vial rather than just opening it, pouring the ointment out, and resealing it. Both of these customs fit well with the gospel message when viewed in the light of who Jesus was and what he was about to do on the Passover:
• If a glass was used by a distinguished guest, it was broken so that it could never be used by a lesser person.
• It was a custom to first bathe the dead, then anoint the body with fragrant ointments and/or perfumes. After the body had been anointed, whatever contained these ointments and/or perfumes was broken and its fragments placed with the body.

Judas, the Thief

"One of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, the one that would betray him said, Why was not this ointment sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor? He said this not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief and carried and administered the money" (Jn.12:4-6 Para.).

Clearly Judas was not concerned with the meaning of Mary's act of washing Jesus' feet or the anointing of his head. What concerned Judas was the amount of money that could have been had by selling the sweet-smelling nard. It is obvious that Judas' question was directed to the other disciples, because many of them also took up his complaint:

"When the disciples saw this, they were indignant, and asked why the ointment had been wasted on Jesus, when it could have been sold for a great amount of money [300 denarii] that could have then been given to the poor, and they were angry with her for what she had done" (Matt.26:8-9; Mk.14:4-5 Para.). See also Jn.12:5-6.

The complaint of Judas and the other disciples about selling the ointment for 300 denarii to give to the poor is yet more proof that the four gospel accounts speak of the same event.

300 Denarii

To the casual reader, 300 denarii will mean very little; however, during the time of Christ, 300 denarii was an enormous amount of money.

One denarii was a full day's pay for a common laborer; therefore, the value of the ointment was at least the value of a full year's pay for a common laborer.

In John, chapter 6, verses 1-10, we see that a meal to feed over 5,000 people would have only cost 200 denarii.

The value of the ointment was either 10 or 7.5 times (depending on which reference you use) the amount of money that Judas received for his betrayal of Jesus. (Matt.26:14-15).

The ointment Mary used to anoint Jesus was the extremely expensive nard, which was made from a rare plant grown in India. Because nard was very expensive, it was normally used with great frugality.
We can safely assume that Mary knew the value of the ointment, and that this occasion was of more value to her than any amount of nard. Her decision to anoint Jesus with nard shows that her love for Jesus, and what he thought of her and could do for her was much more valuable than the ointment.

This is also a part of the gospel message. We are told that we are to love the Father and Jesus above all other things—including our physical life. If we find anything of more value or more important than the Father's call to salvation, we are not worthy to enter the Kingdom of God.

**Jesus' Comments**

"Being aware of what was said by the disciples, Jesus said, Let her alone, why are you bothering this woman? For she has done a good thing to me" (Matt.26:10; Mk.14:6 Para.).

By saying that Mary did a *good* thing, Jesus meant that Mary had done a *lovely* thing. The English word *good* in these two scriptures is translated from the Greek *kalos*, which means something lovely or a *lovely* thing.

Mary had performed a work of deep heart-felt love: hers was an act of deep personal love and was a precious thing to Jesus and his Father.

"Jesus said, You will always have the poor with you [Deut.15:11], and whenever you want to do a good thing for them you can, but you will not always have me with you" (Matt.26:11; Mk.14:7 Para.).

What Mary had done was far more important than giving to the poor, because there would never again be another opportunity to do what she did for Jesus.

"When she poured the ointment on me, she did it to prepare me for my burial" (Matt.26:12; Mk.14:8 Para.).

Mary's act was also prophetic, because it pointed to Jesus' death and burial.

"Then Jesus said, Let her alone because she has kept it [the ointment] for the day of my burial" (Jn.12:7 Para.).

Notice, that Mary had specifically kept this ointment for this very occasion—the anointing of Jesus for his burial.

**The Bringing of the Ointment**

At this point, the process of logical deduction requires that we at least attempt to answer the question of why Mary would have such a large amount of the extremely valuable nard with her when she came to Simon's house?
There are a number of logical explanations that might be correct or at least offer a plausible answer to this question, because it is highly unlikely that Mary made a habit of carrying such a large amount of the valuable nard with her on a daily basis:

1. Perhaps, for some unknown reason, Mary just happened to have the ointment with her when she heard that Jesus was at Simon's house, and decided to go directly there without stopping to place the ointment in a safe place. This answer would seem unlikely, considering what is recorded by both Luke and John concerning the bringing of the ointment (Lk.7:37; Jn.12:7).

2. Perhaps, because of their friendship, Jesus confided in Mary and told her to either purchase some ointment or at least have some on hand to anoint him for his burial.

3. It is very likely that Mary understood that Jesus was going to die on this Passover for the sins of humanity; otherwise, why would Jesus say that she had kept the ointment for this occasion (Jn.12:12).

4. There is also the probability that the Father's holy spirit influenced Mary to purchase and keep the ointment in order to fulfill this prophetic event. This would also fit Jesus' statement concerning Mary keeping the ointment for his burial.

Regardless of the reason for Mary having this expensive ointment with her when she came to Simon's house, it seems clear that Mary knew in her heart who Jesus was. Whether or not Mary knew that Jesus would die soon is not clear. However, what is clear is that she was overcome with emotion when she saw the disrespect that Simon had shown him by not providing the customary water for the washing of his feet. Therefore, she seized the moment and began to wash his feet with the only water available—her tears. And then, after drying his feet with her hair, she began to apply the precious ointment to them.

It was also customary during Jesus' lifetime, to anoint those convicted of capital crimes prior to their death, because after being executed, they might be thrown into a grave without having the body properly prepared by washing and anointing.

Again, we see a custom that fits the circumstances of Jesus' death and burial. Additionally, we see Mary performing a prophetic act.

**SUMMARY**

"I tell you the truth wherever this gospel is proclaimed in all the world, what she did will also be spoken of as a memorial to her" (Matt.26:13; Mk.14:9 Para.).
Why should her act be spoken of wherever the gospel is proclaimed? Mary is to be remembered because she recognized Jesus for who he was and what he could do for her. Mary believed in what he taught and had faith in his ability to save her from her sins. Mary took action; she did the right thing with the knowledge she had been given. She was not concerned with what others thought of her; her only concern was to do the right thing and honor her Redeemer and Savior.

Mary's actions on this day are an integral part of the gospel message and should be an inspiration to any who seek to understand the Father's great and awesome call to salvation through his Son Jesus Christ.

By B.L. Cocherell
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Matthew 26</th>
<th>Mark 14</th>
<th>Luke 7</th>
<th>John 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time period</td>
<td>Not mentioned, see note in text</td>
<td>Not mentioned, see note in text</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>6 days prior to the Passover (v.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Bethany (v.6)</td>
<td>Bethany (v.3)</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Bethany (v.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Simon the leper (v.6)</td>
<td>Simon the leper, a woman, some people (vs.3-4)</td>
<td>The Pharisee Simon, a woman (vs.36-40)</td>
<td>Lazarus, Mary, Judas Iscariot (v.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People at the meal</td>
<td>Simon the leper, a woman, Jesus’ disciples (vs.6-8)</td>
<td>Simon the leper, a woman, some people (vs.3-4)</td>
<td>The Pharisee Simon, a woman (vs.36-40)</td>
<td>Lazarus, Mary, Judas Iscariot (v.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who anointed Jesus</td>
<td>A woman (v.7)</td>
<td>A woman (v.3)</td>
<td>A sinful woman (v.37)</td>
<td>Mary (v.1) and (Jn. 11:1-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ointment</td>
<td>Vial of precious ointment (v.7)</td>
<td>Vial of pure costly ointment (v.7)</td>
<td>Vial of ointment (v.7)</td>
<td>Pound of pure costly nard (v.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusation that the ointment was wasted on Jesus</td>
<td>The disciples (v.8)</td>
<td>Some people (v.4)</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Judas Iscariot (v.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The value of the ointment</td>
<td>For much (a great value) (v.9)</td>
<td>300 denarii (v.5)</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>300 denarii (v.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of the body anointed</td>
<td>Head (v.7) Body (v.12)</td>
<td>Head (v.3) Body (v.8)</td>
<td>Feet (vs.38; 46)</td>
<td>Feet (v.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons Jesus was anointed</td>
<td>A good work (v.11) For burial (v.12)</td>
<td>A good work (v.11) For burial (v.12)</td>
<td>For an honored guest guest (vs. 44-46)</td>
<td>For the day of burial (v.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift to the poor</td>
<td>(v.9)</td>
<td>(v.5)</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>(v.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus speaks of the poor and his death</td>
<td>(vs. 11-12)</td>
<td>(v.7)</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>(v.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO
THE COVENANTS AND SALVATION

The following chapters discuss the four major covenants (i.e., agreements) contained in the biblical record in order to show the logic and continuity of God's plan for the salvation of humanity. This information will provide an overview of these agreements and the promises made to the Patriarchs, national Israel past and future, those called to participate in the first resurrection, and the rest of humanity after Christ returns.

MANY AGREEMENTS AND PROMISES

From the time of Adam and Eve to the prophetic times of the future, the Bible records that God has made and will make many different agreements and promises with many different individuals, tribes, and nations. Contained within some of these agreements and promises is all of the knowledge necessary for a person to understand God's plan for the salvation of humans.

BLOOD COVENANTS

Throughout history the act of confirming an agreement between parties with blood documents that the agreement is binding on the parties as long as they live. Blood covenants are not to be taken lightly, because they are the most binding of all agreements.

It is important to note that the Hebrew word beriyth is used to described all covenants mentioned in the Old Testament. Beriyth can mean a treaty, an alliance of friendship between individuals, a pledge or an agreement containing an obligation of performance which is sealed by a sign or a sacrifice.

The original agreement the Creator God made with the tribes of Israel was sealed with the blood of a sacrificial animal. The promise of a new agreement after the advent of the Messiah was to be a beriyth (Jer.31:31-34). This new agreement was made and sealed with the sacrificial blood of Christ. See Heb.9:1-28; 10:28-29.

MANY AGREEMENTS AND PROMISES

From the time of Adam and Eve to the prophetic times of the future, the Bible records that God has made and will make many different agreements and promises with many different individuals, tribes, and nations. Contained within some of these agreements and promises is all of the knowledge that is necessary for a person to understand the plan of salvation for humanity. Moreover, when one studies the biblical record, it becomes apparent that it is separated into two distinct divisions
concerning the methods and procedures by which a person may secure salvation.

When most people think of these two divisions, they think of them in terms of the old and new covenants; however, this is not technically correct and it leads to many misconceptions concerning God's overall plan for the salvation of humanity.

A good overview of the many different agreements and promises contained in God's plan for the salvation of humanity will help one to understand the continuity of this plan and how these various agreements and promises are structured in order to accomplish salvation.

In God's plan, there are four major agreements that concern how to obtain salvation. Each of these agreements is unique and pertains to the following time frames and groupings of people:

- The Patriarchs: From the time of Adam to the exodus of Israel from Egypt.
- National Israel: From the formation of national Israel to the advent of Christ.
- The children of the New Creation: From the advent of Christ to the first resurrection (i.e., the Gospel age).
- National Israel and other Nations: From the reformation of the nation of Israel after Christ returns to the end of the plan for the salvation of humanity.

THE FOUR AGES OF SALVATION

In order to understand the agreements with the patriarchs, national Israel and the elect of God of all ages, it is important to understand each agreement in the context of the four different ages in which salvation is offered to humanity.

The First Age

The first age of salvation existed from the time of Adam until the agreement between God and Israel at Mount Sinai. During this time, individuals were offered salvation through a sacrificial system and obedience to God's law. Very little is known about God's worship system during this time period; however, the scriptures do record that individuals kept God's law, offered sacrifices, and prayed to God. A few individuals had personal contact with the Creator God, and there were preachers of righteousness and priests of God who taught his law and way of life to people who wanted to worship him.

The Second Age

The second age of salvation began at Mount Sinai and ended with the death and resurrection of Christ in 30 A.D.. During this time, the nation of Israel was offered salvation through obedience to the law of God and a sacrificial system that was officiated over by a priesthood at the place where God and the power of his presence resided.
Individuals were given various attributes and functions of the holy spirit to help them obey God and grow spiritually. A few individuals had personal contact with the Creator God, while the nation as a whole only had access to the Creator God through prayer and formal worship at the tabernacle/temple.

The Third Age

The third age of salvation began on the Day of Pentecost in 30 A.D. During this age, which will last until Christ returns to rule the earth, individuals are offered salvation through belief in God the Father and his son Jesus Christ, repentance, and baptism.

Those under this agreement have the holy spirit given to them, the law of God placed in their minds and spirits, the spirit of the Father and the Son merged with their spirit; thereby, they are transformed into sons of God.

During this age, no animal sacrifices are required for the atonement of spiritual sin, because the Creator God (Jesus Christ) himself gave his life as the supreme sacrifice to pay the penalty for the spiritual sins of humanity.

The sons of God during this age are a temple of God where God's holy spirit resides. These individuals have direct access to God the Father and Jesus Christ and worship the Father in spirit and truth. See Jn.4:19-24.

The Fourth Age

The fourth and final age of salvation will begin after the return of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth.

After Christ's return, the descendants of Israel will be brought to the land of their inheritance where they will be formed into a world power to fulfill their national destiny. It is at this time that God will formalize a second agreement with national Israel.

During this future age, the nation of Israel will again assume its responsibility of being an example of God's way of life to the world, and the city of Jerusalem will again become the focal point of the worship of God, because this is where Jesus Christ will administer God's government and religion to the nations of the world in an effort to convert humanity to the ways of his Father. See Deut.30:1-6; Mic.4:1-7; Joel 3:16-21; Zech.8:1-3.

This age will last until the Father's kingdom is presented to him by Jesus Christ. See 1.Cor.15:24-28.

During this age, salvation will be offered through obedience to the law of God and a sacrificial system similar to the way it was offered to ancient Israel. The sacrificial system will be officiated over by a priesthood at a new temple in Jerusalem where Jesus Christ (the Creator God) in his glorified form and the power of his presence will reside.
Individuals who want to have salvation will be given the holy spirit and they will have God's laws placed in their minds and spirits to help them grow spiritually. These individuals will not have direct access to God the Father, but they will worship the Father through the sacrificial system and through Jesus Christ, the God who will rule the whole earth from Jerusalem.

COVENANT VERSUS TESTAMENT

In order to clear up the misunderstandings that people have about the two covenants that God has made with national Israel (i.e., the old and the new) and the new covenant and testament that he makes with the people he calls to participate in the first resurrection, it is important to understand the difference between a covenant and a testament.

A covenant is an agreement or contract between two or more parties that is governed by a set of rules and has terms, conditions, and benefits for each party, which is sealed with a sign or blood.

A testament is a record of decisions that people made while still alive regarding the distribution of their property after their death. A testament can only be enforced after the death of the one making the testament.

There was no human death involved in the covenants, agreements, and promises between God, the Patriarchs, and national Israel. Therefore, the first division of the Bible, which is generally called the Old Testament, is not actually a testament, but it is a record of these various agreements and promises and the past, present, and future events, which pertain to God, the Patriarchs, and national Israel about the salvation of humanity.

Biblical research shows that there are four distinct ages of salvation; however, how do each of these ages apply to God's overall plan for the salvation of humanity?

IN THE BEGINNING

Humans were created with the ability to reason and weigh alternate courses of physical and mental action. In other words, humans were created with the ability to choose to do as they pleased, whether good or evil.

Before God created humans, he knew that they might choose evil over good. He also knew that after choosing evil and seeing the results of such behavior, some might want to change their behavior and reconcile themselves to him. If any did want to repent and reconcile themselves to him, there needed to be a method by which this could be done. Therefore, before humanity's creation, the sacrificial system was formulated in order to give humans a way to place themselves back into contact and right-standing with God.

Maintaining a harmonious relationship with God is a major part of the terms and conditions of any of God's agreements with humans.
It is very important to understand the basic system and principles that God has set in place in order for people to establish and maintain a harmonious relationship with him. Moreover, it is important to know how the elect of God can use this system for their benefit, because it is a good relationship with the Father that assures a person salvation.

FROM CREATION GOD HAD A PLAN

"Then Abel brought the first lamb born of one of his sheep, killed it, and gave the best parts of it as an offering. The Lord was pleased with Abel and his offering, but he rejected Cain and his offering. Cain became furious, and he scowled in anger. Then the Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry? Why that scowl on your face? If you had done the right thing, you would be smiling, but because you have done evil, sin is crouching at your door. It wants to rule you, but you must overcome it. Then Cain said to his brother Abel, Let's go out in the fields. When they were out in the fields, Cain turned on his brother and killed him" (Gen.4:4-8 GNB).

In verse 7, God told Cain that if he had done the right thing, he would be smiling. But, what had Cain done wrong before he killed his brother?

"The message you heard from the very beginning is this: we must love one another. We must not be like Cain; he belonged to the Evil One and murdered his own brother Abel. Why did Cain murder him? Because the things he himself did were wrong, and the things his brother did were right" (1.Jn.3:11-12 GNB).

Why did Cain murder his brother? The scriptures indicate that Cain was jealous of Abel, because the things Cain did were wrong and the things his brother Abel did were right. But, what were the things that Abel did that were right?

"By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaks" (Heb.11:4 KJV).

The scriptures show that by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice to God than Cain. This is what Abel did right and Cain did wrong. It was Abel's faith in God's word that caused him to offer a better sacrifice than Cain. It was through his faith that he won God's approval as a righteous man, because God himself approved of his gifts. By means of his faith, Abel still speaks although he is dead.

What made Abel's sacrifice more excellent than Cain's?

THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD

"Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb.9:22 Para.).
Here, we see that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. It is quite obvious that Cain and Abel had been instructed on how to be put back in right-standing with God through the sacrificial system.

It is also evident that Cain was not willing to follow these instructions, and Abel was. As it says in Genesis 4:7, Cain would have been smiling if he had given the proper sacrifice. We know Abel offered the proper sacrifice (Heb.11:4), because he was put back in right-standing with God.

Genesis 4:4 tells us that Abel offered a firstling of his flock. Moreover, the animal was probably a goat or a lamb, which symbolized Christ and his crucifixion. Abel knew that someday the Creator God would come to earth as the Messiah and offer himself as a perfect sacrifice, and through the Messiah, he would have his sins taken away forever. So, he offered the proper sacrifice and his sins were set aside by God so that there could be a harmonious relationship between them.

The basic idea of the law is that, as long as people faithfully observe its precepts and principles, they are in a position of friendship with God and the door to his presence is open to them. However, it is extremely difficult for people to keep the law perfectly. It is because breaches between people and God commonly occur that a sacrificial system exists within God’s plan for the salvation of humanity.

We know that eternal and immortal life were offered to those who lived under the agreement with the Patriarchs, because in Hebrews, chapter eleven, there is a list of those who were faithful to God prior to and after the Flood. Among those mentioned are Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah who all lived before the first agreement with national Israel.

How did they secure salvation? There is a simple answer. These and others lived a life of faith and obedience to God in accordance with the agreement God had made with them.

After the Great Flood, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Moses' father-in-law, and others continued in the terms and conditions of the agreement that God had made with Adam and subsequent generations of people.

By B. L. Cocherell and Vernon O. Jones
CHAPTER
TWENTY-THREE

THE FIRST AGREEMENT WITH NATIONAL ISRAEL

After God delivered the Israelites from the slavery and bondage of Egypt, he offered them an agreement. Although this agreement superseded prior agreements made with the Patriarchs, it contained many of the terms, conditions, and promises from these agreements.

Terms and Conditions of the First Agreement

Any agreement or contract between two or more parties has terms and conditions for the performance of the agreement. The terms and conditions of the agreement between God and the nation of Israel were very specific:

The First Condition

"Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation . . ." (Ex.19:5-6 KJV).

Notice that God did not place any limitations on what he might ask the Israelites to do in the future. He asked them to agree to an open-ended contract that could be amended in the future. Moreover, God says that if they would obey him, he would do certain things for their benefit.

"And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord has spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people to the Lord" (Ex.19:7-8 KJV).

After hearing that the people had agreed to honor the basic terms and conditions of this proposed agreement (Ex.19:4-8), God gave the Ten Commandments and other laws to the Israelites. See Ex.20:1-17; 24:1-15.

BENEFITS

In any agreement or contract there must be benefits for each party of the agreement or contract (i.e., each party must receive something in return for their effort to fulfill their part of the agreement).
Israel's Benefits

Under the agreement with the Creator the Israelites would receive tremendous blessings. God promised health, happiness, wealth, physical protection, and many other benefits to the Israelites for their obedience.

Deuteronomy 28:1-13 Paraphrased

"And it shall come to pass, if you shall adhere diligently to the voice of the Lord your God, to observe and do all of my commandments which I command you this day, that the Lord your God will set you on high above all the nations of the earth" (v1).

"And you shall be blessed in the city and in the field. And you shall be blessed with children, with produce from the earth, with offspring of cattle, with increase of cattle and flocks of sheep. And blessed with your basket and store. And blessed when you come in and go out" (vs.2-6).

"The Lord will cause you to conquer your enemies in battle. You will be blessed in storehouses and in all that you do in the land the Lord gives you. You will be holy to the Lord and the people of earth shall fear you because you are called the people of God. The Lord will give you rain in season, you shall lend to other nations and not have to borrow. You shall be the head and not the tail, you shall be above all others, if you adhere to my commandments" (vs.7-13).

"You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Ex.19:6 Para.).

Eternal and Immortal Life

Eternal and immortal life was also offered to those who lived under the first agreement with national Israel. Jesus is an example of one who secured eternal and immortal life under this agreement. How did he secure salvation? There is a simple answer. He deserved eternal life because he had faith that, if he fulfilled his part of the agreement, the Father would fulfill his part. Jesus fulfilled his part by not violating any of the physical or spiritual laws of the agreement between God and national Israel:

"You shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in [by] them: I am the Lord" (Lev.18:5 KJV).

"All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." The law is not based on faith; on the contrary. "The man who does these things will live by them" (Gal.3:10-12 NIV).
Under this agreement, if a person kept every point of the law, he could secure eternal and immortal life. To practice the law perfectly was extremely difficult, but it was possible because Jesus Christ lived a perfect and sinless life by faith. By meeting all the righteous demands of the law, Christ secured eternal and immortal life.

"Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things [the commandments, statutes, and laws] will live by them" (Rom.10:5 NIV).

SALVATION THROUGH THE LAW AND SACRIFICE

As with the agreement that God made with the Patriarchs, the first agreement with national Israel also included animal sacrifice as the method by which God's people could maintain a harmonious relationship with him. Furthermore, some of these sacrifices also pictured the ultimate sacrifice of the Messiah, as did the agreement with the Patriarchs. Additionally, as in the agreement with the Patriarchs, none of these animal sacrifices could totally remove or forgive sin. For those who lived before the advent of the Messiah, there was no total removal or forgiveness of sins; such forgiveness could only be given after the perfect sacrifice of the Messiah.

Hebrews 11:1-40 shows us that many who lived before and many who lived during the first agreement with national Israel will participate in the first resurrection and be granted eternal and immortal life. Hebrews 11 says that Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, King David and others will be in the Kingdom. But, how did all of these people who lived under these two different agreements with God qualify to enter the Kingdom of God and have eternal and immortal life? The answer is that all of these people kept the laws of God and they practiced the sacrificial system, and for this reason, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is retroactively applied to them:

"These people were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised: God had provided something better for us so that with us they should also be made perfect" (Heb. 11:39-40 Para.).

The people mentioned in Hebrews 11 who lived before the first agreement with national Israel and those who lived under the first agreement all followed the instructions of the specific agreement that God made with them. Therefore, they were able to maintain a good relationship with him. These individuals had faith in what God had revealed to them about his plan for their salvation; they knew that someday the Messiah would come and offer himself as a perfect sacrifice to remove and forgive their sins and give them eternal life. This is the reason that these individuals will be in the first resurrection.

"What then? The people of Israel did not find what they were looking for. It was only the small group that God chose who found it: the rest grew deaf to God's call" (Rom.11:7 GNB).
God offered salvation to the people of ancient Israel; however, few responded to this call, and very few seized the awesome opportunity to gain eternal and immortal life in the Family and Kingdom of God. Those who are called to salvation during the gospel age also have the opportunity to reign in the Kingdom of God as kings and priests along with those who answered God's call under previous agreements. See Rev. 5: 9-10; 20:4-6.

Although the promises of eternal life and immortality were given before and during the first agreement with Israel, it was very difficult to obtain under the terms and conditions of those agreements. This is why a second agreement with Israel was necessary and why those called to salvation after the advent of Christ and before his second coming have a different agreement. Those called to salvation under the terms and conditions of these new agreements can more easily obtain the goal of salvation.

The difficulty of gaining eternal life before and during the first agreement with national Israel may also be the reason that many of those who did qualify will hold very high positions of authority in the Kingdom of God. For example, King David will reign as king over all of Israel after the return of Christ.

**God's Benefits**

It is very easy for us to see the benefits that the Israelites would gain from the first agreement. But, what possible benefit could the Creator God and his Father gain from giving these blessings? One of the benefits that they receive is the great pleasure from giving:

"Jesus said, Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure [delight] to give you the kingdom" (Lk. 12:32 KJV).

God the Father and Jesus Christ are loving and giving beings who gain pleasure from sharing what they have with others. This is by no means the only benefit they will get from this agreement. The Father's primary reason for having humanity created was to increase his spiritual family. He is doing this through the process of converting the hearts and minds of physical people so that they will want to live according to his laws and way of life. And eventually, he will transform them into his eternal spirit sons.

**CONTRACT REVIEW**

The first condition God insisted on before revealing anything further about the agreement that he would make with Israel was an unconditional surrender to his will by the Israelites. "If you will obey my voice and keep my agreement, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people" (Ex. 19:5). This is also the first condition of any agreement that God has made with any people, in any age, concerning the granting of salvation.
Moses Speaks For God

Upon hearing the voice of God from Mount Sinai, the people became so frightened that they asked Moses to speak to God and tell them what he said. From that time on, God revealed to Moses everything that would be in the agreement with Israel.

Remember the only reason God spoke through Moses was that the people were afraid to listen to him directly (Ex.20:19). Also remember that God had already given the people the Ten Commandments before he began to speak through Moses. Therefore, the Ten Commandments are definitely a part of the agreement.

In Exodus, chapters 20 and 21, Moses was on Mount Sinai with God; then, in chapter 24 verse 3, Moses came down from the mountain. This is important to note, because after Moses came down, he told the Israelites everything that God had told him (See Ex.chp.20-24:3); this included instructions to build an altar and to offer sacrifices. In chapters 21, 22, and 23, God gave the civil laws (judgments) to Israel, which included the laws pertaining to servants, manslaughter, murder, kidnapping, theft, property damage, witchcraft, slander, and land rest. In chapter 25, God told Israel how they were to worship him.

"And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord has said will we do" (Ex.24:3 Para.).

The fact that Moses relayed God's commandments, statutes, and judgments to the Israelites (Ex.chps.20-24) is also shown in the Book of Hebrews:

"For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people" (Heb.9:19 KJV).

FORMAL RATIFICATION OF THE AGREEMENT

If a contract is important, it is normally written or recorded on something permanent so that there will be no question as to what was agreed upon. Moses told the people everything that God had said to him; then, he wrote these things in a book:

"And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord has said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel" (Ex.24:3-4 KJV).
After recording the terms and conditions in a book, Moses prepared an altar as God had instructed (Ex.20:24-26; 24:4); then, he read the agreement to the people and the nation of Israel formally agreed to do every thing that God asked of them:

"All that the Lord has spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people to the Lord" (Ex.19:8 KJV).

"And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you concerning all these words" (Ex.24:8 Para.).

"When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said, 'This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.' In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb.9:19-22 NIV).

The formal ratification of the first agreement between God and the nation of Israel was sealed with the blood of an animal. This ratification and sealing of the agreement with blood is important to note because the second agreement was also ratified and sealed with blood—the blood of the Creator God in human form. See Matt.26:26-28; 1.Cor.11:25; Heb.13:20.

It is important to remember that the benefits of the agreements and promises between God and the Patriarchs are still in force. Even though a new agreement was made with national Israel regarding their relationship and responsibilities to God, the unconditional agreements and promises that God made to the Patriarchs will still be honored by him.

**Back Up The Mountain**

"And the Lord said to Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give you tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that you may teach them" (Ex.24:12 Para.).

The next few chapters of Exodus contain the instructions that Moses received in his first forty days on Mount Sinai. Exodus, chapters 25 through 27 give the instructions on how to build the tabernacle and how to pay for it. Exodus, chapters 28 and 29 have the instructions on how to sanctify Aaron and his sons for the priesthood.
In Exodus 32:15-30, Moses came down from the mountain carrying the tables of stone that were written on by the very hand of God, and to his utter dismay, he found the people worshiping a golden calf. Overcome with anger, Moses broke the tables containing the Ten Commandments, and after strongly reprimanding the people, Moses went to God to make an atonement for the people and to ask him to have mercy upon them.

THE CREATOR KEEPS HIS WORD

God does not forget or break his word. While instructing Moses in the law, God reminded Moses of the promises that he had made to the Patriarchs:

"And the Lord said to Moses, Depart, and go up hence, you and the people which you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, To your seed will I give it" (Ex.33:1 KJV).

Exodus, chapter 34, shows that Moses went back up to Mount Sinai, and God wrote the laws on tables of stone again:

"And the Lord said to Moses, Cut you two tables of stone like to the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which you broke" (Ex.34:1 KJV).

After coming down from the mountain, Moses gathered Israel together and said, "These are the words which the Lord has commanded, that you should do them" (Ex.35:1 KJV).

WAS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE FIRST AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL?

Israel had agreed to the Ten Commandments (Ex.chp.20), the judgments (Ex.chps.21-23), and the statutes (Ex.chp.23). Moreover, there is no doubt what the agreement was and what was expected of both parties. The Israelites were to obey the commandments, statutes, and judgments, and God would make them a kingdom of priests and be their benefactor and protector.

Many believe or have been taught that there was something wrong with the first agreement that God made with national Israel. But was it a bad agreement? Was it poorly written and administered? Were the terms and conditions of the agreement impossible to fulfill?

A major error being taught today is that before Jesus Christ and the giving of the holy spirit, man could not obey the laws of God; however, this is not true.
Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Lot, King David, and many others spoken of in the scriptures were considered righteous individuals, because they obeyed God and kept his commandments, statutes, judgments, and sacrificial laws. The scriptures clearly show that, before the giving of the holy spirit on the Feast of Pentecost, many were able to obey God. Notice what is said about two of these individuals:

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Lk.1:5-6 KJV).

**POINT OF LAW**

An important point of law to understand is that an agreement is invalid if it is impossible for either party to perform the things agreed to. Would God make a contract that he could not fulfill? Would he have made a contract with Israel knowing that they could not fulfill their commitment? The answer to these questions is no. God made the contract with Israel because he knew it was possible for them to fulfill their part.

The agreements with both the Patriarchs and national Israel were written so that both could become and remain righteous before God and maintain a harmonious relationship with him.

Maintaining a condition of righteousness before God would be an impossibility without the sacrificial system, because without the sacrifices there would be no way to put human beings back in right-standing with God. However, if a person repented of sin and offered the proper sacrifice prescribed under the law, a person would be put back in right-standing with God. This is another reason that Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and many others will participate in the first resurrection.

**BREAKING THE AGREEMENT**

We know from history that the nation of Israel as a whole failed to keep their part of the agreement, so God canceled it:

"For if that first agreement had been faultless, then there would have been no need to make a second one. For finding fault with them [i.e., the people], he said, Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new agreement with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the first agreement that I made with their ancestors in the day when I led them by the hand out of Egypt; because they did not continue in my agreement, and I did not regard them, says the Lord" (Heb.8:7-9 Para.).
As a nation, Israel went through periods of obedience and disobedience. God was extremely merciful to his chosen people; he blessed them for their obedience and forgave them for their disobedience. The problem was that Israel's periods of disobedience far outweighed their periods of obedience. By the time the prophet Jeremiah came to warn them, the Israelites had totally disregarded the intent of the agreement they had with God and they had failed to fulfill their national commitment:

"And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks" (Jer.3:8-9 KJV).

Notice that God divorced the nation of Israel for committing spiritual adultery. In Jeremiah, chapter 5, the same accusation is leveled at the nation of Judah because of their failure to perform their part of the agreement; therefore, the first agreement with national Israel was no longer workable.

**Jeremiah 11:1-10 KJV**

"The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Hear you the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; And say to them, This says the Lord God of Israel; Cursed be the man that obeys not the words of this covenant, Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them from out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall you be my people, and I will be your God:"

"That I may perform the oath which I have sworn to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey . . . Hear you the words of this covenant, and do them. . . Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not."

"And the Lord said to me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers."

It is important to understand here that Israel not only broke the commandments of God but also they refused to obey the sacrificial laws. Therefore, it is evident they disobeyed the whole law—the commandments, statutes, judgments, and the sacrificial system.
A CURSE

"But it shall come to pass, if you will not pay attention to the voice of the Lord your God, to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you this day; that all these curses shall come upon you, and overtake you" (Deut.28:15 Para.).

If national Israel refused to keep their agreement with God, they would not only miss out on these wonderful blessings but also receive terrible curses instead.

In Deuteronomy 30:15-19, the Creator sums up the choices he had given them:

"See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil: In that I command you this day to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that you may live and multiply: and the Lord your God shall bless you in the land where you go to possess it.

"But if your heart turn away, so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce to you this day, that you shall surely perish, and that you shall not prolong your days upon the land, where you pass over Jordan to go to possess it.

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live" (KJV).

It was God's earnest desire that his chosen people would choose life over death. But, history shows that this did not happen; therefore, a unified nation of Israel under the care and protection of God no longer exists.

By B. L. Cocherell and Vernon O. Jones
CHAPTER
TWENTY-FOUR

THE NEW AGREEMENT WITH NATIONAL ISRAEL

The Creator God brought the Israelites out of Egypt because he had a job for them to do and a purpose for their existence as a nation. These people were called to be a nation of priests who would represent God and his plan for the salvation of humanity to the world.

After Christ's return to establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth, the descendants of Israel will be brought to the land of their inheritance. There, they will be formed into a world power to fulfill their national destiny.

During this future age, the nation of Israel will again assume its responsibility of being an example of God's way of life to the world. The city of Jerusalem will again become the focal point for the worship of God. It is from Jerusalem that Jesus Christ will administer his Father's government and religion to the nations of the world while offering the opportunity for salvation to them. See Deut.30:1-6; Mic.4:1-7; Joel 3:16-21; Zech.8:1-3.

With the return of Christ, much of the, prophetic, and symbolic meaning of the sacrificial system and the commanded observances and holy convocations will have been fulfilled. However, the prophecies clearly show that under the new agreement with national Israel, there will be a sacrificial system of worship along with commanded observances and festivals, which was also done under the first agreement with national Israel.

Many people wonder if the prophecies concerning the future of national Israel are simply analogies, or if they have some other meaning that has not yet been discovered.

The Facts

The following biblical facts will help clarify God's new agreement with national Israel:

- With the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., all laws that were practiced through the Levitical Priesthood and the sacrificial system were suspended.
- Many scriptures show that after Christ's return, all peoples of earth will eventually come under the rule of the government of God.
• The prophecies of Ezekiel and Zechariah clearly show that a temple worship system with a priesthood and animal sacrifices will exist during Christ's rule on earth. See Ezk.chps.40-46; Zech.14:16-20.

• During the rule of Christ, the temple system will be officiated over by the male descendants of Zadok who is descended from Eleazar, Aaron's third son.

• The sacrifices will be performed similarly to the way they were performed under the first agreement with Israel.

• The commanded observances and holy convocations will be observed, but they will be significantly changed to fit the people, times, and circumstances of the new agreement with national Israel and the rest of humanity.

• The new agreement with national Israel is not only made with Israelites, although there are specific areas of the agreement that apply only to them. The new agreement also contains promises which apply to all humanity as the plan of God progresses through the centuries toward its ultimate completion.

Although the Bible gives few details regarding the new system of worship that will be performed at the new temple in Jerusalem, it is not silent when it comes to documenting the fact that the laws, precepts, and principles that God has ordained for the purpose of worshiping him and regulating human behavior will still be in effect during Christ's rule.

Because very few details are given about God's worship system after the return of Christ, it seems that the prophecies concerning it are primarily given to show the continuity of God's plan for the salvation of humanity after the return of Jesus Christ.

It is logical to assume that, at the appropriate time, God will reveal all of the necessary details concerning this future worship system, just as he gave all of the necessary details and instructions to Moses concerning his worship system for ancient Israel.

Note:

Although most of this chapter concerns the cancellation of the first agreement with national Israel and the establishment of a new agreement with them, much of what is said also applies to the righteous Patriarchs and those called to salvation during the gospel age.

GOD REMEMBERS HIS PROMISES

Although national Israel disobeyed God and did not fulfill the purpose for which they had been freed from the bondage and slavery of Egypt, he has no intention of casting them aside and using another people. Keep in mind that centuries before Israel became a nation, God made unconditional promises to the Patriarchs. Moreover, some of these promises were also made to their descendants, who include the Israelites.
"That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because you have obeyed my voice" (Gen.22:17-18 Para.).

The promises to Abraham assured him multitudes of descendants and that, through these descendants and Christ, all the inhabitants of the world would be blessed.

Even though Israel failed to live up to their national agreement with God, they still have an opportunity for national greatness and salvation because of God's unconditional promises to the Patriarchs. See 2.Chron. 6:14; Psa.89:34; Zech.2:10-12.

"For you are a holy people to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be his own treasure out of all the people on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love on you or choose you because you were more in number than any people, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But because the Lord loved you, and because he kept the oath which he swore to your fathers, the Lord has caused you to go out with a strong hand, and redeemed you from the house of slaves, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Because of this, know that the Lord your God, he is God, the faithful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to those who love him, and to those who keep his commands, to a thousand generations" (Deut. 7:6-9 Para.).

"O Lord God of Israel, there is no God like you in the heaven, nor in the earth; which keeps covenant, and shows mercy to your servants, that walk before you with all their hearts" (2.Chron.6:14 Para.).

"He will ever be mindful of his covenant" (Psa.111:5 KJV).

Because of his previous commitments to the Patriarchs, God will continue to work with the nation of Israel until his purpose for humanity is finished.

A NEW AGREEMENT PROMISED

"Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new agreement with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the agreement that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them out of the land of Egypt; which my agreement they broke, although I was a husband to them, says the Lord" (Jer. 31:31-32 Para.).

"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob [Israel]: For this is my covenant to them [Israel], when I shall take away their sins" (Rom.11:26-27 KJV).
There is no doubt that God promised to make a new agreement with national Israel. It is also clear from the scriptures that the first agreement with national Israel has been canceled, and that Jesus Christ has initiated a new agreement with them. Although a united national Israel containing all of the twelve tribes has been promised, it does not exist today. So, at what time in the future will this new agreement be formalized with them?

**After Christ Returns**

The prophet Ezekiel speaks of a future time when Israel will be gathered out of the nations and the wicked will be purged from among them:

"And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and you shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezk.20:38 KJV).

"As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, . . ." (Ezk.34:12-13 KJV).

It is logical to assume that a formal presentation of the new agreement with national Israel cannot be made until they are again a nation. Therefore, it seems that this formal presentation will occur at some point shortly after the return of Jesus Christ as conquering King and the gathering of national Israel.

**WHY THE FIRST AGREEMENT FAILED**

"For if that first agreement had been faultless, then there would have been no need to make a second one. For finding fault with them [i.e., the people], he said, Behold, the days come, said the Lord, when I will make a new agreement with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not according to the first agreement that I made with their ancestors in the day when I led them by the hand out of Egypt; because they did not continue in my agreement, and I did not regard them, said the Lord" (Heb.8:7-9 Para.).

The first agreement with national Israel did not work. If it had worked, there would have been no need for a different agreement.

The major fault was not with the agreement; it was with the people who were under the agreement. The terms and conditions of the agreement could be performed—God could perform his part and a number of individuals did perform their part. However, it was extremely difficult for individuals to perform their part of the agreement, because the people did not have the desire to worship God correctly. Therefore, God canceled the first agreement and made a provision in the second one to change what was wrong with it—the people.
THE FIRST AGREEMENT CANCELED

Hebrews 10:5-10 Paraphrased

"Wherefore when he comes into the world, he says, Sacrifice and offering you do not want, but a body have you prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have had no pleasure" (vs.5-6).

God the Father was not interested in the killing of animals just for the sake of killing. He had no pleasure in the death of these animals and he would not have required that they be sacrificed if it were not for the necessity to atone for the sins of humanity and to teach the lesson that the penalty for the violation of God's law is death (Rom.6:23).

"Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do your will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin you do not want, neither had pleasure in them, which are offered by the law" (vs.7-8).

It would have been much better if the people with whom God wanted to have a relationship had been able to live before him in obedience to his basic laws of behavior; however, this was not the case. Adam and Eve were not able to live in obedience to God nor were their descendants. Therefore, the sacrificial system was necessary in order to put people back into right-standing with God so that they could have a harmonious relationship with him.

"Then said he, Lo, I come to do your will, O God. He takes away the first, that he may establish the second. By who's will [i.e., the Father's will] we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (vs.9-10 quoted Psalm 40:6-8).

The writer to the Hebrews points out three very important things in verses nine and ten:

1. Christ is now the perfect sacrifice and through him, the first agreement with national Israel has been canceled and a far better one has been made.
2. The sacrifice of Christ purges away the sin of those whom the Father calls during the gospel age of salvation and sets them apart for a holy purpose.
3. The sacrifice of Christ eliminates the necessity to perform animal sacrifices to atone for spiritual sins.

A NEW AND BETTER AGREEMENT

While speaking of God's first agreement with national Israel, the writer to the Hebrews says that the ministry of Christ is more excellent than that of the priesthood who offered sacrifices that were only prophetic of what was to come from heaven. Additionally, he says that Christ (the Creator God) has instituted a better agreement than the first one. See Heb.8:5.
"But now has he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better agreement, which was established upon better promises" (Heb. 8:6 KJV).

The new agreement is better than the old one because it is based on better promises (i.e., better terms, conditions, and benefits). Moreover, these promises are far better than those given in the first agreement with national Israel.

**FIVE MAJOR CHANGES**

Although there are many differences between the first and second agreements with national Israel, the following five major changes make the second agreement much better than the first one:

- A perfect sacrifice
- A perfect high priest
- The forgiveness of sin
- The law placed within the child of God
- The indwelling of the holy spirit

**1. A Perfect Sacrifice**

"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:1-4 KJV).

The sacrifices had to be given year after year yet they could never save the people from their sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. The reason for this is that an inferior being cannot pay the penalty for a superior being's violation of the law: a human life is superior to that of an animal life. Humans were created inferior to the angels, but with the potential to become superior to them; neither animals nor angels have this potential.

The inadequacy of the sacrifices is another reason the first agreement is inferior to the new one. Animal sacrifice could only provide a temporary stay of execution for the violator of God's law. Under the sacrificial system, before the advent of the Messiah, the penalty for a violation of the law could only be temporarily set aside by the blood of a sacrificial animal. Therefore, there was a need for a perfect sacrifice and a new agreement.
2. A Perfect High Priest

Hebrews 7:11-16 KJV

"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertains to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar" (vs.11-13).

"For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchizedec there arises another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" (vs.14-16).

Under the first agreement with national Israel, the High Priest was to act as a bridge between God and his people. Because the High Priest himself was guilty of sin and under the death penalty, he was also in need of a perfect sacrifice and a perfect high priest to intervene to God on his behalf.

Because of the imperfection of the sacrifices and the High Priest of Israel, no human could pass beyond the Creator God and into the presence of God the Father. But why not? The reason is because the Father dwells in heaven, and any human who is allowed to come into his presence must be totally sinless, holy, and righteous. No human could qualify or had the authority to go before him prior to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, because all people were under the death penalty for the violation of the Father's law before the advent of Christ.

Hebrews 7:11-16 shows a change in the conditions of the agreement with Israel. This change allows the elect of God during the gospel age of salvation to go directly before God the Father without going to a physical priest and having him speak to God on their behalf, which was done under the first agreement with ancient Israel.

"Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, O God . . .He sets aside the first to establish the second . . . Day by day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:5-12 NIV).

305
Jesus Christ is now the High Priest who sits at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. Furthermore, because of his sacrifice and the new agreement, there is a new, life-giving way to gain access to the very presence of God the Father.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh: And having a high priest over the house of God" (Heb.10:19-21 KJV).

"But now has he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better agreement, which was established upon better promises" (Heb.8:6 KJV).

Through his sacrifice, Jesus Christ is now the immortal high priest and the mediator of the new and better agreement, which is built upon new and better promises from God the Father to his people.

3. The Forgiveness of Sin

"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant to them, when I shall take away their sins" (Rom.11:26-27 KJV).

Until the Messiah came and offered himself as a perfect sacrifice, all of Israel and the rest of humanity were lost and doomed to death, because there was no adequate sacrifice to pay for the sins of humanity. Therefore, if the Messiah had not come, or if he had failed in his mission to offer himself as the perfect sacrifice, all of humanity would be doomed because they would have no way to be saved from eternal death.

"And every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb.10:11-12 KJV).

"If the plan that leads to doom was glorious, much more glorious is the plan that makes men right with God" (2.Cor.3:9 LBP).

The first agreement failed because of the inherent weakness of the human spirit, which resists the law and will of God. The new agreement with national Israel offers Jesus Christ as its atoning power and the transformation of the human spirit through the power of the Father's holy spirit.

The reason that the first agreement with the nation of Israel could lead to death, as well as life was because of a problem with the people, not the agreement. Therefore, God corrected this problem with a new and better agreement.
Although the law revealed what sin was and the sacrificial system showed how to have sin temporarily set aside, the flesh was weak and the people found it difficult to keep the law. Because they knew what sin was but were not able to keep the law, they had no hope of being saved from eternal death, because the penalty for breaking the law is death (Rom.6:23).

Righteousness and the Law

"And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us" (Deut.6:25 Para.).

"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of breaking the whole law" (Jms.2:10 Para.).

When speaking of the benefits of the new agreement over the old, the apostle James said that, if a person who is seeking to be justified before God by keeping the law breaks any one of these laws, that person is guilty of breaking all of the law.

Humans can forgive, but they have great difficulty forgetting an offense against them. However, the Father's forgiveness is total—he will not only totally forgive our sin but also totally forget our sin:

"He has not dealt with us according to our sins; or punished us according to our lawlessness. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, this is how far he has removed our transgressions from us" (Psa.103:10-12 KJV).

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawlessness I will not remember" (Heb.8:12 Para.).

A person who is forgiven under the terms and conditions of the new agreement will never have to worry about being punished for past violations of God's law, because their sin is gone as if it had never existed.

The Blood of Christ

The violation of God's law requires that the violator be put to death (Ezk.18:4,20; Rom.6:23). Under all of the old agreements, the Creator God allowed the life of an animal to be substituted for the life of the violator, in order to temporarily set people's sins aside.

In order to form a new and better agreement (Heb.8:1-10), this same Creator God came to earth as a human and sacrificed his own life as a substitute for the lives of those who violated his Father's law. His sacrifice enabled the sins of humanity to be forgiven (Isa.43:11; 45:21).
It is through Jesus Christ's perfect sacrifice and intercessory authority
with the Father that everyone who agrees to be a part of the new
agreement can have their sins forgiven and forgotten by the Father. See

The writer to the Hebrews confirms that the sacrifice of Christ is the
ultimate and final sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin:

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal
spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience
from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the
mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the
redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testa-
ment, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal
inheritance" (Heb.9:14-15 KJV).

The perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ removes the sins of those under
the new agreement. And because of Christ's perfect sacrifice, the Father
forgets those sins forever, so that his children can stand before him as
righteous individuals. Once Christ made the perfect sacrifice, there was
no longer a need for any other sacrifice to be made for the atonement of
spiritual sins.

4. The Law Placed Within

"But this shall be the agreement that I will make with the house of
Israel; After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their
inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and they shall be my people"
(Jer.31:33 Para.).

"For this is the covenant [agreement] that I will make with the house of
Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb.8:10 KJV).

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Heb.10:16-18 KJV).

Because people who lived before the second agreement was made
did not have the law of God as a part of their mental and spiritual
make-up, they found it very difficult to obey and worship God properly.
For this reason, God decided that he would form a new agreement and
include a provision to change what was wrong with people by placing his
laws in their minds and spirits.

God has only one set of laws that show people how to behave toward
each other and how they should worship him. Therefore, the law being
spoken of in Jeremiah, chapter 31, and Hebrews, chapters 8 and 10, is
the same law that he gave to the nation of Israel as a part of the first
agreement with them. This is the law that is written in the hearts and
minds of people under the new agreement. In other words, God will write these laws in their very being and thereby make the law a part of the thinking process of individuals he calls to salvation.

5. The Holy Spirit

After the return of the Messiah, anyone who agrees to the terms and conditions of the new agreement will have no excuse for not being able to fulfill their part of this agreement. Moreover, they will have no excuses for not being able to successfully obtain salvation, because under the new agreement, each person has the tools to guarantee success if they use the tools properly.

The most important tool that God gives people to help them in their effort to please him and obtain salvation is the holy spirit. Understanding the importance of this tool, King David asked God not to take his holy spirit from him. David knew that this was the tool that God gave him to help him obtain salvation and secure eternal and immortal life:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit in me. Cast me not away from your presence; and take not your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with your free spirit" (Psa.51:10-12 KJV).

Prior to and during the first agreement with national Israel, various attributes and functions of the holy spirit were given to a few people; however, there were limitations placed on the kinds of attributes, functions, qualities, and power, that were given. The scriptures also show that many of these individuals who had this spirit-power within them will be in the first resurrection.

The holy spirit that David had is the same power that is given to those who are called during the gospel age of salvation and to those who will live under the new agreement with national Israel in order to help them secure eternal life. See Lk.11:9-13; Rom.8:26-27; Eph.4:21-32; 6:17-18.

SUMMARY

A careful study of the scriptures reveals that all of the terms and conditions that were in God's first agreement with national Israel are a part of the new agreement. The only exceptions are those items specifically changed or superseded by Christ's sacrifice (among these are the Passover observance and the temple worship system). Many other things, such as keeping the commandments, the annual observances and festivals, and health laws are a part of the terms of the new agreement, and the people of God today and those in the future are bound by the new agreement to keep these terms.

Under the new agreement with national Israel, there is a better method by which a person can secure salvation and eternal life. This new method will succeed where the old one failed because it has a perfect sacrifice, a perfect High Priest, the forgiveness of sin, the law placed within our minds and spirits, and the indwelling of the holy spirit.
Salvation During Christ's Reign

The way to salvation is a growth process that requires an ongoing effort in order to receive eternal and immortal life:

"Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do his good pleasure" (Phil.2:12-13 KJV).

See also Gal.6:3-10.

The overall plan of God for the salvation of humanity has not changed from the foundation of the world. Part of this plan is that humans must come into conformity with his laws of behavior. A fundamental teaching in the Bible is that one must put forth a serious, heartfelt effort to change from the disobedience of God's law to the obedience of his law before being granted salvation. This type of change takes time, effort, and life experience.

During the reign of Christ, and under the new agreement with national Israel and humanity as a whole, people will live in a world of peace and prosperity. During this future age, God the Father will offer the opportunity of salvation to all people. However, it will be the responsibility of each individual to make an ongoing effort to live a righteous life and develop spiritual maturity in order to secure eternal life.

An Everlasting Agreement

The new agreement with national Israel, the elect of God, and the rest of humanity concerning how to obtain salvation will never fade away; it will continue to exist after the return of Jesus Christ until God's plan for the salvation of humanity is finished:

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant [agreement], Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb.13:20-21 KJV). See Matt.26:27-28; Lk.22:20.

After the return of Jesus Christ, all people will have an opportunity to receive the spirit of God, which will give them the spiritual strength to successfully obey God (Jer.50:19-20 Para.).

Today, before the return of Christ, the New Covenant brings with it an opportunity to be among the first of humanity to be made a son of God the Father just as Jesus Christ is. The New Covenant offers an eternal inheritance of the earth and the universe, plus a spiritual inheritance so fantastic that it cannot even be comprehended by the human mind. All of this and more is offered by God the Father to those he offers salvation under the new agreement in this age of human existence.
Contract Ratification

After the Israelites left Egypt and were camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, they made an agreement with God to do whatever he told them. In return for this obedience God promised to give them tremendous blessings.

Moses wrote this agreement in a book, read the agreement to the people, and again they agreed to do whatever God required of them. Then, Moses sprinkled the book and the people with animal blood; thereby, he ratified and sealed the agreement.

The blood that was sprinkled upon the people and the agreement was symbolic of the blood of Jesus Christ, which would forgive their sins and ratify and seal the new agreement between God the Father, national Israel, and the rest of humanity. See Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:5-7; Col. 1:12-14, 20; Heb. 10:19-22.

The Blood of Christ

"And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:27-28 KJV). See Also Eph. 1:7.

"This cup is the new agreement in my blood, that is being poured out for you" (Lk. 22:20).

"After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1. Cor. 11:25 KJV).

The first agreement that God made at Mount Sinai with national Israel was canceled on the Passover in 30 A.D. with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The events surrounding this Passover and the death and resurrection of humanity's Redeemer also ratified a new agreement with Israel and the rest of humanity. In this same year on the Feast of Pentecost, many of the various terms, conditions, and promises of the new agreement began to go into effect for all of those called to salvation during the gospel age:

"By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear" (Heb. 8:13 NIV).

By B. L. Cocherell and Vernon O. Jones
CHAPTER
TWENTY-FIVE

THE AGREEMENT WITH THE FATHER'S ELECT
DURING THE GOSPEL AGE OF SALVATION

Some feel that the elect of God who have been called to salvation after the advent of Christ (i.e., those called during the gospel age) are under the new agreement with national Israel. However, this is not entirely true, because the agreement that was established on Pentecost in 30 A.D. is not the agreement that will be made with national Israel after the return of Christ; it is a special version of that new agreement. One of the more notable differences is that the agreement with the elect has a testament attached to it and the promise of a better resurrection:

"After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1.Cor.11:25 KJV).

"Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection" (Heb.11:33-35 KJV).

THE GENTILES

It is during the gospel age that God began to call all people to have equal status with an Israelite in regard to the call to salvation, regardless of their race or national origin:

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of individuals: But of every nation he that fears him, and does righteously, is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35 Para.).

"For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal.3:26-29 KJV).
"Wherefore remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ" (Eph.2:11-13 KJV).

"For through him we both have access by one spirit to the Father. Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph.2:18-19 KJV).

Through the sacrifice of Christ, it is possible for those who are called to salvation during the gospel age to have access to God the Father and receive tremendous blessings above and beyond those that are offered under the new agreement with national Israel and the rest of humanity after the return of Jesus Christ.

THE AGREEMENT WITH THE ELECT OF GOD

Much of what is written by the apostles about the agreement between the Father, Jesus Christ and those called to salvation during the gospel age is written in the context of the new agreement with national Israel. Moreover, it is within the framework of the agreement with national Israel that many of the terms and conditions of the agreement with the elect are stated. However, the agreement that the Father makes with those who are called to salvation during the gospel age and others who will participate in the first resurrection is unique and it is different from the first and second covenant with national Israel in many ways.

The apostle Paul understood the uniqueness of this agreement with those who are called during the gospel age. Notice what he says while speaking of those who had seen Christ and been personally taught by him:

"And last of all, even as one born out of time, he was seen of me. For I am least of the apostles" (1.Cor.15:8-9 Para.).

When Paul says that he was born out of time (i.e.,prematurely), he was not speaking of his physical birth; he was speaking about his spiritual birth and the second agreement that God had made with national Israel. Paul knew that the second agreement with regathered Israel would go into effect after the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings and that his calling to salvation during the gospel age was a special gift, which was not given to all Israelites at that time.

Paul was taken out of his former life and given the awesome opportunity to be an apostle of Christ. If this had not happened, he would have died and been resurrected in the great resurrection of national Israel after the return of Christ (Ezk. chp.37). And he would have had his opportunity for salvation under far different circumstances.
THE A NEW AGREEMENT THROUGH CHRIST

"Then said he, Lo, I come to do your will, O God. He takes away the first, that he may establish the second. By which we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb.10:9-10 Para.).

Although what the writer to the Hebrews is speaking about pertains primarily to the new agreement with national Israel, it also pertains to the agreement that is made with those who are called to salvation during the gospel age.

First the writer to the Hebrews reveals that through Christ's perfect sacrifice, the first agreement with national Israel is canceled in favor of a far better one. Then he says that those whom the Father calls to salvation during the gospel age are set apart through the sacrifice of Christ for a holy purpose, and the need to perform animal sacrifices to atone for spiritual sin has been eliminated by the sacrifice of Christ.

"For by one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb.10:14 KJV).

A BETTER RESURRECTION

In the Book of Hebrews, chapter eleven, there is a long list of righteous individuals who died without receiving God's promises:

"Who [these people] through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection" (Heb.11:33-35 KJV).

The entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews chronicles these righteous individuals and their deeds of faith as they lived and died in obedience to God. Verse 35 shows that they did all this in order to obtain a better resurrection.

Is one resurrection better than another? The answer is YES! The reason that these individuals are promised a better resurrection than other people is because their agreement with God is different from the agreements with national Israel. The thing that makes their agreement unique has to do with the awesome opportunity that they have been given in regard to the responsibilities and rewards that they have been called to participate in. When one reviews the rewards and opportunities for service to humanity that will exist in God's kingdom for those called to participate in the first resurrection, it becomes obvious that the first resurrection is the best and most desirable one.
"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb.11:39-40 KJV). See also Heb.11:13.

There are people who will participate in the first resurrection who were called to salvation before and during the first agreement with national Israel as well as people who are called after the advent of Christ.

THE CALL TO PARTICIPATE

There are four basic reasons why God called people before the advent of the Messiah to participate in the first resurrection. Moreover, these same reasons apply to those he calls after the advent of the Messiah to participate in the first resurrection.

1. They are to prepare a people to help Jesus Christ rule the world upon his return:

"And has made us to our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev.5:10 KJV). See also 1.Thes.3:13; Rev.3:21; 20:4-6.

2. They are to preach the good news of the soon-coming Kingdom of God:

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt.24:14 KJV).

3. They are to preach the message of repentance:

"Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . ." (Matt.28:19-20 KJV).

4. They are to grow in grace and knowledge (2.Pet.3:18) and learn to perfect the ways of God in order to be able to fulfill the purpose for which they were called:

Major Responsibilities

One of the major responsibilities of those in the first resurrection is to assist in the conversion of humanity. God the Father and Jesus Christ want everyone to obtain salvation (1.Tim.2:4; 2.Pet.3:9). For this task, some are called to be trained and prepared through trials, tests, study of God's word, and prayer in order to grow in grace and knowledge, so that they will be able to fulfill an office of a king-priest to rule and teach God's truth to those who have never heard or understood the way to salvation.
Those in the first resurrection (i.e., the elect of God of all ages) will be the examples, leaders, and teachers of the ways of God for the rest of humanity who have never had an opportunity for salvation.

**Awesome Rewards**

Those who participate in the first resurrection are also the inheritors of the Kingdom of God and many other blessings that are not available to the rest of humanity:

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King [Jesus] say to them on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father [God the Father], inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:31-34 KJV). See also Jms.2:5.

Those in the first resurrection will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven as a part of their reward: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt.5:3 KJV, see also v5).

The elect of God will inherit his Kingdom and receive many other rewards for their faithfulness and obedience to God.

**Inherit all Things**

Not only will the righteous inherit the Kingdom, but also they will inherit all things. What a tremendous reward to inherit the Kingdom and to be joint-heirs with Jesus of all that will ever exist.

"He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev.21:7 KJV). See also Heb.1:1-2, 5-8.

**HOW TO BECOME AN HEIR**

What are the requirements necessary to become an heir, and what does a person have to do to acquire the inheritance?

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel" (Mk.1:14-15 KJV).

The first things that must happen before a person can become an heir is that a person must be called of God to become an heir (Jn.6:44,65). After this call, a person must believe the gospel concerning Christ and the Kingdom of God, ask the Father for forgiveness for violating his law, and stop violating it.
"Then Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Except you eat
the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in
you" (Jn.6:53 KJV).

This verse shows that we must go through Jesus Christ to receive
eternal life at the resurrection.

Acts 2:38 tells us that after one repents, one must be baptized for the
forgiveness of sin and the receiving of the holy spirit. Therefore, a person
must believe in Christ, repent of one's sin, be baptized, and then receive
the holy spirit. When one accomplishes these things one becomes a son
and heir of God and is authorized to receive an inheritance at the
resurrection of the just (Rom.8:11-14).

BAPTISM

"Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you
in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall
receive the gift of the holy spirit" (Acts 2:38 KJV).

During the gospel age of salvation, the baptismal ceremony and its
various steps is the process by which people make and ratify an eternal
agreement between themselves, God the Father, and Jesus Christ. Upon
completion of the final ritual of the baptismal ceremony, a person
receives the holy spirit and becomes a son of God the Father and a
brother of Jesus Christ in the holy and divine Family of God.

The baptized person is then committed to an endeavor that will then
lead to eternal life as a member of the family and government of God
(Rev.3:5,21; 5:10; 20:4-6). However, it will lead them to eternal death if
this commitment is not kept (Lk.9:62; Heb.6:4-6; 10:26-27; Rev.20:
13-15; 21:8). God the Father and Jesus Christ have committed them-
selves to help the newly begotten son with the very power that sustains
the universe and all that exists. See Matt.6:25-34; Heb.13:5-6; Jn.14:
12-14.

Romans 6:1-9 KJV

Paul reminds the elect at Rome of their baptism and their sinless
condition before God:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may
abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any
longer therein? Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized
into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (vs.1-3).

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism to death: that like as
Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even
so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been
planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the
likeness of his resurrection:" (vs.4-5).
When a person is raised out of the baptismal water, that person is symbolically and literally raised to a new life. The repentant person has become pure and sinless and is no longer under the penalty of death for violating God's law. The spirit and body have been purged of all sin and defilement:

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him" (vs.6-9).

DEAD TO SIN

"For in that he died, he died to sin once: but in that he lives, he lives to God. Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.6:10-11 Para.). See also Rom.7:6; Heb.9:13-14.

As Christ is dead to sin, so are those who have God's spirit dwelling within them. They are free from sin and its penalty and they can look forward to being an immortal spirit-being that can never die:

"For in baptism you see how your old, evil nature died with him and was buried with him; and then you came up out of death with him into a new life because you trusted the Word of the mighty God who raised Christ from the dead. You were dead in sins, and your sinful desires were not yet cut away. Then he gave you a share in the very life of Christ, for he forgave all your sins, and blotted out the charges proved against you, the list of his commandments which you had not obeyed. He took this list of sins and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross" (Col.2:12-14 LBP). See also Col.3:1-4.

SINS WASHED AWAY

Although baptism is symbolic of a physical death and a resurrection to a new life, it is much more. During this ceremony, the person being baptized is washed clean and purged of all sin by the power of God's spirit through the sacrifice of Christ. And the baptized person becomes devoid of sin and stands righteous before God.

Under the first agreement with national Israel, the washing with water was as an act of purification. During the gospel age, it is the baptismal water and the blood of Jesus Christ that picture and perform this purification. In fact, it is through the sacrificial blood of Jesus that we are washed clean and forgiven of our sins and purged of all defilement that would prevent us from coming before the Father to receive his spirit.

The following scriptures mention the washing away of sin through pure water, the blood of Jesus, and the cleansing power of the holy spirit as an integral part of the process of becoming one of God the Father's earthly children:
"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb.10:22 KJV).

"Or do you not know that the unjust ones will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be led astray, neither fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, abusers, homosexuals, thieves, covetous ones, drunkards, revilers, or plunderers shall inherit the Kingdom of God. And some of you were these things, but you are washed; but you were sanctified; but you were justified in the nature of the Lord Jesus, and in the spirit of our God" (1.Cor.6:9-11 Para.).

"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works in righteousness which we had done, but according to his mercy he has saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the holy spirit, which he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ, our Savior" (Tit.3:4-6 Para.).

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev.1:5 KJV). See also Rom.5:9; Eph.2:13; Heb.13:12; 1.Jn.1:1-7; 3:5-6; Rev.5:9; 7:13-14.

THE TEMPLE

Under the first agreement with national Israel, the priesthood, the people, and all things that came into close contact with God had to be purified and kept clean, because God will not dwell where there is sin (Lev.19:2; 1.Pet.1:15-16) or impurity (Ex.29:36-46; Deut.23:14; 1.Cor.3:17).

God has not changed. Under the new agreement, he still requires that all things that come into close contact with him be free from all sin and impurity:

"And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (2.Cor.6:16-18 KJV).

Why Purify the Body

God the Father will not allow his spirit to inhabit an impure place—a physical, as well as a spiritual change takes place during the baptismal ceremony. In the baptismal water, God purifies the body through the power of his spirit so that his holy spirit can dwell within the person's physical body (See 1.Tim.5:22; Tit.1:15-16; Heb.10:14-22; 1.Pet.1:22; 1.Jn.3:1-3; 4:4):
"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple" (1.Cor.3:16-17 NIV).

"Haven't you yet learned that your body is the home of the holy spirit God gave you, and that he lives within you? Your own body does not belong to you. For God has bought you with a great price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because he owns it" (1.Cor.6:19-20 LPB).

The body of a child of God is a temple of God; it is God's holy place where his spirit dwells.

God will not allow his spirit to inhabit a sinful person; therefore, the first step toward salvation is to repent in order to rid one's mind (God's Holy Place) of all sin. The second step is to sincerely ask God the Father to forgive our sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The third step is to be immersed in water for the washing away of sin through the blood of Christ and for the purifying of the physical body, which will become a temple where God will place his spirit.

**BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT**

After people are made sinless and pure through Christ's sacrifice, God the Father can ratify his agreement with them by placing his spirit within them.

Upon receiving the holy spirit, the baptized person becomes a son of God and an eternal agreement between the person, God the Father, and Jesus Christ has been ratified and sealed. See Rom.8:16-19; Jer.31:31-33; Heb.8:8-11.

Notice what John the Baptist says about being baptized with the spirit:

"I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the holy spirit" (Mk.1:8 KJV).

"And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said to me, Upon whom you shall see the spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizes with the holy spirit" (Jn.1:33 KJV). See also Lk.3:16; Acts 11:15-16.

**THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

"If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will petition the Father, and he will give you another comforter that he may remain with you forever the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it does not see him, nor know him. But you know him, for he abides with you, and shall be in you" (Jn.14:15-17 Para.). See Jn. 16:13-14.
"For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom.8:14 KJV).

Paul also says that only those who have the spirit of God are his sons. The holy spirit is so important that having or not having it is the difference between having or not having salvation. See Rom.8:9; Jn.14:21-24.

The Father's And Christ's Spirit

Under the terms and conditions of the agreement with the elect of God during the gospel age, the children of God are given the Father's holy spirit, which imparts various attributes and powers. The elect of God also have the spirit of the Father and Christ dwelling within them.

Those called to salvation prior to the advent of the Messiah did not have the Father's or Christ's spirit placed in them, because the Father had not been revealed (See Matt.11:27; Lk.10:22; Jn.8:19), and the Creator God had not yet become the Messiah. Moreover, these people did not receive the spirit of sonship (Rom.8:14-15) nor did they have the law of God placed within their minds and spirits (See Jer.31:33; Heb.8:8-10).

Under the new agreement, those to whom the Father gives the holy spirit (his spirit-power), his spirit, and the spirit of Christ are in a condition of sinlessness and purity as they live out their physical lives.

THE LAW PLACED WITHIN

"But this shall be the covenant [agreement] that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer.31:33 Para.). See also Ezk.36:27.

"For this is the covenant [agreement] that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb.8:10 KJV).

Those called to salvation after Christ's death and resurrection are the first to have the law of God placed within their very being through the power of the Father's holy spirit.

"Forasmuch as you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not on tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart" (2.Cor.3:3 KJV).

When people receive the holy spirit, the laws of God are made a part of their very nature and being, which makes it possible to be conscious of the difference between righteous and unrighteous concepts and behavior. Having these laws as a constant part of the consciousness alerts a child of God to the right spiritual path that should be followed as one experiences life with its various trials and temptations.
Another important function of the holy spirit is to transform a person into a son of God. When this function of the spirit of God is applied to a person, that person is transformed into a son of God and made a member of the Family of God. This transformation places a person at the starting point of eternal and immortal life. This is the time of spiritual conception from which we can grow toward spiritual maturity and perfection into an immortal spirit-being.

In his letter to the Church at Rome, Paul draws upon the example of the Roman adoption system to illustrate how a person becomes a son of God:

"For as many as are led by the spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery again to fear, but you received a spirit of adoption by which we cry, Abba! Father! The spirit itself witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God" (Rom.8:14-16 Para.).

Roman adoption was extremely difficult to accomplish, because the Roman father was the absolute controlling power over the family. No matter how old a son became, he was still the absolute possession and under the absolute control of his father. This made adoption into another family a very serious and difficult thing to accomplish. Moreover, even when a father did agree to an adoption, there were a number of symbolic ceremonies and rituals, which required the presence of many witnesses, that had to take place before any adoption was considered legal and binding under Roman law.

Once a son was legally adopted into his new family, he lost all rights to his old family and gained the rights of a legitimate son in his new family. By law, his old life was completely wiped away (e.g., all debts were canceled). He was regarded as a completely new and different person who was entering a new life upon which the old life had no meaning or importance. Under Roman law, he was considered the son of his new father.

Paul says the holy spirit is the witness of the adoption into the Family of God whereby the past life is wiped away—it is gone. All debts are canceled, and the new son of God begins a new life in the God family with all the rights of sonship.

TRANSFORMATION INTO A SON OF GOD

Upon receiving the spirit of God, a person is transformed from the original human creation into a new and different being. The old person, which only had the spirit of man, ceases to exist and a new person who has the spirit of God dwelling within is born. See Jn.3:3-7; 2.Cor.5:17.
Although a child of God still appears to be human, a transformation has taken place. Anyone who has received the holy spirit is different from other humans. A person with the holy spirit is a son of God, with the genetic imprint of the God family. Although a child is not yet an immortal spirit-being, they are still a child of God and a member of the Father's spiritual family, and at some time in the future they will shed the body of flesh and receive an immortal spirit body. See 1.Cor.15: 51-54; 1.Thes.4:13-17; Rev.20:6. Those who respond to God's call to salvation, repent, are baptized, and receive his spirit can look forward to tremendous rewards and happiness forever as an immortal being in the Family of God.

SEALING THE AGREEMENT

"And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you concerning all these words" (Ex.24:8 Para.).

"When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said, 'This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.' In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb.9: 19-22 NIV).

The formal ratification of the first agreement between God and the nation of Israel was sealed with the blood of an animal. This ratification and sealing of the agreement with blood is important to note, because the second agreement is also ratified and sealed with blood—the blood of the Creator God in human form. See Matt.26:26-28; 1.Cor.11:25; Heb.13: 20.

Just as the Creator God sealed his agreements with the Patriarchs and the Israelites with blood, he has sealed the new agreement with blood. However, the new agreement is not sealed with the blood of an animal; the new agreement is sealed with the blood of the Creator God himself who became Jesus Christ.

THE PERSONAL AGREEMENT

Contrary to what many believe, baptism is not for the purpose of binding a person to a group of people or to one particular physical organization or another. Baptism is a person's acceptance of the terms and conditions of the new agreement between God the Father, his chosen people, and the God Family.
Baptism is the making of an agreement between a person, God the Father, and Jesus Christ. Baptism is the induction of a person into the holy and divine Family of God. Baptism is a step toward becoming a god-being in the Kingdom and Family of God. No earthly organization of humans can offer this grand and awesome privilege—only the Father can bind a person to himself and place a person into his Family (Jn.6:44-45).

The allegiance one makes at baptism is to God the Father and Jesus Christ, not to any other. Baptism is a very serious step to take. From the moment one is baptized and receives the holy spirit, a commitment of gigantic proportions has been made by the baptized person, by God the Father, and by Jesus Christ.

THE ADMINISTRATORS

At Christ's death, his will and testament began to go into effect, and after his resurrection he commissioned his followers to execute and administer his will and testament:

"Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world [age]. Amen" (Matt.28:19-20 KJV).

This is the most important job the Father has ever given to anyone other than his Son Jesus Christ. The Father's children are the administrators of Jesus Christ's will and testament today and they will continue to administer it after his return, when the Kingdom of God is established on earth.

Every time a child of God explains the hope of the salvation that is in the meaning of Jesus Christ's life, crucifixion, and resurrection to anyone, that person is having the will of Christ administered to them. However, it is the responsibility of each person who receives this knowledge to respond in a positive manner in order to become an heir of Christ's will and testament.

Yes, it is true that if you will believe in Christ (believe that his sacrificial blood will remove sins), repent from breaking God's law, be baptized, and live according to God's laws and ways of life, you can also become an heir of Christ and receive eternal life.

The apostle Paul also tells us that the administrators of the new and better agreement of God are the elect children of God:

2.Corninthians 3:6-11 NIV

"He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the spirit; for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (v6). See also 1.Cor.15:3.
The old way of obtaining salvation—by trying to perfectly keep the law—ends in death, because everyone has sinned (Rom.3:23; Gal.3:22). However, through a new agreement, the holy spirit imparts life because it is through the power of the holy spirit that one can have the desire and help required to successfully obey God. See Rom.8:11.

"Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was" (v7).

The old way to obtain salvation under the first agreement with national Israel began with such glory that the people could not bear to look at Moses' face as he repeated the laws of God to them.

"Fading though it was, will not the ministry of the spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!" (vs.7-9). See Ex.34:27-35.

The glory that is made possible under the new agreement is much greater than the glory that radiated from Moses' face after he had been with God. The glory that can be secured through this new agreement is similar to the glory that emanates from God the Father and Jesus Christ. The reason adherence to the new agreement will result in this type of glory is that, under the new agreement, the children of God have the necessary tools (i.e., the holy spirit) to do the Father's will.

"For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!" (vs.10-11).

The laws of God showed people their sins; however, the people who lived before the advent of Christ had great difficulty keeping the law perfectly because of the weakness of the flesh. Therefore, to them the law led to death, because the penalty for breaking the law of God is death (Rom.6:23).

The new agreement is much more glorious because it has Jesus Christ, the Righteous, to offer as its atoning power. If we claim the promise of forgiveness of sin through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and truly believe that we are forgiven for our sins through his sacrificial blood, we are justified or declared righteous in the eyes of God the Father—our sins are forgiven and forgotten. We are then justified and put in contact with the Father by the death of his Son, Jesus Christ (Rom. chp.5):

"In fact, that first glory as it shone from Moses' face is worth nothing at all in comparison with the overwhelming glory of the new agreement. So if the old system that faded into nothing was full of heavenly glory, the glory of God's new plan for our salvation is certainly far greater. for it is eternal" (2.Cor.3:10-11 LPB).
Why was the glory of the first agreement worth nothing when compared to the new agreement? The first agreement has no value because it only revealed what sin was and there was no way found under the first agreement to forgive sins.

When the first and second agreements with national Israel are compared, the second one has an overwhelming glory, because it contains the tools necessary for success that the first one did not have. These tools are as follows:

- The perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ
- A spiritual High Priest who is able to understand human imperfections (Heb. chap.2)
- The holy spirit placed within the child of God, which creates the desire to obey God's commandments, statutes, and judgments

**AFTER REPENTANCE AND BAPTISM, WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT?**

The majority of people who attempt to follow God today believe that all or most of the law of God was canceled by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, although he says,

"Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt.5:17 Para.).

Christ says the same thing today that he said to the professing righteous of his day concerning his Father's law:

"You do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matt.22:29 Para.).

Most people do not understand the truth of God because they refuse to obey the laws that he created for their benefit. Obedience to these laws will bring an understanding of God's mind and purpose for humanity:

"O how love I your law! It is my meditation all the day. You through your commandments have made me wiser than my enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep your precepts" (Psa.119:97-100 Para.).

A careful study of the scriptures will reveal that all of the terms and conditions that were in the old agreement with national Israel are a part of the new agreement. The only exception is those items specifically changed or superseded by Christ's sacrifice (among these are the Passover observance, and the temple worship system). Many other things, such as the commandments, the annual observances and festivals, and the health laws are still a part of the new agreement and are binding upon the people of God today.
NON-COMPLIANCE
The rewards of the new agreement are far superior to the old one, and the penalties for non-compliance of the new agreement are more severe:

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy spirit, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that comes often upon it, and brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God: But that which bears thorns and briers is rejected, and is near to cursing: whose end is to be burned" (Heb.6:4-8 KJV).

Once this agreement is entered into by God and an individual, there is no turning back.

Hebrews 10:26-31 KJV

"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (vs.26-27).

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant [agreement], wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite to the spirit of grace?" (vs.28-29).

"For we know him that has said, Vengeance belongs to me, I will recompense says the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (vs.30-31).

If people willfully refuse to honor their contract with God, he cannot bless them, but he must instead curse them under the terms and conditions of the contract. See Deut.30:15-19.

SUMMARY
Today, before Christ's return, the new agreement brings with it an opportunity to be among the first of humanity to be made a part of the Family of God as a son of God the Father, just as Jesus Christ is. The new agreement offers immortality and an eternal inheritance of the earth and the universe, and a spiritual inheritance so fantastic that it cannot even be comprehended by the human mind. All of this and more is offered by God the Father to those he calls and offers an agreement to in this age of human existence.

By B. L. Cocherell and Vernon O. Jones
CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX
OVERVIEW OF THE COVENANTS

The following pages contain the basic outlines of the old and new agreements with national Israel and the Sovereign Father's agreement with the elect during the Gospel age of salvation.

THE FIRST AGREEMENT WITH NATIONAL ISRAEL

TYPE OF AGREEMENT

The first agreement was an exclusive agreement between God and the individuals who comprised national Israel. Moreover, this agreement was open-ended.

An Exclusive Agreement

The agreement was made exclusively with the nation of Israel, but other people could participate in the agreement if they met its terms and conditions.

A National and Individual Agreement

The agreement was made with the nation of Israel and each individual Israelite. See the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy for details of the national and individual terms and conditions of the agreement.

An Open-ended Agreement

The agreement could be added to or subtracted from by God, but not by the Israelites (Ex.19:5-6).

MAJOR TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- The Israelites to obey God (Ex.19:5-6; chps.20-23).
- The Israelites to worship only the Creator God (Ex.20:1-7, 25).
- God was to bless and protect the Israelites.

Benefits For Israel

God provided physical benefits and the opportunity to participate in the first resurrection.

Benefits For God

The Israelites would be his treasure as a kingdom of priests and an example of the benefits that would come from obedience to his way of life (Ex.19:5-6).
AGREEMENT DURATION

The agreement was a perpetual agreement that would last as long as national Israel kept their part of the agreement (Ex.31:16; Lev.23:14, 21, 31,41; 24:5-8; Deut.28:15).

AGREEMENT RATIFICATION

The agreement was written in stone and in a book; then, it was attested to orally and sealed with the blood of a sacrificial animal (Ex.24:3; 24:12; 34:1-5; 24:8).

THE AGREEMENT WITH RE-GATHERED ISRAEL

At the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, two major things happened that concern the old and new agreement with national Israel:

1. The old agreement was canceled.
2. The new agreement was ratified with the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ. This new agreement is now awaiting the re-gathering and re-establishment of Israel as a sovereign nation after the return of Jesus Christ. It is at this time that the new agreement with national Israel will come into force.

TYPE OF AGREEMENT

The new agreement will be made exclusively with the re-gathered tribes of Israel as a whole; it will be an exclusive agreement between God and the individuals who will comprise national Israel. Moreover it will be a closed agreement.

An Exclusive Agreement

The agreement will be made exclusively with re-gathered Israel (Ezk.20:33-38; 36:24-28), but other people will be allowed to participate in the agreement if they meet its terms and conditions.

A National and Individual Agreement

The agreement allows both Israelites and non-Israelites to worship God and have the opportunity for eternal life (Zech.14:16-19; Acts 10:34-35; Rev.21:1-7, 24-27). Moreover, each person who comes under this agreement will be dealt with on a personal level (Jn.6:44,65; Ezk.20:35).

A Closed Agreement

The agreement cannot be added to or subtracted from by either party (Heb.8:8-10; 10:16).
TERMS AND CONDITIONS

• Individuals must repent of past sins (Ezk.20:35; Acts 2:38).
• Individuals must worship the true God.
• Individuals must keep the terms and conditions of the agreement.
• God will give individuals called to salvation during this age of salvation spiritual tools to help them perform their part of the agreement (Jer.31:31-33; Heb.8:8-10).

BENEFITS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

God will provide physical benefits and the opportunity to have eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

BENEFITS FOR GOD

The Israelites will be priests of God and an example to all nations of the benefits that come from obedience to God's way of life.

AGREEMENT DURATION

The physical aspects of this agreement will last until the end of the harvest of humanity into the Kingdom and Family of God, but its spiritual aspects will last for eternity (Heb.13:20; Jer.31:34,37; 32:40; Rev.21:3-7).

DIFFERENCES

The following are some major differences between the first and second agreements with national Israel:

• Under the first agreement, only Israel was required to practice God's laws, precepts, and principles and go to the place where God placed his name to worship him and offer sacrifices.

Sacrifices

• Under the new agreement, Israel, as well as, all other nations are required practice God's laws, precepts, and principles, and come to Jerusalem to worship God and offer sacrifices.

THE SCHOOLMASTER

In his letter to the elect at Galatia, the apostle Paul gives much insight into God's law which includes the sacrificial system. Paul writes that the law was the schoolmaster (i.e., the instructor/method) through which Christ and justification through him can be understood:

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith is come, we are no longer under the schoolmaster. For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal.3:24-26 KJV).
Paul shows that there was nothing wrong with the law and the covenant, which included the sacrificial system, because it was a tool by which one could learn the ways of God and come to an understanding of how to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ.

**The School Master Returns**

Animal sacrifices will be performed as a part of the new temple worship system after Christ returns, but will not be used for the atonement for sin. Because, it is only through the sacrifice of Christ that a person can obtain forgiveness of sin. The sacrificial system after the return of Christ will have a similar function to the one under the agreements with the Patriarchs and ancient Israel, in that sacrifices will be offered to make it possible for people to access, worship, and be taught by God at the temple.

Ezekiel's prophecies clearly reveal that a temple for the worship of God will exist after Christ's return and that various observances and sacrifices that will be performed there. Moreover, Paul and others of the early church offered sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem. Therefore, it can be safely assumed that there is nothing wrong with the sacrificial system of worship and that it will again be used as a tool to teach people the way of God and bring them to an understanding of how to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ.

The following are the primary lessons taught through offering a blood sacrifice for the atonement of spiritual and moral violations of God's law:

- The violation of the law of God separates a person from God and all of the benefits of this relationship.
- The penalty for the violation of the law of God is the death of the law breaker (Rom.6:23).
- Because the violation of the law requires the death of the law breaker, the only way to heal the breach between a person and God without that person dying for their sin, is for a superior sacrifice to be made in their place.

People who live after the return of Christ will live under a sacrificial system of worship for the followings reasons:

- It is the way God has always led people to salvation and his way of life.
- It will be used to teach the way to eternal life through the meaning of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- It will be used to teach God's laws and way of life.
- It will allow people to practice and learn God's way of life through experience.
- It will allow people to come into the presence of Jesus Christ in his glorified form.
Individuals who fulfill their part of the new agreement will have the indwelling of the holy spirit (Acts 1:4-8; 2:38; Heb.8:10), and will receive eternal life as sons of God (Rev.21:1-7; 22:14).

THE GOSPEL AGE AGREEMENT

Those who are called to salvation during the gospel age have an agreement with God the Father that is different from the first and second agreement with national Israel in many ways, because they have been given different promises, benefits, terms, and conditions that are a part of their special calling.

TYPE OF AGREEMENT

Individual Agreement

The agreement with the elect of God during the gospel age is made between God the Father and each individual (whether he or she is an Israelite or non-Israelite) that he specifically calls to salvation (Jn.6:44,65; Acts 2:39,47).

Closed Agreement

The agreement cannot be added to or subtracted from by either party (Heb.8:10; 10:16-18).

MAJOR TERMS AND CONDITIONS

• Individuals must repent of past sins, be baptized, and receive God's holy spirit (Acts 2:38).
• Individuals must worship and keep the terms and conditions of the agreement (Heb.6:4-8).
• God gives those called to salvation during this age the tools to help them perform their part of the agreement (Jer.31:31-33; Lk.24:49; Heb.8:8-10).

BENEFITS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

Each receives physical benefits, the opportunity to participate in the first resurrection, be king and priest in the Kingdom and Family of God, and be given immortal life as a son of God.

BENEFITS FOR GOD

God shares eternity with his immortal spirit sons.

AGREEMENT DURATION

The agreement will last for eternity once the individual fulfills his part of the bargain (Heb.13:20).
AGREEMENT RATIFICATION

The agreement is overtly committed to by the individual upon being baptized in water. God then seals the agreement by placing his spirit into the individual's mind and spirit, and thereby, he infuses his laws, precepts, and principles into that person's thought process (Jer.31:31-33; Acts 2:38).

DIFFERENCES

The following are some major differences between the first and second agreements with national Israel and the agreement made with those in the gospel age:

• A change has been made from the physical Aaronic/Levitical priesthood to the spiritual Melchisedec-Christ priesthood (Heb.4:15; 5:1-10; 6:20; 7:1-17).
• Animal sacrifice for the atonement of spiritual sin and physical defilement is no longer necessary under this agreement because of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Heb.10:4-18).
• The temple worship system is not necessary for people under this agreement because the spirit of God dwells within them and they are a temple of God (Acts 1:1-8; 2:38; 2:1-4; 1.Cor.3:16-17; 6:19; Heb.8:10).
• Individuals other than Israelites are also called to participate in this agreement (Gal.3:26-29; Eph.2:11,13,19).
• Individuals called during the gospel age have direct access to God the Father through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Eph.2:18; Heb.4:15-16).

Rewards for Service

Individuals who fulfill their part of the agreement will receive the following rewards for fulfilling their calling and diligent service to God the Father and Jesus Christ:

• They will be eternal and immortal spirit-beings (1.Thes.4:13-17; 1.Cor.15:1-58; Rev.20:4-6; 22:14).
• They will be co-heirs of all things with Jesus Christ (Rom.8:17; Eph.3:6).
• They will be Kings and Priests in the Kingdom of God (Rev.2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6).
• They will be immortal sons of God in the Family of God (Rom.8:14,16-17; 1.Cor.15:39-54; 1.Jn.3:1-2).

By B. L. Cocherell and Vernon O. Jones
MAINTAINING A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The reason for the existence of humans is almost beyond belief. The Sovereign God who sent the Creator God to earth over nineteen hundred years ago to become the Messiah, is in the process of expanding his family:

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, . . ." (Jn. 1:12 KJV).

"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1.Jn. 3:1-2 KJV). See also 2.Cor. 6:18; Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:14,19.

Through his human creation, the Sovereign God begun the greatest and grandest of all his creations; he is creating beings just like himself (Phil. 3:21; 1.Jn. 3:2) and he intends to share all he has created and all that he is yet to create throughout eternity with them.

Why Maintain a Good Relationship?

There would be no reason to strive to obey and practice God's law in order to maintain a good relationship with him unless there were benefits to be derived from this relationship. However, there are awesome eternal benefits that are offered through a good relationship with the Sovereign God (God the Father) and the Creator God (Jesus Christ).

"But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God [the Father] has prepared for them that love him" (1.Cor. 2:9 KJV).

The biblical record clearly shows that individuals who will not put forth a sincere and diligent effort to maintain a harmonious relationship with God the Father will not benefit from a father-son relationship with him in the present or in the future. Therefore, it is extremely important to know and understand how to establish and maintain a proper relationship with him and his firstborn son.

Because of the extreme importance of a harmonious relationship between God the Father and humanity, the Sovereign God and the Creator God, designed a system that would allow such a relationship to be established and maintained.
In the following pages we will review some of the early agreements between the Creator God and people in order to provide insight into how to establish and maintain a good relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ during the gospel age of salvation.

Did God Have a Plan?

Some people who study the Bible believe that God did not fully understand the potential for evil and rebellion that was inherent within the human creation. And that, when the first humans disobeyed the instructions he gave them in the garden of Eden, he hastily developed a plan to save them from their destructive nature. Then, when the nation of Israel rebelled at Mount Sinai, God again developed a new plan that included many new rules and regulations. Moreover, when this plan failed, he discarded it for yet another plan. But this belief is very far from the truth.

Before humans were created, the potential of humans was well understood. The Supreme Sovereign God (God the Father) and the Creator God (Jesus Christ) knew that humans had the potential to become rebellious.

They also knew that some people would want to have a good relationship with them and accept the awesome opportunity for immortality and eternal life that would be offered to them.

Therefore, before the creation of humans, the Sovereign God and the Creator God had already formulated a complete plan for the salvation of humanity. From what is revealed about this plan, it is obvious that all factors were considered and all contingency plans were well thought out and in place before the creation of the earth and humanity. See Heb.4:3; 1.Pet.1:18-20; Rev.13:8; 17:8.

From Genesis to Revelation

The desire of both God the Father and the Creator God to dwell with their human creation and have a close relationship with them is well documented in the biblical record.

One of the very first things that we learn from the first four chapters of the Genesis account of early humanity is that the Creator God wanted to have a close relationship with them from the very beginning. And at the end of the Book of Revelation, we see this same desire stated in the prophecy of the coming of the Father to dwell on the earth.

Revelation 21:3-7 Paraphrased

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the lodging of God is with men! And he will reside with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them, as their God." (v3).
After this announcement is made, God the Father will come to dwell on earth with his children. What follows is a prophetic promise from him to his faithful children who have shown by their lives that they love him and want with all of their being to dwell with him forever:

"And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (v4).

Only after humans have advanced beyond this physical existence and into the spirit realm can these conditions exist. Why will there no longer be tears, sorrow, pain, or death? None of these things will exist, because the things that were a part of the human experience will no longer exist.

"And the One sitting on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. . . To the one thirsting, I will freely give of the fountain of the water of life. The one overcoming will inherit all things, and I will be God to him, and he will be the son to me" (vs.5-7).

This prophecy shows that the Sovereign God's desire to have an ongoing relationship with those who want to have a relationship with him has not changed from the beginning of humanity.

FROM THE BEGINNING

In the beginning, the Creator God (the God who became Jesus Christ) could walk and talk with the first two humans, because they were free from sin and lived in a state of purity within the garden that he had prepared for them. All of this changed when they disobeyed his instructions to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Because of their disobedience, God instituted the next phase of his plan that provided a way for humanity to have their violation of his law (i.e., sin) temporarily set aside and their physical impurity purged from them, so that he and they could fellowship together. See Gen.3:21; 4:3-4.

This basic plan that allowed people to maintain a good relationship with their Creator has not changed from the time that it was instituted with Adam and Eve. At the time of the first agreement with the nation of Israel, the Creator God required the same basic method of atonement for a violation of God's law and the purging away of physical defilement as he always had. The only difference was that the first agreement with national Israel required that atonement be administered in a formal way from a place of God's choosing and through an attending priesthood.

A change in the administration of the sacrificial system was made necessary because God was going to dwell with the nation of Israel during this next phase of his plan for the salvation of humanity:

"And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex.25:8 KJV). See also Deut.23:10-14.
The Creator wanted to dwell among the Israelites for the same reason that he wanted to have a close relationship with Adam and Eve, which was to teach them how to obtain eternal life in the Kingdom and Family of God.

From the time of the rebellion of the first humans and the institution of the sacrificial system, there has only been one method by which a person could establish and maintain a harmonious relationship with God. This method did not change with the advent of the Messiah and the cancellation of the first agreement with national Israel, it did not change with the agreement that God the Father makes with those who accept his offer of salvation during the gospel age, and it will not change after Christ returns to rule the world from Jerusalem.

The basic method by which a person establishes and maintains a harmonious relationship with God has always been the same; it is just the method of administration that has changed throughout the centuries, in order to facilitate God's plan for the salvation of different people during different times and circumstances.

The Foundational Elements

It is evident that both the Sovereign God and the Creator God desire to have a harmonious relationship with humans in order to accomplish their goal of expanding the God Family.

Once a person is given an opportunity for a personal relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ then repents, is baptized, and receives the indwelling of the holy spirit there are several things that must be done in order to maintain this personal relationship and be assured that one will successfully obtain eternal life.

Just as the question of eternal life is on the minds of people today, it was on the minds of people during Jesus' day:

"And, behold, one came and said to him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said to him, Why call you me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if you will enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt.19:16-17 KJV).

Why did Jesus tell this man to keep the Commandments? The answer is simple—the man had a choice. He could either obey God's law and gain eternal life or he could disobey and pay the penalty for disobedience (Rom.6:23).

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev.22:12-14 KJV).
A lawyer asked Jesus the following question about God's law. The answer he received shows the two primary attitudes and behaviors that a person must have in order to have and maintain a good relationship with their heavenly Father:

"Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus answered him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your life, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is similar to the first. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt.22:36-40 Para.).

The English words commandment(s) in Matthew, chapters 19 and 22, are translated from the Greek word entole which basically means an authoritative prescription (i.e., God's laws, precepts, and principles).

What Jesus said about practicing God's law and the results from its practice was nothing new. After Moses had repeated the major points of the law of the covenant to Israel he said:

"See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil: In that I command you this day to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that you may live and multiply: and the Lord your God shall bless you in the land where you go to possess it" (Deut.30:15-16 KJV).

"But if your heart turn away, so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce to you this day, that you shall surely perish, and that you shall not prolong your days on the land, where you passed over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live" (Deut. 30:17-19 KJV).

In relation to the obedience and the practice of God's law, nothing has changed. During this gospel age of salvation, a faithful and diligent obedience and practice of God's law will result in blessings and eternal life, but disobedience will bring curses and death.

The first thing that is necessary if you desire to have a good relationship with God the Father is to love him with all your being. This kind of love will be manifested in your desire and effort to fellowship with him and to please him through the obedience and practice of his law and the pursuit of his will in your life.

The second thing that is necessary is to understand that the Father loves all people and wants everyone to obtain salvation and become a part of his family. Because this is his goal, anyone who loves the Father must also have love and concern for other people.
Listed below are other foundational attitudes, behaviors, and other things that have always been required of people in order for them to show that they are serious about their desire to build and maintain a close personal relationship with God:

- Acknowledge God as Sovereign over one's life.
- Seek to please God through one's thoughts and behavior.
- Learn and study God's laws and way of life in order to come into compliance with them.
- Fellowship with God through prayer, observance of his law, and one's lifestyle.
- Repent of any violation of his law.
- Ask for forgiveness of any violation of his laws, precepts, and principles.
- Apply the proper sacrifice for the atonement of sin.

Faith In God

In the Book of Hebrews, chapter 11, there is a long list of individuals who have received God's approval through the application of faith in his promises and way of life. See Heb.11:1-40.

"And these all, having received a witness through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb.11:39-40 Para.).

These people all had a good relationship with God through faith. But, how did they accomplish this?

Abel had faith that the sacrifices he offered would set his sins aside and keep him in a harmonious relationship with God. Abel understood that the sacrifices were symbolic of the Messiah and he looked forward to the time when the Messiah would come to provide the perfect sacrifice, which would forgive sin and remove its penalty.

It was Abel's faith in God's sacrificial system and his obedience to God's laws that caused him to be listed in Hebrews, chapter 11, as one of those who will be made perfect along with God the Father's elect children who are the first to live under a new and better agreement than the one made with national Israel.

When an in-depth study is made of the sacrificial system, it becomes obvious that the individuals—from Adam to Christ—who had faith in God's promises and followed his instructions pertaining to his sacrificial system and his law have secured eternal life just like the Father's elect during the gospel age of salvation.

These individuals had absolute faith that God would set their sins aside and remove them forever when the Messiah would come to present himself as the supreme sacrifice.
ANCIENT ISRAEL

Under the first agreement with national Israel, the Creator required a priesthood to administer the sacrificial system in order to accomplish the atonement for spiritual sin and purge away the people's physical defilement. This was required so that he could dwell among them and teach them the ways, that lead to immortal and eternal life in the Kingdom and Family of God:

"The priest was a man whose function was to build a bridge between men and God by means of the sacrificial system. If a man broke the law, his fellowship with God was interrupted and his access to God was barred. By the offering of the correct sacrifice, that breach of the law was atoned for, and so the fellowship was restored and the barrier removed" (Commentary on Hebrews, by William Barclay, page 66).

The Blood of Atonement

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you on the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes an atonement for your soul" (Lev.17:11 KJV).

At the institution of the first agreement with national Israel, the people accepted the laws of God as the condition of their special relationship with him. A sacrifice was made, and Moses took half of the blood from the sacrifice, put it in basins, and threw half of it against the altar. After the Book of the Law had been read and the people had signified their acceptance of it, Moses took the blood from the sacrifice and sprinkled it on the people and declared that the covenant had been sealed and ratified:

"Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you concerning all these words" (Ex.24:8 KJV).

No ratification of any agreement or reconciliation can occur between God and people without the shedding of blood, because life is in the blood and life is the most precious possession of any living creature. Therefore, the giving of a life emphasizes the seriousness of making and maintaining an agreement with God.

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood. . ." (Lev.17:11). "For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof. . ." (Lev.17:14).

In order for a person to atone for sin and maintain a harmonious relationship with God before the advent of Jesus Christ, the sacrificial law required that, when a person violated God's law, a specific offering must be made for that particular violation:
"Sin offerings are required in the following cases: If someone is officially summoned to give evidence in court and does not give information about something he has seen or heard, he must suffer the consequences. When a person is guilty, he must confess the sin. In this way the priest shall offer the sacrifice for the man's sin, and he will be forgiven . . .” (Lev.5:1,5,13, GNB).

When a person was guilty of sin, a confession must be made and the proper sacrifice brought to the place of sacrifice. Then, the priest would offer the sacrifice and the sin would be atoned for, but not forgiven.

The Setting Aside of Sin

Under the first agreement with national Israel, a sinner could have sin atoned for through the sacrificial system. When a person acknowledged and repented of sin and offered the proper sacrifice, the sin was set aside and temporarily hidden from God's sight, and the person was placed back into right-standing with God.

Total Forgiveness

1. Before the advent of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, was there a method or process whereby individuals could have their sins forgiven?
2. Could sins be forgiven through animal sacrifices?

The answer to both questions is No. Before the advent of Jesus Christ, there was no method or process by which sin could be totally forgiven. No amount of animal sacrifices could bring the forgiveness of sin or remove its penalty. However, the sacrifices did provide for the setting aside of sins, which allowed people to maintain a good relationship with God.

Sins Set Aside, Not Forgiven

"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb.10:1-4 KJV).

The sins of Israel were brought to remembrance every year on the Day of Atonement because these sins were neither forgiven nor forgotten. The reason they could not be forgiven or forgotten was that the sacrifices were not perfect; they had no power to forgive sins. Therefore, the record of sins still existed, and the people were still guilty of their sins.
Once a year on the Day of Atonement, all accumulated sin (physical/ceremonial defilement and spiritual/moral sin) of every individual was atoned for; it was either purged away or set aside. However, the sins were not forgiven. The punishment for these sins had not been exacted. The penalty had not been paid, and each individual was still guilty before God. Therefore, the next year on the Day of Atonement these same sins and any sins committed during the previous year would be remembered and would have to be atoned for by the blood of bulls and goats. And these sins would again be symbolically sent away from the nation of Israel for another year.

The atonement process had to be repeated over and over in order for the Israelites to maintain a harmonious relationship with God under the terms and conditions of the first agreement with ancient Israel. Only the life of the lawbreaker could pay the penalty for personal sin. Animal life was only a substitute payment for sin until payment could be made by the lawbreaker.

The sacrificial animals only provided a temporary substitute for the life of those guilty of sin so that they could continue to fellowship with God, learn his way of life, and receive the other benefits of having his presence dwell among them.

The sacrifices for sin under the sacrificial system did accomplish the purpose of placing individuals and the nation into harmony with the Creator God so that he could dwell among them and commune with them. However, there was no forgiveness for the violation of God's law or its penalty through the sacrifice of animals.

THE GOSPEL AGE

During the gospel age of salvation, God the Father has provided a much simpler and easier method by which his people can maintain a good relationship with him.

- Individuals who have an agreement with God the Father can have their sins totally forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- Individuals can communicate with their heavenly Father through the authority of Jesus Christ who is their High Priest and who sits at the Father's right hand and intercedes on their behalf.

"And every priest stands daily ministering and offering many times the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb.10:11-12KJV). See Matt.26:27-28; Acts 2:38; Rom.3:23-25.

It is through Jesus Christ's perfect sacrifice and priesthood that the elect have access to the Father and are able to establish and maintain a harmonious relationship with him. And it is because of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ that the elect are able to stand before the Father in a pure and sinless condition.
Under the agreement with the Patriarchs and ancient Israel, sins were only set aside and covered from God's view after repentance and the offering of the proper sacrifice. However, under the new agreement, the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ has the power to forgive sin and remove its record and penalty forever. Never again will it be necessary for anyone to offer an animal sacrifice for the purpose of having a violation of God's law set aside and covered from the Father's view. Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, all sin can be forgiven and forgotten forever.

"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col.2:14-15).

"Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom.3:25 KJV).

Notice Paul's statement: "for the remission of sins that are past." Some references define this statement as "passing over of sins done in the past" (i.e., sins committed since the time of Adam).

The following explanation of Paul's statement is from William Barclay's "Commentary on Hebrews":

"It is through him [Christ] that there emerges a new covenant between God and man; and the purpose behind this new covenant is that those who have been called might receive the eternal inheritance which has been promised to them; but this could happen only after a death had taken place, the purpose of which was to rescue them from the consequence of the transgressions which had been committed under the conditions of the old covenant.'

"For where there is a will, it is necessary that there should be evidence of the death of the testator before the will is valid. It is in the case of dead people that a will is confirmed, since surely it cannot be operative when the testator is still alive.'

"That is why even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. For, after every commandment which the law lays down had been announced by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, together with water and scarlet and hyssop, and sprinkled the book itself and all the people. And as he did so, he said: 'This is the blood of the covenant whose conditions God commanded you to observe.'

"In like manner he sprinkled with blood the tabernacle also and all the instruments used in its worship. Under the conditions which the law lays down, it is true to say that almost everything is cleansed by blood. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.'

343
"As we have seen, the idea of the covenant is basic to the thought of the writer, by which he meant a relationship between God and man. The first covenant was dependent on man's keeping of the law; as soon as he broke the law the covenant became ineffective."

"Therefore, the basic meaning of the new covenant, which Jesus inaugurated, is that men should have access to God or, to put it another way, have fellowship with him."

"So the writer to the Hebrews has a tremendous thought and says that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is retroactive. That is to say, it is effective to wipe out the sins of men committed under the old covenant and to inaugurate the fellowship promised under the new" (Commentary on Hebrews).

All this seems very complicated, but at its roots there are two great eternal truths:

- It is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that violations of God's law are forgiven and forgotten forever.
- It is through the sacrifice of Jesus that a person may have fellowship with God the Father.

It is because of the better terms and conditions of the new agreement, which was instituted by Jesus Christ, that a person can now maintain a good relationship with God the Father and be assured that, when they ask forgiveness for their sins, these sins and the penalties for these sins will vanish as if they had never existed.

**A Perfect High Priest**

"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertains to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchizedec there arises another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" (Heb.7:11-16 KJV).

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; And having a high priest over the house of God" (Heb.10:19-21 KJV).
Under the first agreement with national Israel, the High Priest was to act as a bridge between God and his people. Because the High Priest himself was under the death penalty, he was also in need of a perfect sacrifice to be offered for his sins in order to have these sins forgiven and their penalty removed. Moreover, because the High Priest of Israel was not perfect, he and those he represented could never pass beyond the Creator God and into the presence of God the Father. But why not? The reason is that the Father dwells in heaven, and anyone who is allowed to come into his presence must be totally sinless, holy, and righteous. No human qualified or had the authority to go before him prior to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, because every human was under the death penalty for the violation of God's law before the advent of Christ.

The writer to the Hebrews shows a change in the conditions of the original agreement with Israel; this change allows the Elect to go directly before God the Father without going to a physical priest. Under the first agreement with Israel the physical priest would speak to God on their behalf, but today this is not necessary.

**A Spiritual High Priest**

Jesus Christ is now the High Priest who sits at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. And because of Christ's sacrifice and the new agreement, there is a new and life-giving way opened for the Father's earthly children to go into his presence:

"But now has he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant [agreement], which was established on better promises" (Heb.8:6 KJV).

Through his sacrifice, Jesus Christ has become the immortal High Priest and the mediator of a new and better agreement that is built on new and better promises from God the Father. And since Jesus Christ became the perfect sacrifice, there is no longer a need for animal sacrifices to be made to atone for violations of God's law.

**HOLINESS**

**Physical Defilement**

Before the advent of the Messiah, when people became physically defiled, the only way they could be restored to a condition of purity (holiness) was through the sacrificial system. See Lev. chps.8-16.

This same situation still exists during the gospel age of salvation; however, a person who has an eternal agreement with God the Father is in a continual state of purity (holiness) through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. Moreover, this person does not need to offer an animal sacrifice to remove physical defilement.
Spiritual Defilement

Another point to be aware of is that, before the advent of the Messiah, a person who committed a spiritual sin was considered spiritually defiled (impure and unholy) before God. Again, the only way to restore a person to a condition of spiritual purity was to offer the proper animal sacrifice. Today, anyone who has an eternal agreement with the Father is in a continual state of spiritual purity (holiness) through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ and they do not need to offer an animal sacrifice to remove spiritual defilement.

The Perfect Sacrifice

Although a person could obtain a state of physical and spiritual purity (holiness) before the advent of the Messiah, this condition could not be maintained because there was no perfect sacrifice that could totally eliminate physical and spiritual defilement.

Then and today, the sacrifice of one's personal life in order to become holy is not possible because no human is without sin; however, a substitute sacrifice that is holy and perfect in every way (sinless) may atone for the life of the sinner. Through this kind of substitution, a person's life can be redeemed and given back to them. Although animal life is without sin, animals are neither perfect spiritually or of the same value as human life. Therefore, it is only God himself who can be this substitute sacrifice, which is what the Creator God actually became as the Messiah.

It is only through the sacrificial blood of the Creator God (Jesus Christ) that any human can be placed back into or maintain a good relationship with God the Father. The sins of a person who is under the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ are considered to be non-existent as long as one's attitude is correct in seeking to please God. When sin is brought to the consciousness of a person under the blood of Christ, the only thing that this person must do in order to eliminate this record of sin is to repent of the sin, acknowledge it to the Father, and ask for his forgiveness through the authority of Jesus Christ. When this is done the sin is wiped from the person's record and vanishes as if it had never existed:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things become new. And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them: and has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2.Cor.5:17-19 KJV).
It is obvious from the Bible that God the Father's earthly children are made and kept holy through the blood of Christ's perfect sacrifice, just as the people who lived before the advent of the Messiah were made and kept holy by the blood of sacrificial animals. It is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that we are declared holy in the Father's eyes and can remain in a condition of holiness before the Father.

THE SACRIFICES PAST AND PRESENT

Much can be learned from the sacrificial system of the past that can be applied to the present and will surely be taught in the future when national Israel exists as a nation under Christ's rule. Therefore, it is good to review some of the sacrifices that were offered under the first agreement with ancient Israel and the sacrifices that are offered by the people of God during the gospel age of salvation.

Some of the sacrifices were acts of praise, gratitude, and homage. Others showed a person's submission to the Holy One of Israel, and others were symbolic of gratitude and devotion to him and dependence and confidence in him.

THE AGREEMENT WITH ANCIENT ISRAEL

The Burnt Offering

The burnt offering expressed one's individual surrender to God's will. It pictured the faithful Israelite giving a gift to God. In the burnt offering there is a method whereby one could come to present God with something that he desired and was pleased by. The burnt offering was not given to atone for sin; it was strictly a means by which an individual could express his love and devotion to God through an act of worship. See Lev.1:3-7.

The Meal Offering

The meal offering was also a burnt offering. It was an offering that was pleasing to God. It pictured the individual in perfect obedience to God and it had basically the same meaning as the burnt offering. Again, this offering had nothing to do with sin. It was a means by which a person could worship God by bringing something to him that he desired—something valuable to the offerer—as an act of worship. See Lev.2:1-6.

In the Burnt or Meal offering, there was an offering that was satisfying to God. This offering was consumed by his holy fire on his holy altar and its smoke ascended to him as a pleasant smell. The burnt offerings were symbolic of the perfect fulfillment of the law's requirements. God found satisfaction in these offerings, and declared them to be very good.
The Peace Offering

The Peace offering that was made by the general population of Israel was also called the Fellowship offering and it was offered for the following reasons:

- It showed an individual's gratitude to God for his bounteous blessings and mercies.
- It was symbolic of God, man, and the High Priest eating and fellowshipping together as a family.
- It pictured a family feast or a community feast where friends and neighbors got together with God to have fellowship (Lev.3:1-17).

The offerings and sacrifices that were to be made on the New Moon were considered fellowship offerings. These types of offerings were partially consumed by fire as a sweet savor to God and partially eaten by the priesthood, which signified their eating at the table of God.

The eating of the fellowship offerings had great significance, both literally and symbolically, because the priests were partaking of the Lord's food (i.e., partaking of the Lord's table). Remember that the High Priest and the priesthood were to be the bridge between God and the nation of Israel. When the priesthood ate the sacred food offered to God, by extension, the people were also eating at the table of God.

The Peace Offering was unique from the other offerings in that God, the priest, and the offerer, ate together. This was the only offering in which God, the priest, and the offerer had something in common; they each partook of the offering.

In the Peace Offering, the offerer feasts with God. God, the priesthood, and offerer all found satisfaction in this offering, because of the common food that was shared among them. God also found satisfaction in being honored by the one making the offering, as well as in sharing the offering with the priesthood and the one making the offering. This offering also shows that God desires and enjoys fellowship with his people.

Freewill Offerings

The Burnt, Meal, and Peace offerings were all freewill offerings; they were not offerings of necessity, but they were brought to God because an individual wanted to please God. These offerings were a way of showing gratitude toward God.

The Sin Offering

The sin offering was made for sins that were done in ignorance. It was given to show God that one recognized one's sinful condition and the inability to perfectly practice his law. It pictured asking God to purge away all sins that were done in ignorance and to be made pure and holy before him (Lev.4:1-35).
This was not an offering during which an individual came and confessed his known sins, which was done in the trespass offering.

The Trespass Offering

The trespass offering was to be given when a person was conscious of personal sin that was knowingly committed. It pictured one who was truly sorry for having sinned and was willing to confess this violation of the law of God and make restitution. If a person did this, God would set the sin aside and cover it from his view:

"And he shall make amends for the harm that he has done in the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it to the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him" (Lev.5:16 Para.).

ATONEMENT PAST AND PRESENT

Under the agreement with ancient Israel, a person who violated God's law knowingly or in ignorance became separated from God and the benefits of a relationship with him were withheld. When the violator offered the proper sacrifice to atone for the sin, their sin was set aside and their relationship with God was repaired.

Since Jesus Christ offered his life as the final and supreme sacrifice for the sins of humanity, there is no longer a need to make an animal sacrifice in order to set sins aside. But, there is a need for the forgiveness of sin when it is committed, because sin is the violation of God's laws, precepts, and principles according to the apostles John, Paul, and James:

"Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1.Jn.3:4 KJV).

"All unrighteousness is sin" (1.Jn.5:17 Para.).

"Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Blessed is the one not condemning himself in what he approves. But the one doubting, if he eats, he has been condemned, because it is not of faith—and all that is not of faith is sin" (Rom.14:22-23 Para.).

"Therefore, to anyone knowing to do good, and not doing it, it is sin to him" (Jms.4:17 Para.).

Sin is any deviation from God's laws, precepts, and principles, which define how a person should live their life and worship God. It is this deviation from the law of God for which a person must ask forgiveness. According to the apostle Paul the penalty for the violation of God's law is death:

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.6:23 KJV).
When one of the Father's earthly children becomes aware of sin in their life, they must stop sinning and ask for forgiveness in order to continue to maintain right-standing with their heavenly Father and their Savior. If a child of God refuses to stop sinning, the Father cannot forgive the sin nor give the person the gift of salvation.

**Sacrifices During the Gospel Age**

During the gospel age of salvation the people of God are still required to give sacrifices of thanksgiving in order to please God; however, the sacrifices are of a different nature from those given under the agreement with ancient Israel:

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, for this is your reasonable service. Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, in order to prove what is the good, pleasing and perfect will of God" (Rom.12:1-2 Para.).

Today, under the new agreement, the Father's earthly children must be living sacrifices through being subject to the Father's law and way of life. Thereby, they offer their life as a living sacrifice to him. The offering of one's life in service to the Father is a thing that is most pleasing to him, because it shows the attitude of love for him and his way of life.

"Be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live a life of love, even as Christ loved us, and gave himself a fragrant offering and sacrifice to the Father. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or any kind of impurity, or greed, because these things are improper for the elect of God. Nor obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving" (Eph.5:1-4 Para.).

Paul speaks of being an imitator of the Sovereign God's example as a father and Christ's example of sacrificial love in the context of being a living sacrifice.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul shows that sacrifice goes beyond one's attitude and behavior and into the giving of one's physical substance to those of the elect who are in need. Paul also shows that this is acceptable to God and that there is a reward to be gained by such an attitude and behavior.

"For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God" (Phil.4:16-18 NIV).
The writer to the Hebrews shows that if one is to dedicate one's life to the Father, one must be willing to do the things that are necessary in order to maintain a harmonious relationship with him. To maintain this sort of relationship one must set one's heart and mind on living a life that pleases him:

"The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifice God is pleased" (Heb.13:11-16 NIV). See also 2.Pet.1:1-12; 1.Jn.3:16-22.

This is how we maintain a harmonious relationship with God the Father and his son Jesus Christ. It is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that we can be justified before the Father and are allowed to bring the sacrifice of our life before him.

SUMMARY

There is obviously much more that could be said about how to live in harmony with God the Father and Christ; nevertheless, the information presented documents that an ongoing effort to please the Father through obedience to his laws, precepts, and principles and through a sincere and diligent effort to practice them will result in a harmonious relationship between God the Father and the one chosen to be one of his children.

By B.L. Cocherell and V.O. Jones
On the Feast of Weeks in 30 A.D., a major event occurred concerning where the name and presence of God resides on earth. The subject of where God places his name and presence on earth is vitally important to everyone who seeks to worship and serve him, because the only place he can be worshiped is where his presence resides.

In order to determine where God's name and presence is on earth today, it is important to review where he placed his name and presence from the time of Moses to the end of the first covenant with national Israel and where the Father promised to place his name and presence after the advent of Jesus Christ.

THE BURNING BUSH

"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called him out of the midst of the bush, and said Moses, Moses. And he said, here am I. And he said draw not near here: put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground" (Ex.3:1-5 KJV).

When Moses first encountered God in the wilderness, God appeared to him in a fire and told him that the place where he stood was holy ground. As we will see, the fire of God is a very important key to unlocking the mystery of where God's presence resides on earth today.

This account shows that when God places his power and presence on earth, this event is accompanied by fire that does not consume that which he has separated for his use. It also shows that where God's presence resides is sacred and to be shown respect.
FIRE AND SMOKE ON MOUNT SINAI

Exodus 19:9-24

"Then he said to Moses, 'I am going to come to you in the form of a dark cloud, so that the people themselves can hear me when I talk with you, and they will always believe you. Go down now and see that the people are ready for my visit. Sanctify them today and tomorrow, and have them wash their clothes. Then the day after tomorrow, I will come down upon Mt. Sinai as all the people watch" (vs.9-11 LBP).

Moses was to prepare the people for the day when God would appear upon the mountain. One of the things that they were to do was to wash their clothing, which was a very important part of the preparation prior to appearing before God.

"Set boundary lines the people may not pass, and tell them, 'Beware! Do not go up into the mountain or even touch its boundaries; whosoever does shall die" (v12 LPB).

"Not a hand shall touch him, but surely he shall be stoned, or surely he shall be shot through, he shall not live, whether animal or man" (v13 Para.).

In verses 12 and 13, we are told that neither animals nor the people could touch the mountain where God was going to be, and if they did touch it, they would be killed.

"All Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because Jehovah descended upon it in the form of fire; the smoke billowed into the sky as from a furnace, and the whole mountain shook with a violent earthquake" (v18 LBP).

There was a tremendous display of energy, fire, and smoke as the Creator God came to rest upon the mountain.

"So the Lord came down upon the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses up to the top of the mountain, and Moses ascended to God. But the Lord told Moses, 'Go back down and warn the people not to cross the boundaries. They shall not come up here to see God, for they will die" (vs.20-21 LBP).

God warns the people not to venture upon the sacred ground where he is:

"And let the priests which also come near the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them" (v22 KJV).

The priests must purify themselves in order to come close to the presence of God:

353
"But the people won't come up into the mountain!" Moses protested. "You told them not to!" You told me to set boundaries around the mountain, and to declare it off limits because it is reserved for God" (v23 LBP).

"And the Lord said to him, come, go down. And you and Aaron come up. And do not let the priests and the people break through and come up to the Lord, lest he burst forth among them" (v24 Para.).

At Mount Sinai, while God instructed Moses in how he wanted Israel to worship him he spoke with Moses face-to-face, as a man speaking to a friend (Ex.33:11). Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel were to stay some distance away and worship (Ex.24:1), but the rest of Israel were to remain outside the sacred area:

"And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars according to the tribes of Israel. And sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. And he took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people: and they said, all the Lord has said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you concerning these words" (Ex.24:4-8 KJV).

After Moses came down from the mountain, he required that sacrifices be made to God, after which he sealed the covenant with the blood of these sacrifices.

"Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God and did eat and drink" (Ex.24:9-11 KJV).

Here, we see that the elders of Israel were also allowed to meet with the Creator God, after the proper sacrifices had been offered.

Verse 11 shows that no harm came to them while they were in the presence of God. But, what kept them from being killed by the power of God's presence? The reason they could come into the presence of God without being harmed is that they had prepared themselves through a purification process. They were free of all contamination and were purified through the offering of the proper sacrifices and acts of purification before going up the mountain to meet with God.

This account shows that wherever God's power and presence resides is a sacred place. Moreover, nothing impure can come into contact with the power and presence of God without being destroyed by God's purity. Indeed, this was the case on Mount Sinai.
THE TABERNACLE

While the Creator God resided upon Mount Sinai, he instructed Moses to have the tabernacle built so that he could dwell among the nation of Israel and provide a place for them to worship him:

"And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and made the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. then the cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and the fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys" (Ex.40:33-35, 38 KJV).

After the tabernacle was erected and all of God's instructions had been followed concerning its preparation, God moved his presence from Mount Sinai to the tabernacle. Again, God's presence is evidenced by fire.

Preparation and Purification

Leviticus, chapters 8 and 9 show that preparation and purification of the priesthood was necessary in order for them to serve God in the Tabernacle. This indicates that everything used in the service of God and in the place where his presence resides must be clean, pure, and sinless. Please read both chapters 8 and 9 in order to gain an understanding of the importance that God places on the purification process.

God gave great detail to Moses and Aaron concerning how the priesthood and all other things should be prepared and purified before they could come into his presence. He warned that, if these procedures were not followed, the violator would be killed. It is important to remember that nothing impure or sinful can abide in the presence of God.

A Fatal Mistake

"And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took their censor, and put fire in it; and they put incense on it and brought strange fire before the Lord God, which he had not commanded them. And fire went out before the Lord God and consumed them; and they died before the Lord God" (Lev.10:1-2 Para.).

The two sons of Aaron did not take the instruction that God gave them about keeping all contamination out of his presence seriously. Because they did not heed these instructions, they were killed by the fire of God's presence.
The Holy of Holies

"The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who were killed when they offered unholy fire to the Lord. He said, 'Tell your brother Aaron that only at the proper time is he to go behind the curtain into the Most Holy Place, because that is where I appear in a cloud above the lid on the Covenant Box (i.e., the mercy seat)" (Lev.16:1-2 GNB).

Within the most sacred place of the tabernacle was the ark of the covenant along with the three following things:

• The two tables of stone on which God wrote the Ten Commandments. See Ex.25:10-22
• Aaron's rod, which was a symbol of his office as the high priest of God. See Num.17:10
• A small amount of manna, which was the food that God provided daily for the Israelites as they traveled in the wilderness. See Heb.9:4

Although others of the priesthood could officiate in various duties within the tabernacle, only Aaron could come within the Holy of Holies where the presence of God resided upon the ark of the covenant. Moreover, Aaron had to make special preparations to remove all contamination from himself prior to entering this most sacred of places. If Aaron did not follow these instructions in exact detail, he would have been killed as his two sons were when they failed to properly prepare to come before the presence of God:

"If he disobeys, he will be killed. He may enter the Most Holy Place only after he has brought a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering." Then the Lord gave the following instructions, "Before Aaron goes into the Most Holy Place, he must take a bath and put on the priestly garments: the linen robe and shorts, the belt, and the turban" (Lev.16:4-4 GNB).

The tabernacle was the place where God met with Moses and the priesthood. This was the only place where God would accept sacrifices and allow offerings to be made to him. It was also the only place where an Israelite could go before God to ask for their sins to be forgiven. See Ex.29:42-43; 30:6;36.

The Place in the Promised Land

After instructing the Israelites on how to worship him, God told them to destroy all of the pagan places of worship in the land he was going to give them. Then, he said that they should not attempt to worship him in the ways that the pagans worshiped their gods and they had to worship him where he placed his name and presence:
"You must not worship the lord your God in their way. But you are to seek the place the lord your God will choose from among your tribes to put his name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the first born of your herds and flocks. There, in the presence of the Lord your God you and your families shall eat and rejoice . . . ” (Deut.12:4-7 NIV).

AT SHILOH

After wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, the Israelites entered into the promised land and set the tabernacle up at Shiloh as directed by God:

"And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them" (Josh.18:1 KJV).

The prophet Jeremiah also records that Shiloh was the first place in the promised land where God chose to place his name and presence:

"But go you now to my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel" (Jer.7:12 KJV).

The tabernacle resided at Shiloh for about 300 years. During this time, the Israelites stopped diligently worshiping God. As punishment for their sins, God allowed the Philistines to invade Israel and capture the ark of God. The Philistines took the ark and placed it in the temple of Dagon for a short period of time (1.Sam.5:1-11) after which, it was returned to Israel where it remained at the house of Abinadab until it was moved to the city of David and later to the temple that Solomon built.

The Temple at Jerusalem

"Now my God, I beseech you, let your eyes be open and your ears attentive to the prayer of this place; and now O Lord God, rise to your rest; You and the ark of your strength; O Lord God your priest are clothed with salvation, and your saints rejoice in goodness; O Lord God, do not turn away the face of your anointed; remember the good deeds of your servant David" (2.Chron.6:40-42 Para.).

"And when Solomon finished praying, then the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of Lord God filled the house; and the priests were not able to go into the house of the Lord God, because of the glory of Lord God had filled the house of Lord God and all the sons of Israel were watching, when the fire came down, and the glory of Lord God was on the house" (2.Chron.6:7:1-3 Para.).

357
Approximately 480 years after the children of Israel came out of Egypt, God moved his dwelling place into the Temple at Jerusalem. Again, the fire of God descended upon the place where the presence of God was to reside. This fire is also evidence that God had moved the place where he intends to reside and be worshiped. God's presence remained in Jerusalem for approximately 1,000 years until the temple that Herod built was destroyed in 70 A.D.

WHERE DOES GOD DWELL TODAY?

Because the temple at Jerusalem where God's presence resided was destroyed, it is pertinent to ask if there is a place on earth where the presence of God resides today, and if there is such a place, where is it?

After The Advent of Christ

The Bible tells us that, after the advent of Christ, salvation would be offered to people throughout the world:

"In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as the days of old. That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the heathen, which are called by my name, says the Lord that does this" (Amos 9:11-12 KJV). See also Psa.22:27-29, 67:1-7; 72:1-17; Matt.28:18-20; Lk.24:46-47; Acts 10:1-48; 15:15-17.

God the Father knew it would be impossible during the gospel age of salvation for the elect who were scattered throughout the world to come to one specific location on earth to worship him and carry out their responsibilities as kings and priests; therefore, a change in the temple system of worship would be necessary. Thus, he made it possible for those whom he would call to salvation to worship him wherever they were on earth.

JESUS FORETELLS A NEW TEMPLE SYSTEM

Although there is no record in the New Testament of Jesus specifically saying that there would be a new temple for the worship of God during the gospel age of salvation, what he said about the way the Father would be worshiped and that the Father's holy spirit, the Father's personal spirit, and his personal spirit would be placed within the elect clearly implied that a new temple and a new worship system would be established after his death and resurrection. See Jn.14:15-17; 17:20-23.

While speaking to a woman of Samaria, Jesus explained that there would come a time when the existing worship system would be abolished, and those who worshiped God would do so in spirit and truth. He explained that it would no longer be necessary to travel to a specific location to worship God and people would worship the Sovereign Father:
"The woman said to him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where it is necessary to worship. Jesus said to her, Woman believe me that an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews" (Jn.4:19-22 Para.).

In verses 23-24, Jesus says that God the Father is a spirit-being who can only be worshiped in spirit and truth:

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. For the Father seeks such ones that worship him. God is a spirit, and the ones that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn.4:23-24 Para.).

**Spiritual Worship**

Many people believe that when Jesus spoke of worshiping in the spirit and truth, he was only speaking philosophically in an attempt to convey that people would eventually worship God with a different attitude. However, Jesus was saying something entirely different. He was speaking of the time when the worship of God would be moved from the temple in Jerusalem to a temple of flesh where the spirit of God would reside.

The apostle Paul wrote to the saints at Philippi, that it is the children of God who worship by the spirit:

"For the rest, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is not truly tiresome to me, but safe for you. Look out for the dogs; look out for the evil workers; look out for the concision party [i.e., the Jews]. For we are the circumcision who worship by the spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who do not trust in the flesh" (Phil.3:1-3 Para.). Also see Eph.6:18; Gal.6:1-2.

**THE FESTIVAL OF PENTECOST AND THE NEW TEMPLE**

"And he said, Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah must suffer and die and rise again from the dead on the third day; and that this message of salvation should be taken from Jerusalem to all the nations: There is forgiveness of sins for all who turn to me. You have seen these prophecies come true. And now I will send the holy spirit upon you, just as my Father promised. Don't begin telling others yet—stay here in the city until the holy spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven" (Lk.24:46-49 LBP).

Here, we see Jesus preparing his disciples for the moment that the Father would place his holy spirit within them and they would become the dwelling place of his presence. This is the hour Jesus spoke of when he told the woman of Samaria that the hour would come when the Father's place of worship would be changed.

359
"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them" (Acts 2:1-3 KJV).

This is the same kind of fire that was present when Moses met God at the burning bush. Additionally, it is this kind of fire that descended upon Mount Sinai, upon the tabernacle, and upon the temple Solomon built in order to show that God had placed his name and presence there.

Just as the fire descended upon the tabernacle and the temple that Solomon built, as the fire of God descended upon God's people of the New Covenant on this festival of Pentecost, the Father placed his name and presence in a new Temple where he could meet with his people.

The following things distinguish this Day of Pentecost from any others since:

• The place where God chose to be worshiped was being transferred from the temple at Jerusalem to a temple of flesh.
• The New Covenant had been established (Jer.31:31-34; Heb.8:8-10), and the Father had moved the place where he would meet with his people.
• The descending of the heavenly fire and the other things that occurred on that day were all evidence that the presence of God now inhabits his earthly children, making them his holy temples.
• God the Father poured out his holy spirit upon those he had chosen to receive it, which caused the earthly temple of God and the place where his presence dwells to be within his children wherever they are on this earth.

Historical Review

When the servant Stephen was brought before the high priest and accused of blasphemy, he reviewed the history of Israel and revealed that God had moved his dwelling place on earth to a temple of flesh.

Acts 7:44-51 NIV

Stephen reminds them that the tabernacle was God's first dwelling place with Israel:

"Our forefathers had the tabernacle of the Testimony with them in the desert. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. Having received the tabernacle, our fathers under Joshua brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them" (vs.44-45).

In verses 46-47, Stephen speaks of the great temple that Solomon constructed for God to place his presence within:
"It remained in the land until the time of David, who enjoyed God's favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built the house for him' (vs.46-47).

"However the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says: Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things?" (vs.48-50). Also see Acts 17:24-25; Isa.66:1-2; Psa.11:4.

Stephen understood that the temple was an object of worship to many of the people who stood there, and he reminded them that God cannot be captured and held in a house built by men, because God is greater than all man-made objects. What Stephen said was considered blasphemy to those who thought of the temple as indispensable to their worship of God:

"You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the holy spirit!" (v51).

Those to whom Stephen spoke had forgotten the Creator's promise of a new covenant with Israel in which he promised to move his dwelling place (his Holy Place) into a temple of flesh (Jer.31:31-34). Because of their spiritual blindness and attachment to the temple and its worship system, they killed Stephen, not realizing that he had revealed to them one of the most profound and wonderful truths of their age. See Psa.37:30-31; Jer.32:40.

Purification of the Temple

Under the Old Covenant, the priesthood, the people, and all things that came into close contact with God had to be purified and kept clean, because God will not dwell where there is sin (Lev.19:2; 1.Pet.1:15-16) or physical impurity (Ex.29:36-46; Deut.23:14).

Many people do not realize that God has not changed and that, under the New Covenant, he still requires all things that come into close contact with him to be free from all sin and impurity. This is why it is vitally important to become and remain sinless and pure through the blood of Christ. See Mal.3:6; Heb.9:22-28.

The Temple of Flesh

The writings of the apostle Paul leave no doubt that the physical body of a child of God is a temple of God where his presence through his holy spirit dwells:

"Don't you know that you are God's temple [naos] and that God's spirit lives in you? If anyone defiles God's temple [naos], God will destroy him; for God's temple [naos] is sacred, and you are that temple [naos]" (1.Cor.3:16-17 Para.).
"Haven't you yet learned that your body is the home [naos] of the holy spirit God gave you (Acts 5:32), and that he [it] lives within you? Your own body does not belong to you. For God has bought you with a great price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because he owns it" (1.Cor.6:19-20 LPB).

"And what agreement has the temple [naos] of God with idols? for you are the temple [naos] of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (2.Cor.6:16-18 LBP).

"Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; In whom all the building fitly framed together grows into a holy temple [naos] in the lord: In whom you are also built together for an habitation of God through the spirit" (Eph.2:19-22 KJV Para.).

In the scriptures noted above, the English word temple is translated from the Greek word naos, which is derived from the Greek word hieron, which means an entire sacred place, whereas naos denotes the central sanctuary of a temple.

The apostle Paul's use of the Greek word naos, which defines the most sacred place in God's temple clearly identifies the body of a child of God as the focal point of God's spiritual presence on earth and a place of great importance to the Father and Christ that should be kept in a state of spiritual purity:

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy" (1.Pet.1:13-16 NIV) See also Lev.11:44-45; 20:7.

The Indwelling of the Spirit

"No one has seen God [God the Father] at any time. If we love one another, God [the Father] abides in us, and his love having been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him, and he in us, because of his spirit he has given to us" (1.Jn.4:12-13 Para.). See also Lk.24:46-49; Acts 5:32.
There are several important things to note from what John says:

- The Father resides within his children
- God's love is perfected in his children
- God's spirit is evidence of sonship in the Family of God

**SUMMARY**

While the temple existed in Jerusalem and was attended by the priesthood, anyone who wanted to perform certain acts of worship could do so at Jerusalem. However, after the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., there was no place for the priesthood to officiate or sacrifices to be offered:

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he says, A new covenant, he has made the first old, Now that which decays and waxes old, is ready to vanish away" (Heb.8:12-13 KJV).

When the last vestige of the presence of God's spirit left the temple just before its destruction, what remained of the system of worship that God gave to national Israel has been suspended until Christ returns to establish a new temple system under the Kingdom of God. Until this event occurs, the only place that the spirit presence of God dwells is within the Sovereign Father's earthly children.

The Biblical record clearly shows that the Father has moved the place where he has chosen to place his presence three times:

1. From Mount Sinai to the tabernacle
2. From the tabernacle to the temple
3. From the temple to the children of his new creation

Each of these moves was preceded by fire that came out of heaven and rested upon the place where he was going to place his presence.

**The Holy of Holies**

Within the heart of the tabernacle and later the temple, was the Holy of Holies where the high priest met with God once a year on the Day of Atonement. In this most sacred place was the ark of the covenant where the presence of God rested. With the ark of the covenant were the ten commandments written in stone by the finger of God, Aaron's rod, which signified his authorization to meet with God and intercede for the people of Israel, and some of the food (manna) God gave from heaven to sustain the Israelites as they traveled in the wilderness.
Today, the Father's name rests upon his children and his presence dwells within their flesh through the power of his holy spirit. All who have the name and presence of the Father dwelling within them are a temple of God on earth. Within this temple of flesh, the law of God is written in the hearts of his children. As long as they live within this temple of flesh, they have the authority to communicate, serve, and worship the Father wherever they are and receive daily spiritual nourishment to sustain them as they journey through life.

Within the children of God is the most holy place on earth: it is where the spirit of God resides and where God the Father and Jesus Christ meet with those who are called to salvation.

The Place of Worship

Now God's temple and his Holy Place are within his chosen people (the elect of God) and no matter where they are on this earth, they can meet with the Father and Jesus Christ. A worshiper of God no longer has to go to the temple to offer sacrifices or to observe annual festival days or other observances. All of God's festivals and observances can be observed anywhere one of his children is or wherever they gather to fellowship and worship him.

The Festival of Pentecost has many important meanings for the followers of Christ today. However, perhaps the most inspiring meaning is the fact that God the Father has moved the dwelling place of his presence into his children.

By B. L. Cocherell
The scriptures clearly show that the apostles and the early church understood and taught the deep spiritual meanings and relationships between the Levitical priesthood, the temple worship system of national Israel, and the holy nation of kings, ambassadors, and priests that serve the Father and Jesus Christ through temples of flesh during the gospel age of salvation.

One reason the early church understood the comparison between the temple worship system of national Israel and the Father's worship system during the gospel age is that the apostles were all Israelites who were taught how to worship God through the temple worship system from childhood. Another reason is that until 70 A.D. there was an existing temple for the worship of God in Jerusalem from which to draw analogies between the physical temple and spiritual temple.

Being a temple of God during the gospel age is not some abstract thought or mystical concept; it is a reality for those who are the Father's elect children on earth. Therefore, in order to more clearly understand how the Father's temple functions within his elect children today, we need to have some understanding of the temple system of ancient Israel, the temple system after the return of Christ, and the heavenly temple system.

This chapter explains some of the more important allegorical and meanings and relationships between the temple worship system of ancient Israel and the temple worship system during the gospel age of salvation, which began on the day of Pentecost in 30 A.D. when the holy spirit was sent to dwell in temples of flesh.

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

Before and after his death and resurrection Jesus promised that the holy spirit would come to dwell within his Father's elect children:

"If you love me keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another comforter that it may abide with you forever; it is the spirit of truth that the world cannot receive, because the world cannot see it or know it, but you know it; for it dwells with you and shall be in you" (Jn.14:15-17 Para.). See also 2.Tim.1:14.

The spirit of truth is the Father's holy spirit. One of the functions of this spirit-power is to communicate spiritual truth to those who are authorized to receive and understand God's truth about things regarding the spirit realm:
"But when the Father sends the Comforter instead of me—and by the Comforter I mean the holy spirit—he [it] will teach you much, as well as remind you of everything I myself have told you" (Jn.14:26 LBP).

"And he said, Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah must suffer and die and rise again from the dead on the third day; and that this message of salvation should be taken from Jerusalem to all the nations: There is forgiveness of sins for all who turn to me. You have seen these prophecies come true. And now I will send the holy spirit upon you, just as my Father promised. Don't begin telling others yet—stay here in the city until the holy spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven" (Lk.24:46-49 LBP).

Here, we see Jesus preparing his disciples for the moment when the Father would place his holy spirit within them and they would become the dwelling place of his presence. This is the hour Jesus spoke of when he told the woman of Samaria that the hour would come when the Father's place of worship would be changed. The prophecy spoken to the woman and the promise of the holy spirit given to the disciples was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost in 30 A.D.:

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them" (Acts 2:1-3 KJV). See also Acts 2:4-18.

Here, we have the physical manifestation of God moving the dwelling place of his spiritual presence to temples of flesh. Thus, the Father made it possible for all those whom he calls to salvation who accept that call to worship him wherever they are on earth. See 1.Cor.3:16; 6:19-20.

**WHAT IS A TEMPLE?**

**Hebrew and Greek Words**

The Hebrew word most often translated into the English word temple is *hekal*, which can mean several different types of buildings. However, when the word *hekal* is used in reference to a dwelling-place belonging to God, it always incorporates the sphere of the sacred into its meaning.

Although the Hebrew word *bethel*, which means *house of El* (i.e., God's house or a place where God's presence dwells), appears almost the same number of times as the Hebrew word *hekal* in the Old Testament, the word *bethel* is left untranslated in most English translations of the Bible, which obscures many important prophetic and spiritual lessons.
The Greek words *hieron* and *naos* are translated into the English word temple. *Hieron* means *a sacred place* and *naos* means *a shrine or temple*. Although both Greek words are used to describe the temple in Jerusalem, there is a difference in their intended meaning. *Hieron* is primarily used to describe the whole temple complex, but *naos* is mostly used in reference to the innermost portion of the temple (i.e., the actual building within the temple complex).

*Naos* is used exclusively in reference to Christ's body as a temple, the elect as temples of God, and the heavenly temple in the Book of Revelation; therefore, it seems that the use of *naos* in the New Testament is intended to refer to the most important and sacred place in the temple of God.

**The Temple is Where God dwells**

When the Creator God first formed the nation of Israel, he told them that, if they would live according to his statutes and laws, he would dwell among them, protect and bless them, and walk among them. God wanted to dwell with his chosen people and have personal contact with them in order to commune with them and teach them his ways (Lev.26:3-12). However, the Israelites were rebellious and would not or could not maintain themselves in a state of ceremonial purity so that God could walk among them, and teach them. Therefore, in order to dwell among them, God had to confine himself in his glorified spiritual form to the tabernacle for the protection of his people.

The temple was the most important place in ancient Israel because it was the point of contact between God and his people. It was where the spiritual presence of God dwelt and the only place on earth where God's people were allowed to formally present themselves before him in order to give offerings, make sacrifices, atone for sins, and perform other rites that were required to correctly worship him. Without the temple, there could be no formal worship or interaction between the Creator God and his people. The temple was not just a physical structure where people went to perform their religious duty, it was also the place where God's presence dwelt.

**The Agreement Before and After Christ**

Before the advent of Christ, the Creator God gave the holy spirit to some individuals in order to give them knowledge, talents, and various other attributes and powers so that they could perform certain tasks for him. Although some of these people were called to a special calling, they did not have the Father's or Christ's spirit placed in them, because the Father had not been revealed (See Matt.11:27; Lk.10:22; Jn.8:19), and the Creator God had not become the Messiah. Moreover, these people did not receive the spirit of sonship (Rom.8:14-15) nor did they have the law of God placed within their minds and spirits (See Jer.31:33; Heb.8:8-10).
After the Creator God who came as Jesus Christ the Messiah had revealed God the Father, preached the Father's good news message, and become the firstborn Son of the Father's new creation, a new agreement for salvation was instituted. Under the terms and conditions of the Father's agreement with his elect children during the gospel age, each of his elect children become a sacred temple on earth where he places his holy spirit, his personal spirit, and the spirit of Christ to dwell.

The Temples of Flesh

The writings of the apostles Paul and John leave no doubt that the physical body of a child of God is a temple of God where the presence of God dwells:

"Don't you know that you are God's temple [naos] and that God's spirit lives in you? If anyone defiles God's temple [naos], God will destroy him; for God's temple [naos] is sacred, and you are that temple [naos]" (1.Cor.3:16-17 Para.).

"Haven't you yet learned that your body is the home [naos] of the holy spirit God gave you (Acts 5:32), and that he [it] lives within you? Your own body does not belong to you. For God has bought you with a great price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because he owns it" (1.Cor.6:19-20 LPB).

The apostle Paul's use of the Greek word naos, which defines the most sacred place in God's temple in 1.Corinthians, chapters 3 and 6 clearly identifies the body of a child of God as the focal point of God's spiritual presence on earth and a place of great importance to the Father and Christ that should be kept in a state of spiritual purity.

The apostle John says that the Father's personal spirit resides within the elect:

"No one has seen God [God the Father] at any time. If we love one another, God [the Father] abides in us, and his love having been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him, and he in us, because of his spirit he has given to us" (Jn.4:12-13 Para.). See also Lk.24:46-49; Acts 5:32; 1.Jn.4:12-16.

The apostle Paul says that Christ's personal spirit resides in the elect:

"Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; Even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to the saints; To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col.1:25-27 KJV).
The mystery of how the Father's holy spirit, his personal spirit, and Christ's spirit resides within the flesh of every child of God was understood by those of the first age of the church and this important knowledge can also be understood today by those who have the Father's holy spirit residing within them. See 1.Jn.4:1-17.

Paul explains that a child of God does not have the same thought processes as a normal human because a child of God has the Father's spirit, the holy spirit, and the spirit of Christ residing within them:

"To have a carnal mind is death; but to have a spiritual mind is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is against God: for is not subject to the Law of God, and indeed cannot be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, you are in the spirit, that is if the spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, that person does not belong to him. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead to sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But the spirit of God the Father that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he that raised Christ will also make your mortal bodies alive by his spirit that dwells in you. Therefore brethren, we are not in debt to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (Rom.8:6-12 Para).

The Collective Temple

The apostle Paul speaks of the elect of God as being a collective body brought together to form a holy temple for God to inhabit:

"Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner; In whom all the building [i.e.,the collective church] fitly framed together grows into a holy temple [naos] in the Lord: In whom you are also built together for an habitation of God through the spirit" (Eph.2:19-22 KJV Para.). See also Zech.6:12 which shows God's people as being a collective temple just before Christ returns.

The temples of flesh are unique among all of God's temples that are mentioned in the Bible. The scriptures indicate that these temples only exist during the gospel age of salvation and that the only people on earth who have access to them are the children of the Father's royal household.

Today, the Father's name rests upon the children of God and his presence dwells within the innermost parts of the flesh through the power of his holy spirit. All who have the name and presence of the Father dwelling within them are the Father's temple on earth.

Because the elect of the early church knew that they were the Father's temples, and a holy nation of kings, ambassadors, and priests, they understood what their goals and responsibilities were. Therefore, they were able to do great works through the power of the holy spirit that dwelt within them.
THE TABERNACLE AND THE TEMPLES

Moses was given detailed instructions about the construction of the tabernacle, its furnishings, the rituals, sacrifices, and offerings that were to be made there. Moreover, God instructed him about the priest's functions, garments, and behavior as they served God in the tabernacle. These instructions given to Moses were the basis for the temple that King David designed and that his son Solomon built in Jerusalem for the worship and service of God. These instructions will also be the basis for much of the temple worship system that will be performed after Christ's return.

Because much about the tabernacle, the ancient and millennial temples in Jerusalem, and the practice of the worship system in them have allegorical and literal spiritual meaning for the Father's elect today, it is important to know something about the importance of the physical buildings and the responsibilities and functions of the priests' service in them in order to make comparisons and draw analogies between them and the Father's temple worship system that is represented within his elect children today.

THE WORSHIP SYSTEM IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

The Physical Buildings

- Everything within the tabernacle/temple was totally dedicated to the worship of the Creator God.
- The tabernacle/temple was the only place where God's presence continually resided on earth. The tabernacle/temple was the only place on earth where God could be worshiped in a formal way.
- The tabernacle/temple was the only place on earth where people could receive atonement for their sins.
- The tabernacle/temple was the only place on earth where people could give gifts and make offerings to God.

The Priesthood

- The priesthood was responsible for administering and teaching God's worship system.
- The priesthood functioned as a bridge between God and his people, and the priests were the only ones authorized to enter the tabernacle/temple to present offerings and sacrifices to God.
- The high priest was God's representative and the chief administrator of his worship system on earth.
- The high priest was national Israel's and the priesthood's representative to the Creator God.
- The high priest was the only priest who was allowed to directly communicate with God and receive instructions from him at the tabernacle/temple.
• The high priest was the only person authorized to enter the holiest place within the tabernacle/temple in order to maintain a harmonious relationship between God, national Israel, the priesthood, and himself.

**The People**

• All formal worship of God by the people at the tabernacle/temple, whether offerings, sacrifices, or rituals, were performed for the people by the priesthood.

• Anyone who wanted to formally worship God and receive atonement for their sins through offerings and sacrifices had to perform rites of purification before they could present themselves, their offerings, or their sacrifices to God at the tabernacle/temple.

• The people could not enter into the sacred portions of the tabernacle/temple where the priests officiated; they could only come to its main entrance where the priest would accept their offering or sacrifice and offer it to God on their behalf within the tabernacle/temple.

**The Millennial Temple**

After Christ returns and establishes the Kingdom of God on earth and the tribes of Israel are established as a nation in the land of their inheritance, a new temple will be built at Jerusalem for the formal worship of God and the teaching of his ways:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain [government] of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. And many people shall go and say, Come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house [temple] of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa.2:2-3 KJV).

The following are several facts about the millennial temple and the system of worship that will be practiced at Jerusalem:

• The prophecies about the millennial temple worship system show that it will be essentially the same as the worship system that existed under God's first covenant with national Israel, except for the changes that were promised in order to make salvation easier to obtain.

• The prophecies of Ezekiel (chs. 40-48) reveal many details about the millennial temple, its officiating priesthood and the sacrifices that will be offered there.

• The prophecies of both Ezekiel and Jeremiah show that God's presence will reside in the millennial temple at Jerusalem where people will be taught the ways of God.
• The prophet Zechariah tells us that all nations on earth must present themselves in Jerusalem (where the millennial temple will be located) to worship the Lord of Hosts during the Feast of Tabernacles, and that Jerusalem will be the place where all who offer sacrifices to God will come (Zech.14:16-19).

The Heavenly Temple

The Books of Hebrews and Revelation tell us the following things about the Father's heavenly temple:

• The tabernacle and the things Moses had to make to put in it, such as the altar of incense, the incense censer, the lamp-stand, the table for the show bread, the ark of the covenant, and the altar of sacrifice outside the sanctuary were all symbolic representations of things in heaven (Heb.8:1-5).
• Jesus Christ is the high priest of the order of Melchizedec (Heb.7:14-28) in the heavenly temple and acts as the intercessor and mediator for the elect before God the Father (Rom.8:34; 1.Tim.2:5).
• The heavenly temple is where the heavenly host presently worship and serve the Sovereign Father and his Son.
• After Christ's return, the elect of God will serve the Father as kings and priests in his temple city (Rev.3:12; 5:10; 7:14-17).
• The Father's temple city will come to earth, after his plan for the salvation of humanity is complete (Rev.21:1-27).
• Nations of spirit-beings (people who obtain salvation) will come and bring their glory and honor to the Father's heavenly temple city (Rev.21:24-27).

Things In Common

The tabernacle/temple of ancient Israel, the millennial temple, and the heavenly temple have the following things in common:

• Each is a holy place where the presence of God resides.
• Each is dedicated to the service and worship of God.
• Each has an attending priesthood to officiate and administer God's worship system.
• Each has a priesthood that functions as a bridge between God and his people.
• Each has a high priest.
• Each is a place where God communicates with his people.
• Each is a place where God's people come to praise, serve, and worship him.

372
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE THE FATHER'S TEMPLE?

In order to understand what it means to be the Father's earthly temple, it is necessary to clearly understand that all the temples of the true God—past, present, and future—share the following things in common:

• God's temple is a place dedicated to serve his purpose.
• The presence of God dwells in his temple.
• God's temple has a high priest.
• God's temple has a priesthood.
• God's temple is a place of Atonement.
• God's temple is a place to communicate with him.
• God's temple is a place to worship and praise him.

A Place dedicated to God

The baptismal ceremony, with its various steps, is the process by which a person makes and ratifies an eternal agreement between themselves, God the Father, and Jesus Christ. At baptism, one makes a commitment to live a righteous life and worship and serve the Father and his Son forever. Upon completion of the final ritual of the baptismal ceremony, a person becomes God the Father's son, a brother of Jesus Christ, and a member of the Father's household and his holy nation of firstborn sons. Upon receiving the Father's holy spirit, one also becomes the Father's earthly temple dedicated to his worship and service.

"Don't you know that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwells in you?" (1.Cor.3:16 Para.).

"Don't you know that your body is the temple of the holy spirit that God gave you, and you do not belong to yourself? For you have been purchased with a price; therefore: glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which belong to God" (1.Cor 6:19-20 Para.).

A Place Where the Presence of God Dwells

Many scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments show that the temple of ancient Israel and the temple of the future millennial reign of Christ is where the spirit-presence of God dwells and many scriptures show that the presence of the Father's holy spirit, the Father's personal spirit, and Jesus Christ's personal spirit dwell within the Father's elect children; therefore, the Father's individual children fulfill the first requirement of being his temple; they are a place where the presence of God dwells:

"Don't you know that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwells in you?" (1.Cor.3:16 Para.). See also Rom.8:9-14.
A Place with a High Priest

Ancient Israel's high priest presided over the priesthood who served at the tabernacle/temple, he communicated directly with God, and he made intercession to the Creator God on behalf of Israel's priesthood, himself, and the people of Israel.

Today, during the gospel age of salvation, Jesus Christ is the high priest who presides over his Father's earthly temples and priesthood. Although Jesus Christ is not on earth, he is the administrator of his Father's worship system, priesthood, household, and holy nation on earth. And he also makes intercession for the Father's children from his heavenly throne through his office as high priest.

"Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? Will God? No! He is the one who has forgiven us and given us right-standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? Will Christ? No! For he is the one who died for us and came back to life again for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us there in heaven" (Rom.8:33-34 LBP).

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them" (Heb.7:25 KJV). See also 1.Jn.1:7-9; 2:1-2; 1.Tim.2:5; Eph.2:18.

A Place with a Priesthood

In ancient Israel, the priesthood's primary function and reason for being was to serve the Creator God in his temple, act as his representatives to national Israel, and help maintain a harmonious relationship between him and his people.

During the gospel age of salvation, the Father's priesthood are not his representative to national Israel nor do they act as a bridge between him and Israel in order to maintain a harmonious relationship between them. Today, the Father's children are his earthly temples whose primary function is to serve him through personal sacrifice, intercession on behalf of their fellow priests, and personal growth toward spiritual maturity as the Father's individual and collective spiritual house on earth:

"Lay aside all malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speech, and as newborn babes, desire the pure life-nourishing milk, so that you may grow by it. If you have tasted that the Lord is good. Having drawn near to him, the living Stone who was rejected by men, but chosen and precious to God; you also as living stones are being built into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1.Pet 2:1-5 Para.).
A Place of Atonement

Under the old covenant between Israel and the Creator God, the tabernacle/temple was only one place on earth where people could receive atonement for their sins and reestablish a harmonious relationship between themselves and their God.

Today, the Father's children do not need to travel to a central temple to gain an audience with him in order to ask him for forgiveness, because each of his children are his temple and have Jesus Christ as their heavenly high priest:

"Seeing that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched by our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb.4:14-16 KJV). See also Heb.2:14-18; 9:7-25.

A Place to Communicate with God

Only the high priest of ancient Israel was permitted to communicate directly with the Creator God within the tabernacle/temple and, then, only once a year on the Day of Atonement. Today, because each of the Father's children is a temple where his spirit dwells, each of his children is authorized by his Son who is their high priest in heaven to communicate with him through his earthly temple. Today, when the Father's children want an audience with him, all they have to do is request to be heard through the authority of Jesus Christ and proceed to speak with him as a child speaks to their father:

"For through him (Jesus Christ) we both have access by one spirit (the holy spirit) to the Father. Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph.2:18-19 KJV). See also Heb.4:14-16.

A Place to Worship, and Praise God

The only place in ancient Israel where God could be worshiped in a formal way was at the tabernacle/temple where the presence of God dwelt. When Jesus spoke of a time when people would no longer worship God in a specific place, he was speaking of the gospel age of salvation when the Father's children would worship him within themselves through the holy spirit:

"But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jn.4:23-24 KJV).
The apostle also confirms that the Father's elect children worship him in spirit, "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus" (Phil.3:3 KJV).

When Jesus said, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves" (Matt.21:13) after he had condemned the spiritual leaders of his day for defiling God's temple at Jerusalem, he was quoting Isaiah's prophecy for the future concerning how people would worship the Father after his death and resurrection within a temple of flesh (Isa.56:1-7). Although this prophecy will have its major fulfillment after Jesus returns, it has a fulfillment today in the elect because the Father's children are his temples through which they can praise him.

CONSEQUENCES FOR DEFILING THE FATHER'S TEMPLE?

The consequences for defiling the tabernacle were clearly detailed in the covenant that the Creator God made with national Israel and the consequences for defiling the Father's earthly temples are also clearly detailed in the agreement that the Father has made with his elect children today. In order to understand these consequences it is necessary to review some of the instructions that the Creator God gave to national Israel concerning their relationship to him and the tabernacle:

"You [Moses and Aaron] must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so that they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them" (Lev.15:31 Para.).

God is a holy righteous being whose very nature and being requires that all things that come into close contact with him be of the same quality of existence. The very nature of God's spiritual existence prevents him from dwelling where there is physical and spiritual sin or impurity; therefore, in order for the presence God to be able to dwell among his people and to commune with them, the temple, the priesthood, the people, and all things that came into close contact with him had to become holy and be kept in a condition of physical and spiritual purity. (See Lev.19:2; 1.Pet.1:15-16; Ex.29:36-46; Deut.23:14; 1.Cor.3:17.

Be Holy

"For I am the Lord your God: you shall set yourselves apart for a holy purpose. You shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall you defile yourselves with any kind of thing that creeps upon the earth. For I am the Lord that brought you out of Egypt, to be your God; therefore, you shall be holy, for I am holy" (Lev.11:44-45 KJV).

"And you shall be holy to me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that you should be mine" (Lev.20:26 KJV). See also Lev.19:1-2; 1.Pet.2:1-10.
Moses was given many instructions concerning the procedures that were necessary in order to purify the temple, the temple contents, and the priesthood from defilement and maintain them in a state of purity, so God could dwell in the temple and the priesthood could come inside the temple to perform their duties.

Throughout the Old Testament, the Creator God continually warned the Israelites about the sacredness of his temple and the punishment that they would bring on themselves if they did not keep from polluting it. The death of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, is an example of what happens to those whom God has set apart for a holy purpose when they fail to remain holy and maintain the purity of his temple (Lev.10:1-3).

**The Father's Earthly Temples are Holy**

The many scriptures that speak of God's earthly temples clearly show that these temples must be respected as the most sacred places on earth. Because the bodies of the elect are the Father's holy temples on earth in which his spirit presence dwells during the gospel age of salvation, the Father will not allow the power of his holy spirit, his personal spirit, or Christ's spirit to inhabit a person that is not holy. All things that come into close contact with God's holy place must be free from all sin and impurity; therefore, a child of God must be holy in order to be God's temple.

But, how does the body of the elect become holy and remain in a condition of physical and spiritual purity so that it can be a temple in which the spirit presence of God can dwell? The answer is that, during the baptismal ceremony, a physical and spiritual change takes place that makes the body an acceptable place in which the spiritual presence of God can dwell. In the baptismal water, God purifies the body and purges the spirit of all sin.

After baptism, the person whom the Father has adopted into his family is a new creature and their physical body becomes a temple in which the presence of the Father's holy spirit (his spirit-power), his personal spirit, and Christ's personal spirit can dwell. See 1.Tim.5:22; Tit.1:15-16; Heb.10:14-22; 1.Pet.1:22; 1.Jn.3:1-3; 4:4.

**The Temple Must Remain Holy**

While exhorting and instructing the Corinthians how to be righteous and perform their calling as children of God, the apostle Paul drew upon the Creator God's instructions to national Israel to avoid having any interaction between themselves and other religions and to remove all vestiges of false religions from the land he was giving them. Paul tells the Corinthians to avoid being spiritually bound to people who do not truly believe and obey the things of God, because there is no common ground on which to build a spiritual relationship:
"Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? And what participation he that believes with the infidel? And what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For you are the temple of the living God; and God has said, I will walk in them and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch the unclean; and I will receive you And will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (2.Cor.6: 14-18 Para.).

What agreement and what kind of relationship can the Father's children have with this world's religions? The answer is none, if one wants the Father and his Son to walk with them and be within them. The Father's elect cannot be a part of this world's religious systems and a part of the Kingdom of God, because the two are in total opposition to each other:

"And I heard another voice from heaven saying, Come out of her my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her lawlessness" (Rev.18:4 KJV Para.).

Clearly, the elect are to avoid false religions and spiritual relationships with people who practice them, just as ancient Israel and the Corinthians were to avoid them. Because the apostle Paul was speaking the will of God, a child of God who avoids false religions and spiritual relationships with people who practice them can claim the Father's promise of continued sonship and fellowship with him.

A SERIOUS WARNING

The scriptures show that the Father's earthly temples are to remain in a holy condition just as the tabernacle/temple in ancient Israel was to remain holy:

"Don't you know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you? If anyone defiles God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple" (1.Cor.3: 16-17 Para.). See also 1.Cor.6:19-20.

When the apostle Paul said, "you are God's temple" what exactly did he mean by the word you?:

• Did he mean that the elect's physical body is God's temple apart from the spirit-being of the new creation that inhabits the body?
• Did he mean that the spirit-being of the new creation itself is God's temple apart from the body?
• Did he mean that the spirit-being of the new creation and its physical body both comprise God's temple?
Although this may seem like an unimportant point to understand, it is extremely important to know exactly what Paul meant by the word 'you', because this understanding will help a person know what kind of conduct to avoid in order to keep from defiling the Father's temple and what he will destroy if his earthly temple is defiled.

In order to clearly understand what Paul was talking about when he said "You are the Temple of God", one must first understand the following four terms and conditions of both the Old and the New Covenants:

1. The spiritual presence of God will not dwell in an unholy place.
2. The spiritual presence of God will leave a place that becomes unholy.
3. People who are holy must make an effort to remain holy.
4. When a holy person becomes unholy, access to God's temple is denied.

Under the Old Agreement with Israel

Before the Creator God would allow his presence to dwell in the tabernacle in the wilderness and later in the Jerusalem temple, all physical impurity had to be removed from the tabernacle/temple through the rites of purification. After this initial purification, purity had to be maintained through continual rites of purification in order for God's spiritual presence to remain in the tabernacle/temple.

Under The Father's Agreement With The Elect

There are significant differences between the Creator God's agreement with ancient Israel and the Father's agreement with his elect children concerning how to become purified and remain in a condition of purity.

Under the Father's agreement with his elect children, all physical and spiritual impurity is removed through the baptismal ceremony.

Once one's physical body is purified and one's sins are washed away in the baptismal ceremony through the power of the Father's holy spirit, one's body and spirit is ready to receive the indwelling of his spirit, which transforms a person into one of the Father's children. Once a person has the spirit of God dwelling within them, they are the Father's earthly temple that will be kept in a pure and a sinless condition through the purifying blood of Jesus Christ. This pure and sinless condition will last as long as one remains in obedience to the Father and repents of any infraction of his law when they are made aware of it.

The Father's elect children are a spiritual creation which have as a part of their genetic make-up, the Father's holy spirit, the Father's personal spirit, and Jesus Christ's personal spirit, which makes them the Father's earthly temples and provides them with certain spiritual attributes, authorizations, qualities, and powers.
• The physical bodies of the Father's children are temples sanctified for sacred use.
• The Father's children are a spiritual creation residing within a physical body which is a temple of God.
• The Father's holy spirit resides within the physical temples of his children.
• The Father's personal spirit presence resides within the physical temples of his children.
• Jesus Christ's personal spirit presence resides within the physical temples of his Father's children.
• The Father's holy spirit, his personal spirit, and Jesus Christ's personal spirit will not reside in a sinful or impure place.

The Human Body and Spirit

The body is not the totality of the human existence. The body is only a physical housing. It is a machine made of flesh; it is the means through which the human that is a spiritual entity can experience this physical dimension of time and space. The human spirit without a physical body cannot exist in this dimension of time and space.

A New Creature

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2.Cor.5:17 KJV). See also Rom.6:1-11; Eph.4:21-24; Gal.6:15.

Although the Father's children outwardly appear to be the same as any other human, they are not. During the baptismal ceremony they are transformed into a new creature with the genetic imprint of the God family. Although they are not yet immortal spirit-beings, they are members of the Father's spiritual family as his sons. Moreover, at some time in the future they will shed their bodies of flesh and receive an immortal spirit-body. See 1.Cor.15:51-54; 1.Thes.4:13-17; Rev.20:6.

The scriptures say, "There is a spirit in man" (Job 32:8) and at the death of a human, the human body returns to the elements from which it is made and the human spirit "goes back to God who gave it" (Ecc.12:7). At death, the spirit of those who are of the new creation go to heaven to await the first resurrection at which time they will be given a spirit-body through which they can live and experience life in the spirit-realm of existence "this mortal must put on immortality" (1.Cor.15:51-54). The spirits of all other humans who die before the first resurrection return to God to await a resurrection to their first opportunity to obtain salvation or the resurrection to the second death.

Because the elect of God are a new creation (a new spirit creation) and a member of the Family of God, they are subject to the laws and standards of behavior that have eternal consequences if they are violated. The following stern warning shows the punishment of the elect who decide to rebel against God and depart from the faith:
"Don't you know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you? If anyone defiles God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple" (1 Cor. 3:16-17 Para).

The English word *defiles* is translated from the Greek word *phtheiro*, which means *to shrivel or wither*, i.e., *to spoil* (by any process) or (generally) *to ruin* (especially figuratively, by moral influences, *to deprave*):

Paul says that, when a person defiles the temple of God they have committed an offence for which there is no forgiveness and God will destroy them.

But, how does a person defile the Father's temple and what happens to the person during this life after they have defiled his temple, which they are? In order to answer these two questions, it is important to clearly understand that, when one is raised out of the baptismal water, one is literally raised to a new life, and upon receiving the spirit of God, a person is literally transformed from the original human creation into a new and different being. The old person with only the spirit of man ceases to exist, and a new person who has the spirit of the new creation dwelling within them is born.

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy spirit, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. . .But that which bears thorns and briers is rejected and is nigh to cursing; whose end is to be burned" (Heb. 6:4-6,8 KJV). See also Heb.2:1-3; 2 Pet.2:20-21; Ezk.18:24,26.

Once a person is a member of the Family of God and fully understands what God requires of them and refuses to accept God's will and rule in their life, that person will suffer the second death which is reserved for the incorrigibly wicked:

"For if we are willfully sinful after receiving the full knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice concerning sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and zealous fire being about to consume the adversaries. Anyone not regarding the law of Moses dies without pity on the word of two or three witnesses: How much worse punishment do you think he will be thought worthy to receive having trampled on the Son of God, and having counted the blood of the covenant in which he was sanctified common, and having insulted the spirit of grace?" (Heb.10:26-29 Para.).

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb.10:31).
Jesus said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28 KJV). See Gen. 6:1-7; Lk. 12:4-5.

The Greek word for body here is soma, which means a physical human/animal body, or corps. The Greek word for soul is psyche, which means breath, life, or mind. Here, there are two distinct elements of physical and non-physical human life spoken of and both elements can be completely destroyed by God. There is nothing in either of these two words that indicates anything immortal. The Greek word for destroy is apollumi, which means to destroy fully, to kill, to perish, to completely do away with, or to die. The word apollumi is used many times to describe the utter destruction of individuals and places (see Matt. 12:14, 21:41; Lk. 17:29). In every context where apollumi is found in the New Testament, it means to completely destroy and it is used to convey utter and complete destruction.

There is no doubt as to the meaning of the words used in Matthew 10:28. Physical beings only have the power to kill the physical body, but the Father has the power to completely destroy all aspects of his new creation, including its spirit.

Understanding that the human body is only a physical housing through which one can experience this physical dimension of time and space helps one to understand that, when Paul said, "You are God's temple" and "If anyone defiles God's temple, God will destroy him" (1 Cor. 3:16-17), he was not speaking of the physical body. He was speaking of the spirit of the new spiritual creation, which can become irrevocably defiled under the terms and conditions of the Father's agreement with his elect children.

The kind of defilement that Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 3:16 has little to do with a person making an occasional error in judgment or giving in to the pulls of the flesh in a moment of weakness. Paul is speaking of an action that leads to a permanent condition of defilement, which cannot be reversed through the application of the sacrificial blood of Christ.

Although the apostle Paul is speaking of the defilement of the spirit in verse 17, this does not mean that we can disregard God's precepts, principles, and laws governing the treatment of the physical body.

National Israel was given several laws prohibiting the disfiguring of the body, such as marking the body with tattoos, cutting or tearing the flesh, and making a bald spot between the eyes as a show of mourning or grief. See Lev. 19:28, 21:5; Deut. 14:1. These laws would also apply to those seeking to have a harmonious relationship their heavenly Father, because we are made in his image (Gen. 1:27, 9:6); therefore, we must not abuse, disfigure, or misuse our physical body in a manner which would show disrespect for our Father and his creation.
DO NOT EXTINGUISH THE SPIRIT

In Paul's warning and exhortation to the Thessalonians to be alert to the dark forces of the spirit-realm that seek to destroy the elect and to do the things that are expected of them as children of God, he says, "Do not extinguish the spirit" (1.Thes.5:19 Para.). This is a serious warning, because when the spirit of God within a child of God is extinguished, that person has removed themselves from the Family of God and is no longer considered a child of God. But, how does a person extinguish the spirit? Some of the ways to extinguish the spirit are to become self-deceived, self-willed, apathetic toward one's calling, or stubbornly refuse to obey God's will in one's life:

"Now the spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisies; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1.Tim.4:1-2 KJV).

Jesus warns that there is an unforgivable sin:

"I say to you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy concerning the spirit shall not be forgiven men. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him. But whoever speaks against the holy spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, not in this age or in the age that is coming" (Matt.12:31-32 Para.).

The Father is willing to forgive all kinds of sin; he is even willing to forgive the most vile things that are spoken against his firstborn Son the Savior of humanity. However, he will not forgive the ridicule of the holy spirit, which in actuality is a rejection of the things that the holy spirit represents. Blasphemy of the holy spirit is a conscious rejection of the Father's power, grace, and right to rule in one's life; therefore, it is an attitude and a behavior that is unforgivable.

A child of God who becomes a habitual and unrepentant sinner destroys the ability of the temple (which they are) to house God's spirit. When the Father removes his personal spirit, his holy spirit, and the spirit of Christ from one of his elect children, that person has no more hope of eternal life.

The extinguishing of the holy spirit causes a breach between the Father and his disobedient child that is irreparable. This breach results in the death penalty being passed upon the unrepentant sinner who has defiled God's temple. This person's spirit will go back to the Father in a corrupted state to await the resurrection to the second death, which is destruction in the lake of fire.
The Father's call to salvation is very clear; he will reward obedience and forgive sin, he is patient and merciful; he will not cause the irrevocable termination of a person's life unless there is no hope of redemption. The Father and his Son will never leave or forsake one of the elect; however, one of his children can leave and forsake him and his Son by refusing to resist evil and nurture a relationship with them:

"God sets himself against people filled with pride, but he gives grace to people that are humble; therefore, be subject to God. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you" (Jms.4:6-8 Para.).

The elect who defile the Father's temple will be punished with the second death. Death is the absence of life; it is not existence in another form. When the second death is administered to a person, that person will cease to exist. The second death is total death; it is an irreversible and total destruction from which there is no return.

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.6:23 KJV). See also Ezk.18:4, 20.

"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death" (Rev.21:8 NIV).

By B.L. Cocherell

384
How to Recognize Those Who Truly Follow Jesus Christ

In a world of religious confusion, how does one recognize those who practice true Christianity?

Is there something that one could observe that would indicate that an organization is practicing God's ways or that a person is a true child of God? The answer is yes! The elect of God can be identified and separated from those who are not the elect.

In the following few paragraphs, some major behavioral traits to look for when deciding if people are guided by the spirit of God will be reviewed.

Love for God's People

A major sign of God's people is their love and concern for one another:

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if we have love one to another" (Jn.13:35 Para.).

While this would not seem to be a major sign of God's people, it stands out in a world torn with strife, war, divorce, murder, anger, hatred, and violence. Love and true concern for another human being is rare indeed and it is truly a sign of the people who follow God the Father and his son Jesus Christ who loved humanity enough to give his life, so they could have salvation.

The Law of God

One indication that someone is following God's way of life is that they will understand and be practicing all of the ten commandments, as well as many other laws of God.

The Elect of God recognize that God has set in motion laws that will bring every good thing and an abundant and full life if these laws are obeyed. God's people will boldly proclaim that his laws have not been destroyed, but have been expanded by Jesus Christ to cover every aspect of human activity (Isa.42:21; Matt.chp.5).

Jesus says, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (Jn.14:15 Para.).

The apostle John has a stinging rebuke for those who say that they follow God, but do not practice his law:
"He that says, I know him, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and has no truth in him" (1 Jn. 2:4 Para.).

The people of God recognize that God's law is one of his greatest gifts to mankind and they believe what King David said: “Your word is as a lamp before my feet, and lights my path” (Psa. 119:105 Para.).

**They Love God and His Law**

"This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God, and keeping his commandments. This is love for God: that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not burdensome" (1 Jn. 5:2-3 Para.).

**The Sabbath and Annual Observances**

Another mark of God's people is that they observe God's commanded observances. Moreover, people who follow God's ways observe his weekly Sabbath, which is the fourth commandment:

"Speak you also to the children of Israel, saying, Truly my sabbaths you shall keep; for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who does sanctify you . . . Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever does any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death . . . Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath [Heb. Shabbat. The weekly sabbath], to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever . . . " (Ex. 31:13-17 KJV).

**A Perpetual Covenant**

The requirement to observe the Sabbath and the festival days was not a temporary command and it has not been canceled. The people of God observe these days, which are holy to him and a perpetual covenant and sign between God and his people forever. See also Isa. 56:1-6; 58:13; 66:22-23.

The prophet Ezekiel was inspired to write that the commanded festival days are a sign of a true follower of God:

"Moreover, I also gave them my Sabbaths [Heb. shabbaton. The festivals], to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctifies them . . . And hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God" (Ezk. 20:12,20 Para).
A Sign of Obedience

A person can keep nine of the Ten Commandments of God almost in complete secrecy, and no one will be the wiser. Someone may even keep the royal law of love in relative secrecy. Even though the practice of these laws shows a Godly attitude and is extremely important in maintaining Godly character, it does not impact the lives of people in the same way that practicing the weekly Sabbath and the annual observances does.

It is almost impossible for others not to notice a person who keeps God's special observances. The first thing that is noticed is that they do not perform their normal work or business on the Sabbath or annual festival days. If all of these observances fell on a weekend or on days when a person did not have to go to work or do business, they could go by relatively unnoticed. But, these observances fall on different days throughout the year, which makes it impossible to hide the fact that a person is observing them.

When people voluntarily honor and practice the observance of these days, a very profound statement is being made. Their actions show that they believe this is the way to please and worship God. Their actions also indicate that they believe that those who are not observing these days are not worshiping God correctly. One of the reasons the world hates God's children is that God's children practice the same worship system that Jesus did. See Jn.15:12,17; Lk.17:14; Matt.24:9.

Jesus sums up the general attitude of people, while speaking to Nicodemus:

"He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (Jn.3:18-21 Para).

Human nature is the opposite of God's nature, therefore, it results in the hatred of the things of God. The vast majority of people today do not love truth; they love evil. This fact is evidenced by their disobedience of God's laws, statutes, and judgments. This is why the people of God are hated. Jesus was hated because he truly observed and practiced all of God's law.

Because Jesus faithfully practiced God's law, his behavior became a condemnation of those who professed to keep it, but in reality, they did not. This same hatred will be directed toward anyone who truly follows God's way of worship.
Practicing the law of God, which includes the observance of the weekly Sabbath and annual observances, is a sign of those who are truly the children of God. See Ex.13:9; Isa.56:1-6; 58:13; 66:22-23.

**Separate From False Religions**

In a letter to the elect at Corinth, the apostle Paul exhorts them to avoid mixing the truth of God with paganism. He also tells them to separate themselves from the religions of that day:

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you" (2.Cor.6:17 Para.). See also verses 14-16.

A child of God must neither participate in nor be a part of this world's religions. Participation in this world's religions is spiritual adultery, because the elect of God are the spiritual Bride of Christ and are his ambassadors to this world. Therefore, they must accurately represent God and his way of life. See 2.Cor.5:20; 6:14-16; Rev.19:7-9.

**The Preaching of the Kingdom**

After being crucified and resurrected from the dead, Jesus instructed his disciples as to what he wanted his followers to do:

"Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Matt.28:19-20 Para.).

Notice, Jesus told his disciples to teach the things he had commanded. Christ was not referring only to the things he had taught during his earthly ministry in human form; he also meant for them to teach the things he had taught Israel before he became flesh. See Jn.1:1-11; Eph.3:9; 2.Tim.3:16.

**The Government of God**

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel" (Mk.1:14-15 Para.).

This is the same gospel that the elect of God will be preaching (Matt.24:14; 28:19-20).

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel to you than that you have received, let him be accursed" (Gal.1:8-9 KJV).
These are strong words! However, they do show how important it is to God that his people preach the right message: No other message is acceptable.

The Elect of God will be doing the work Jesus instructed them to do in preaching the gospel (good news) of the soon-coming Kingdom of God. The true gospel of the Kingdom of God is much different from what is popularly taught today. It is a gospel so dynamic, so powerful, so diametrically opposed to what is popularly taught that the vast majority of people reject it when they hear it. Surprising as it is, Jesus Christ did not come to make this world a better place in which to live under its present leadership:

"I have given them your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of this world. I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (Jn.17:14-16 Para.). See Matt.10:34-35; chp.24; Mk.chp.13; Rev.5:9-10; 11:15; 20:4-6.

To Become an Immortal Being

God the Father and Jesus Christ have a plan by which mankind may be born into the very Family of God. This plan involves repentance, forgiveness of sin, baptism, full redemption, and salvation (See Acts 2:38; 3:19). No other people but the elect of God truly understand that human beings have the opportunity to become immortal beings in the Family of God.

The Apostle John writes, "Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1.Jn.3:2 Para.).

Jesus himself was criticized for saying he was the son of God, but he answered this criticism by stating,

"Is it not written in your law, I said, "You are gods?" If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken" (Jn.10:34-35 Para.).

The Elect are destined to be born into the Family of God! Almost no one understands the profound nature of this vital teaching. Jesus said that this is another earmark of those whom God has called out of this world:

"It is given to you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt.13:11 Para.).

The Fruit of the Spirit

Because it is the possession of God's spirit that makes one a member of the body of Christ, those who are the elect of God must bear unmistakable evidence of those fruits. Jesus tells us how to tell the difference between those who are his followers and those who are not:
"Beware of false prophets, which come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit" (Matt.7:15-17 Para.).

Look at the fruit (i.e., results) of this world's religious and political systems: crime, hunger, poverty, religious bigotry, hatred, broken homes, permissiveness, promiscuity, and war.

This is the pathetic situation in which we see the professing Christian nations today. This is the result of a false Christianity taught by counterfeit ministers of Christ and practiced by false Christians.

If this statement were not true, the fruits of their teachings and practices would be far different; their fruit would be good and not evil. However, the evidence shows, without a doubt, the error of their ways:

"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal.5:22-23 Para.).

SUMMARY

Yes, true Christians can be identified and separated from those who are not true Christians. Those who truly follow God the Father and Jesus Christ will live their lives in accordance with what is written in the word of God.

By B.L. Cocherell
MISSION STATEMENT

We sincerely hope that you have found these topical studies into the Bible intellectually challenging, spiritually enlightening and beneficial.

For those wondering who authored this study, what the study's purpose is, or how to participate in this educational program, the following brief summary will give some insight into who we are and what we are trying to accomplish.

This Work

This work is a non-profit, volunteer effort. There are no salaried writers, employees, or staff. The volunteers are engaged in an ongoing effort to discover, research, understand, and publish foundational truths that have been hidden in the Bible for centuries. We believe that, when these foundational truths are correctly understood and practiced, they will bring people happy, abundant, and productive lives with the promise of eternal life after physical death.

Our Goals

Our primary goal is to share our knowledge and understanding of the Sovereign God's plan and purpose for humanity with those who are interested in living according to his law, and not by the dictates and traditions of men. Our secondary goal is to proclaim the coming Kingdom of God as a warning and a witness to humanity before the Messiah returns to rule the earth.

If You Want To Know More

If you want to know more about us, the work we are doing, or how you can participate in our biblically based educational and research projects, contact us at: www.BibleResearch.org or www.Bible-Prophecy.net
OTHER BOOKS BY B.L. COCHERELL

BIBLICAL PROPHECIES PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

The Bible is full of prophecies which speak of unimaginable pain and suffering which Jesus Christ says he is going to pour out on humanity and many of the Father's elect children before he returns to establish the government of God on earth. But, why would the loving God who gave his life for humanity as the Messiah want to inflict the kind of pain, agony, and terror spoken of throughout the Bible as 'The Wrath of God'?

If the wrath of God is inevitable, when will it come and what does God hope to accomplish through it? These and many other questions are answered in this in-depth study about the major events which will precede and be a part of the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

This book also identifies several political alliances, people, and spirit-beings and their involvement before and during the fulfillment of the prophetic events at the end of this age.

THE GIFT OF IMMORTALITY

The magnitude of the opportunities and rewards that the Sovereign God offers to those he calls to salvation through repentance, baptism, and conversion is almost beyond comprehension; nevertheless, what is offered can be obtained by those who are willing to become obedient to his way of life.

This book answers many questions about how to enter the Sovereign God's family and kingdom as an immortal spirit-being and what he expects of his children while they live in human form.

HUMAN LIFE

DEATH AND BEYOND

Is death the end of human existence? According to the Bible, the answer is No! There are several major resurrections of the dead to physical life noted in the Bible in which an individual's eternal destiny is determined.

This book explains the four major resurrections mentioned in the Bible, who will be in each resurrection, and when each one will occur. This book answers many questions about heaven, hell, the state of the dead, immortality, predestination, reincarnation, and much more.
THE COMMANDED OBSERVANCES AND HOLY CONVOCATIONS
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Throughout human history, anyone who wanted to worship the true God had to do so within the boundaries of strict rules that were set forth by God. The foundational elements of this worship system are shown through the sacrificial system and the commanded observances and holy convocations.

This two volume study answers many questions about the Sovereign God's plan for humanity, explains many of the literal and prophetic meanings of the various observances and convocations, and reveals a new dimension of understanding into God's plan for the salvation of humanity—past, present, and future—that has been hidden for many centuries.

SURVIVE AND THRIVE AS A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST

During the centuries that followed the demise of the early church, those who clung to the basic truths of God also accepted much error and made many departures from the truth once delivered. Along with this departure from truth, much knowledge and understanding about spiritual leadership, congregational organization and government, and problem solving within the body of believers was lost.

This book contains studies that should give any serious student of the Bible enough knowledge to understand who the spiritual leaders of the church are and are not, the organizational and governmental structure of the early church, and what one's attitude, behavior, and responsibility should be pertaining to the organizational and governmental structure of the church and those who govern and serve the elect of God through it.

BIBLICAL LAW PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Throughout much of Christian history there has been much confusion and misunderstanding as to what constitutes God's law and whether or not any or all of it applies to Christians today. This study gives some unique insights into the Sovereign God's purpose for humanity and shows how the first humans came under the authority of God's law, how the law applies to Christians today, how it will apply to humans after Christ returns, and how to have a harmonious relationship with the Sovereign God and Jesus Christ through the practice of God's law.

This book gives logical, concise, and meaningful answers to many questions about God's law and its application today.
OUR PLACE IN THE SPIRIT REALM
GODS • ANGELS • DEMONS

The spirit realm and the beings who inhabit it and interact with this physical realm are a reality which should not be casually dismissed as being unimportant to one's daily life.

The Bible contains much information that true Christians need to know about the Sovereign God, the Creator God, Jesus Christ, and other spirit-beings.

This book is a serious discussion about the reality of spirit-beings, the tremendous positive impact on mankind that some of these beings have had, are having, and will have in the future and the serious danger posed by some spirit-beings as they interact with humans and this physical dimension of time and space.

SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN AND DOCTRINES OF DEMONS

In the Book of Revelation, there is a cryptic reference to individuals Christ identifies as being of the synagogue of Satan. Additionally the apostle Paul warned the evangelist Timothy to beware of those who would depart from the faith and pay attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. Is it possible that much of what is taught as biblical truth today is not truth, but a clever deception?

This book identifies the Synagogue of Satan and its members and documents a number of popular beliefs held by many professing Christians that are in reality teachings of evil spirits meant to prevent an understanding of true biblical precepts, principles, and laws which if practiced will lead to life everlasting.

BOOK ORDERS AND DONATION INFORMATION

5½" x 8½" soft cover copies of each book noted in the above list may be ordered from www.BibleResearch.org or www.Bible-Prophecy.net. Copies of each book and the topical studies contained in each book may be download free of charge from the websites noted. This book or the ones noted in the above list can be ordered from the printer for mass distribution at cost plus shipping and handling.

Donations are gladly accepted to help defray the cost of our publishing, shipping, and the maintenance of our websites.