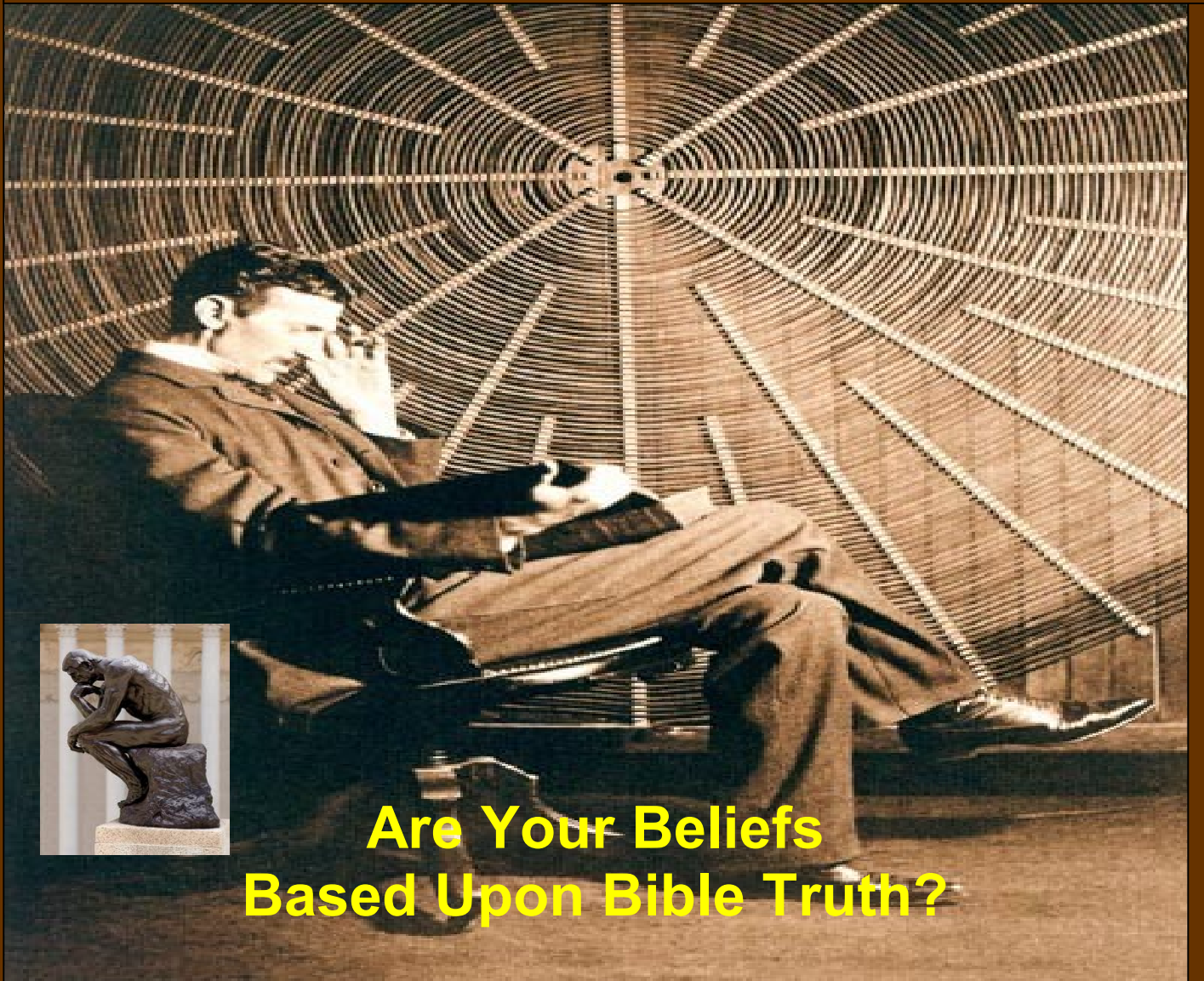




Think About It



**Are Your Beliefs
Based Upon Bible Truth?**

Written By Rev.

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Introduction

This book is designed as a resource for inquiring minds. It looks into the reality of major Christian doctrines and beliefs and asks one simple question, *“Is What We Believe True Or Are We Believing A Lie?”*

The author’s purpose in writing this eBook is to cause Christians to, “Think About It” and get back on track or confirm existing beliefs.

The author will discuss ideas, doctrines and popular beliefs. The King James Version of the Bible will be used to validate any conclusions unless otherwise noted in the text.

This book is perfect for Topical Bible Studies, Self-Examination, Christian School Resources and as an Evangelistic Tool for the inquiring or skeptic mind.

The opinions and conclusions of the author are not exclusive to the author. More than a dozen Scholars, Pastors and/or Bible Teachers have been quoted.

Poetry, written by the author, has been added to strengthen his views and touch the heart of the reader.



Chapter #1

The Existence of God

Is there is a Supreme Being called God? If so, what is He like? Can we know Him? Is He a “He” or a “She” or what? Is God a vague reality that cannot be known or can God be understood? Can anyone prove that there is a God? Wouldn't you love for someone to simply show you the evidence for God's existence? If you are looking, there are signs everywhere. Theology is the study of the nature of God. This is where we see the signs and draw our conclusions.

The concept of God has been with us since the creation of man. History records man's journey through life and his belief in a God or gods. The Greeks, Egyptians, and many other societies worshiped gods. There were gods of fertility, warfare, love, and all the other good and bad elements of life. The gods and goddesses were worshiped with altars, elaborate statues, or sacrifices. Today in India they report as many as one million gods.

The Atheists, those who say that there is no God, believe that when you die, you cease to exist. The Humanists tell us that man evolved and has no need for a god. The New-Age folks take evolution to the ultimate, saying that they can become their own god. All do not believe in a Supreme Being. However, the Agnostic believes in a Supreme Being but says that Being cannot be known, thus impersonal.

We may not be able to look upon God but we can see His handiwork. It reeks of “Intelligent Design.” The complexity of our planet points to a deliberate Designer who not only created our universe, but also sustains it. The universe operates by *uniform laws of nature* that could not just have happened.

There is also the “*Theory of Motion*” that says, in effect, that if a thing is in motion it had to be started by someone or thing that is not in motion. The universe is in constant motion, started by God who is not in motion. He is above it all. Even the Big Bang Theory begs the question, who caused it to happen? Logic dictates that it could not just have happened on its own.

The clearest revelation and proof that there is a God is seen in the Bible. It is full of proof that God exists and is rich with stories of interaction between God and man. God is identified as a “He” not “She” and is known as Father by millions of believers. His name, character, handiwork, and dealings with

man are openly revealed. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24)

Does God exist? I would say, from all the evidence, YES, there really is a God. However, the real proof is seen when you and I seek Him. He loves to reveal Himself to inquiring minds and is always willing to accept the repentant soul.

With all the evidence available, some folks still say that there is no God. I see it this way...we make up our minds as to the existence of God or not and interpret the evidence through that pre-determined filter. If we don't want to know God, then we adhere to the notion that there is no God. If, on the other hand, we want to know Him, we seek Him and He reveals Himself to us in a whole lot of ways.

It's been said that Religion is; man seeking God and Christianity is; God seeking man. A study of world religions seems to confirm this premise. Here's a list of the 10 top religions, excluding Christianity, and an approximate head count. All on this list seek a god that cannot be known in a personal way.

Islam: 1.5 billion, Secular/Nonreligious and /or Agnostic/Atheist: 1.1 billion, Hinduism: 900 million, Chinese Traditional Religion: 394 million, Buddhism: 376 million, Primal-Indigenous: 300 million
African Traditional & Diasporic: 100 million
Sikhism: 23 million, Juche: 19 million, Spiritism: 15 million

Christianity reports 2.1 billion followers worldwide. It's popularity is found in the one indisputable fact that those who profess salvation claim that God sought them and called them out of this sinful world to become His children. The Apostle Paul said, in a letter to the church at Rome, that, “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” The Beloved apostle, John reports Jesus' words in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”.

Religion is all about rules, regulations and expectations, whereas Christianity is all about relationship. The Bible says that God is Love and He reached out to a lost and dying world to save as many as would believe on Him.

Man can really know this invisible God? He is referred to as a Spirit. (John 4:24) I see it this way, some folks know a lot about a famous personality but in reality have never met that person. Being a fan or a follower is o.k. but I'd rather be one that not only knows a lot about God but also walks with Him and talks with Him and gains counsel, wisdom and peace from each encounter. We will talk more about this intimate fellowship in chapter five.

Yes there is a God, that is, if you want Him to exist. There is a God, even if you do not want Him to exist. He is an eternal being, invisible but ever so close. He now waits in the heavens for that one day when we all will stand before Him, face to face. In the meantime, He has given us His Holy Spirit to guide and comfort us through life's many bumps and turns.

Chapter Two

Creation Verses Evolution



Most of us were raised with the theory of evolution being taught to us as fact in the public school system. For those of us that may not know what evolution is, it is the process by which different kinds of living organisms are thought to have developed and diversified from earlier forms. It is the gradual development of something, from a simple to a more complex form. Darwin's theory, over the years, has become fact, accepted in all walks of life and even in the scientific community. It also includes man as one of the living organisms that evolved.

This theory is, of course, contrary to the Bible and eliminated God, as the creator of all living things. It's premise is that if you apply enough time, existing chemicals and other substances that are found on earth, will spark life and form living organisms that over more time will grow and develop into higher organisms and eventually plant, animal and even human life. That's like saying if I place all the raw materials needed to make a watch in a bucket and leave it for millions of years it will eventually become a fully operational watch. Time and substances cannot produce life.

Again, the Bible is the only source for a realistic understanding of life. I will again point to Intelligent Design as a proof text that God was and is still behind the creation of all things including man. Listen to what Moses wrote in Genesis, chapter one;

Genesis 1

King James Version (KJV)

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. ² And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. ³ And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. ⁴ And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. ⁵ And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

⁶ And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. ⁷ And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. ⁸ And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. ⁹ And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. ¹⁰ And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good. ¹¹ And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. ¹² And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. ¹³ And the evening and the morning were the third day. ¹⁴ And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

¹⁵ And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. ¹⁶ And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. ¹⁷ And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸ And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And the evening and the morning were the fourth day. ²⁰ And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. ²¹ And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought

forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

²² And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. ²³ And the evening and the morning were the fifth day. ²⁴ And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. ²⁶ 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 creepeth upon the earth. ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. ²⁸ And God blessed them, and God said unto 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 moveth upon the earth.

²⁹ And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. ³¹ And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. God rested on the seventh day.

Note: God spoke creation into existence. He said, “Let there be, and it came forth from nothing.

All the above scripture verses clearly say that God created earth and everything else. He is the “Intelligent Designer” behind it all.

Here are 10 sure evidences that dispute evolution, showing it to be false.

Moon Dust

Meteoritic dust falls on the earth continually, adding up to thousands, if not millions, of tons of dust per year. Realizing this and knowing that the moon also had meteoritic dust pilling up for what they thought was millions of

years, N.A.S.A. scientist were worried that the first lunar ship that landed would sink into many feet of dust which should have accumulated. However, only about 1/8 of an inch of dust was found, indicating a young moon. The assumption is, that if the 1/8 thickness is evident on the moon, it also has to be the same for the earth because they are in close proximity.

Meteoritic material contributes nickel to the oceans. Taking the amount of nickel in the oceans and the supply from meteoritic dust yields over the years indicates that the age of the earth is only several thousand years, certainly not millions as evolutionists claim. Thus the nickel count in our oceans and meteoritic dust deposits found on the earth clearly indicates a younger planet.

Magnetic Field

The earth's magnetic field is decaying rapidly at a constant rate. Using this rate of decline, one can back step and determine the magnetism of the earth. 8,000 years ago, the earth would have equaled that of a magnetic star, a highly unlikely occurrence. Also, if electric currents in the earth's core were responsible for the earth's magnetism, the heat generated would have dissolved the earth.

Fossil Record

Charles Darwin stated, in his Origin of Species, "The geological record is extremely imperfect and this fact will, to a large degree, explain why we do not find intermediate varieties, connecting together all the extinct and existing forms of life by the finest graduated steps. He who rejects these views on the nature of the geological record will rightly reject my whole theory."

Now, over 130 years and billions of fossils later, we can rightly reject the view of an incomplete fossil record or of one, "Connecting together all forms of life by the finest graduated steps."

Out of millions of fossils in the world, not one transitional form has been found. All known species show up abruptly in the fossil record, without intermediate forms, thus contributing to the fact of special creation.

Probability

The science of probability has not been favorable to the evolutionary theory. Dr. James Coppedge, of the Center for Probability Research in Biology in California, made some amazing calculations. Dr. Coppedge applied all the laws of probability studies to the probability of a single cell coming into existence by chance. He computed a world in which the entire crust of the earth...all the oceans; all the atoms and the whole crust were available. He then had these amino acids bind at a rate one and one-half trillion times faster than they do in nature. In computing the possibilities, he found that to provide a single protein molecule by chance combination would take 10, to the 262nd power, years to get a single cell. (That is, the number 1 followed by 262 zeros) The single smallest living cell known to mankind – which is called the mycoplasma hominis H39, would take 10, to the 119,841 power, years. That means that if you took thin pieces of paper and wrote 1 and then wrote zeros after it, you would fill up the entire known universe with paper before you could ever even write that number. That is how many years it would take to make one living cell, smaller than any human cell!

According to Emile Borel, a French scientist and expert in the area of probability, an event on the cosmic level with a probability of less than 1 out of 10, to the 50th power, will not happen. The probability of producing one human cell by chance is 10, to the 119,000 power.

Sir Fred Hoyle, British mathematician and astronomer, was quoted in Nature magazine, November 12, 1981, as saying “The chance that higher life forms might have emerged in this way (evolution) is comparable with the chance that a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein.”

Second Law of Thermodynamics

The second law of thermodynamics states that although the total amount of energy remains constant, the amount of usable energy is constantly decreasing. This law can be seen in most everything. Where work is done, energy is expelled. That energy can never again be used. As usable energy decreases, decay increases. Herein lies the problem for evolution. If the natural trend is toward degeneration, then evolution is impossible, for it demands the betterment of organisms through mutation.

Sun's Diameter

The sun's diameter is shrinking at the rate of five feet per hour. At this rate, life could not have existed on the earth 100,000 years ago because the sun's heat output would have rendered the earth inhabitable.

Earth's Rotation

The spin rate of the earth is slowing .00002 second per year. If the earth were the billions of years old, as the evolutionists say it is, the centrifugal force would have notably deformed the earth billions of years ago.

Written Record

The 22nd edition of Robert Young's concordance lists thirty-seven ancient written accounts which all place the date for creation at no earlier than 7000 B.C.

The Bible

Finally, and most importantly, the Bible says that God created the universe and every living thing, so the world must have been created. In denying this, we call God a liar.

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The above evidences against evolution are taken from Kevin Martin's 17 reasons against evolution website. <http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/Evolution%20Hoax/evidences.htm>.

The damage of this theory has been to our children, whose minds have been conditioned to believe a lie. The consequences of such a lie are devastating:

1. It devalues human life, putting it equal to animal life, not as a higher being.
2. It says God is not real, leaving man with no accountability, fear of judgment, and respect for other life.
3. It strips man of any reason for his own existence and says life is meaningless.
4. It denies man God's divine destiny, the purpose for which he was created.
5. It says to our children, "Why try?" "What's the point?" "Is that all there is?"

When a theory is taught, by educators as fact and our children are denied access to evidence that exposes the theory to be a lie, our society slowly shifts from a God-Fearing nation to an immoral self-absorbed society that has no regard for anything but itself. Without God, living life has no meaning.

There Are Signs Everywhere

I am so glad that God left us signs everywhere that He is alive and well and tending to His creation. Knowing all of this should lead us to ask Him, Why do I exist...and to discover His destiny or will for our life.

Chapter Three

The Fall of Man



The belief that man fell from God's glory is predicated upon other beliefs i.e. That there is a God; That He created man as part of an ultimate creation of all things, That man originally existed to have fellowship with God, Spirit to spirit, That God's purpose for creating man was to place His image or reflection in the earth. If we deny these things, we loose sight of where man fell from and where man landed after the fall and how that affected the rest of the human race.

Going back to the written record of man's beginning, when God created him, we hear God saying, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: (Gen 1:26) ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. ²⁸ And God blessed them, and God said unto 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 moveth upon the earth."

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Gen. 2:7) That, "Breath of Life", which caused man to become a living soul, was the breath of God, His Holy Spirit. It was this that man lost when he disobeyed God and what Jesus said He had come to seek and to save, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10) "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." (Gen. 2:17)

Thus the fall of man brought spiritual death to Adam and an exchange of DNA. He was created with God's nature but now finds himself cut off from God and living in, as it were, an alternate reality... one that took on the nature of sin instead of innocence.

This new DNA, full of sin, is a condition that we call "The Flesh." The apostle Paul in Galatians, chapter five, appropriately depicts this fleshly nature, Adam's newfound image. (Gal. 5:19-21) "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, Fornication, Uncleaness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath,

Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envy, Murders, Drunkenness, Revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

So man fell into this awful nature that actually belongs to Satan. He lost the nature and image of God, which Paul describes as being (Gal. 5:22), the fruit of the Spirit, characterized by Love, Joy, Peace, Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, 23 Meekness, Temperance: against such there is no law)... only to now be the mirror image of evil.

The 1st man, Adam, died spiritually in the very instant that he disobeyed. He also started to die physically as well. He went on to live in the flesh but not in the Spirit of God. He was lost and dead in his sin. His nature was fallen and he continually missed the mark of God’s righteousness. (Romans 5:8). This loss can be seen clearly in Gen. 3:9 and the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, where art thou? God surely knew where Adam was. The question was to cause Adam to realize his condition. I guess we could say God was asking Adam, “What happened to you? Where is my Spirit? It’s no longer in you.” The judgment of death given to Adam if he ate of the forbidden fruit had come upon him.

All this happened to Adam long before we came on the scene...so how does what happened to him affect us? Here’s what the Bible says about that. “Wherefore, as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12.)

All have sinned? Why? Because Adam’s descendants, that’s us, also possessed a fallen nature and could not help but sin. Therefore, everyone dies because of sin. And so it was and so it is and so will be. Mankind dies because of personal sins against a Holy & Righteous God. But God did not leave man in this fallen state. He chose to pay the price, the penalty for sin, thus restoring access and fellowship with Him. Again, Romans 5:8 gives us part of the answer...Jesus died for us. He became the sacrifice for our sins, paying the penalty that He Himself established. (Ezekiel 18:20)

John 3:16 gives us the rest of the story. It tells us that Jesus was and still is the only Begotten Son of God. He came to earth as the 2nd or last Adam and lived life as it was intended, perfectly in tune with God’s law and will and then He went to the cross of Calvary and died for us, a willing sacrifice. He

did this so we could be accepted based upon His righteousness. Our righteousness had long since missed the mark.

The First Adam - Was Created, (Genesis 1:27) The Last Adam - Jesus Christ - Is The Creator (Colossians 1:15-17)

The First Adam - Wanted To Become Like God, (Genesis 3:4-6) The Last Adam - Jesus Christ (God) Became A Man. (Galatians 4:4,5; John 1:14)

The First Adam - Believed A Lie. (John 8:44) The Last Adam - Jesus Christ - Is the Truth (John 1:17; John 14:6)

The First Adam - Disobeyed. (Genesis 3:17) The Last Adam Obeyed, even to the point of death. (John 6:38; Philippians 2:6-8)

The First Adam - Was Sent Away. (Genesis 3:22-24) The Last Adam - Was Sent to Pay. (John 3:13-18)

The First Adam - Brought Death to the Living. (Romans 5:12) The Last Adam - Jesus Christ - Brought Life to the Dying. (1 Corinthians 15:21-22)

And it's that last point that sums it up for us. As the sin and disobedience of the first Adam brought death to the world, the second Adam, Jesus Christ, bought life: "For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." (1 Cor 5:21-22 - NIV)

If you can believe Jesus, which I do, He says WHOSOEVER believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16) When we put our faith in Jesus, we are, "Born Again". That term can be better explained in Chapter three of Saint John's gospel. We are born first of water. (Physical Birth) When we confess to God that we are sinners and repent, we go through a new birth experience that fills us with the breath of God, His Spirit. (Spiritual Birth) We become as He intended us to be from the beginning. We are in Christ and that makes us alive.

Here are a few Bible verses from the book of Romans in the New Testament. They will help you to understand how to be saved.

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We all have sin in our hearts. We all were born with sin.

- *Admit that you are a sinner.*

Romans 6:23a "...The wages of sin is death..."

Sin has an ending. It results in death. We all face physical death, which is a result of sin. But a worse death is spiritual death that alienates us from God. This death will last for all eternity. The Bible teaches that there is a place called the, "Lake of Fire", where lost people will be in torment forever. It is the place where people who are spiritually dead end up and remain for all of eternity.

- *Understand that you deserve death for your sin.*

Romans 6:23b "...But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Salvation is a free gift from God to you! You can't earn this gift, but you must reach out and receive it.

- *Ask God to forgive you and save you.*

Romans 5:8, "God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "When Jesus died on the cross, He paid sin's penalty. He paid the price for all sin, and when He took all the sins of the world on Himself on the cross, He brought us out of slavery, sin and death! The only condition is that we believe in Him and what He has done for us. He did all this because He loved us.

The early apostles said that we needed to believe that Jesus is the only Son of God; that He died on the cross of Calvary for our sins; that He was buried and rose again on the 3rd day. This belief opened the floodgates for a new life with God. No more hopelessness and fear of death. Now, we have hope and peace with God, knowing Jesus will help us through this life and the one to come. (See Chapter 14 for more about salvation)

Skeptics say that Jesus was a mere man and thus subject to the same DNA fault as Adam. However, the gospel story makes it clear that Jesus was born of a Virgin, one who had never been with a man. This was the only way Jesus could escape the sin nature and qualify to be the 2nd or last Adam.

Now, the "Born Again" man can manifest God's divine nature, whereas, the unregenerate man or not born again man cannot. In effect, we have two

natures and they are always in conflict, trying to control the image that is manifested in us.

Paul, The apostle says, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. (Galatians 5:17)

The “Born Again” man can choose to walk in the Spirit or to walk in the Flesh. Remember, God’s plan was to place His image and likeness in the earth. The fulfillment of that desire is now in the hands of the “Born Again” man. He can hate or love. He can be short tempered or longsuffering. He can be good or bad. However. He must deny one to release the other. We are encouraged to walk in the Spirit so we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Gal.5: 16)

As we read the daily newspapers or view the nightly news, it’s all about what evil happened today. Satan’s image is being revealed everywhere. But quietly, among thousands of believers, God’s image and nature flourishes, revealing God to whomever wants to see.

The apostle Paul again talks about this double nature in his letter to the church at Rome. (Romans 7:4-25)

4 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil, which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

24 O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. This is a

clear picture of two natures battling each other for supremacy, as the believer struggling with a fallen nature, as he tries to do what he knows is good.

Many folks that claim to be Christians do not believe in the “Born Again” experience or that man ever fell from God’s glory. They still look upon man as inherently good and not altogether wretched. Jeremiah 17:10 tells us that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? This condition of the heart is a result of man’s sin and remains today as a consequence of the fall.

All men are not brothers, only those who are truly “Born Again” because they share in one Spirit and have the same father, God. Those folks that are not “Born Again” are not our brothers. They are unbelievers.

Paul, writing to the Corinthian church put it this way, (II Corinthians 6:14) Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? : Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

How do you know that the person sitting next to you is a believer? That’s simple...look for the fruit of the Spirit. True Christian fellowship is birthed out of God’s Holy Spirit. If you do not see Love, Joy, Peace, Longsuffering and the rest of the fruit, chances are they are not “Born Again.” However, do not be too hasty to draw a conclusion for many of today’s fine Christian folk are living in the Flesh and have never learned or forgotten how to walk in the Spirit. You just may be God’s instrument of blessing to show them the way back to having fellowship with God the Father.

Adam must have thought that by knowing or experiencing evil, he would be like God. The irony of it all was that Adam was already like God, fashioned in His own image and likeness. There was no evil in Him. God didn’t want Adam to know evil.

The “Being Like God by knowing evil lie” is still with us today and has destroyed many sincere people over the years since Adam fell. Don’t fall for that lie. It will lead you straight into God’s judgment.

Here’s a popular saying that we should avoid, “The Devil made me do it.” He tempted Adam and Eve but they bought the lie. The Devil cannot make you do anything. It is our choice to do a certain thing or act a certain way. The only way to avoid confusion and fall prey to the Devil’s subtlety is to know the truth.

A serious study of the Bible, God’s Holy Word, will equip you to withstand the wiles of the Devil. During the Devil’s temptations of Jesus, He continually answered the attacks with, “It Is Written.” That is how it’s done in real life warfare. Adam didn’t have the Bible but He still had God’s spoken word and could have used it as a weapon against the Devil’s attack.

Some of the effects of man’s fall from God’s Glory into sin are listed below. You may see more as you personally study this topic.

1. The loss of God’s image and likeness.
2. The inability to walk in His Spirit as before.
3. The horror of a new nature that is prone to rebellion and sin.
4. The loss of immortality and ultimately spiritual life.
5. The sorrow of knowing that all of his descendants will be slaves to sin by nature.
6. The pain of having to deal with problems that are caused by the practice of sin.
7. The sadness of watching a loved one as death passes upon them and they die.
8. The deep sorrow in seeing most of humanity reject the only true God to follow their own ways.



Chapter Four

Just, “One Way To God?” ...True or False?

It is hard for most folks that are not “Born Again” to understand why there is just one way to God, yet it is true. There is only one way and that is through Jesus Christ. The Bible is our source to prove that the one-way doctrine is valid. Acts 4:12 says, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Jesus is the only way to attain salvation. All the world religions cannot save us. Joining a church or specific faith cannot save us. It must be an acknowledgment of our sin, our cry before the throne of God for forgiveness, and our invitation for Jesus to come into our hearts and save us. His name is the only name that can get us through death into eternal life.

Here are a few scriptures that support the only “One-Way” doctrine.

1. ...there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (I Timothy 2:5-6)
2. ...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved... (Acts 16:31)
3. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, THOU SHALT BE SAVED. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)

The skeptic would say, ”You mean to tell me that all the religions of the world are wrong and only Christianity is the one true religion?” Remember, Christianity is not a religion. It is a relationship born out of love between man and the one true and living God. There is no one true religion. Religion, in itself, will not get us to God. It is the blood of Christ that unlocks the door and our confession of faith in Jesus that makes it all happen. (John 14:6)

Why is Jesus the only way to God? Because God planned it that way. He set the penalty for sin, which was death. **The soul that sinneth, it shall die.**(Ezekiel 18:20) In fact, Jesus was the slain lamb of God before the foundation of the world. (Ephesians 1:3-7)

Jesus Himself said, as recorded in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: No man cometh to the Father but by Me”. Christianity states that the

God of the Bible is the only true God and salvation is only possible by accepting Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son as Savior and Lord. II Corinthians 5:21 says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

God validated His Son as the only way in multiple ways so we could be assured that Jesus was indeed the only way to Him. Here are some to consider.

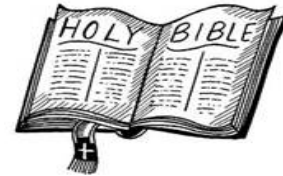
1. He claimed to be the only way as in John's record 14:6 says but validation came through miracles that proved He was who He claimed to be.
2. Eyewitnesses saw Jesus' miracles and validated them as authentic. Over 500 followers saw Jesus, after His resurrection, and watched Him ascend into heaven.
3. The prophets foretold of His coming, where He would be born, that He would be God in human flesh and lots more...all prophetic statements were realized in Jesus, even those like in Isaiah chapter 53 that were uttered hundreds of years before Jesus came.
4. God Himself validated Jesus as His sole pathway to Him. "While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him!"(Mathew 17:5)
5. The Apostles lost their homes, wealth, and even their lives preaching the gospel. Would they do that if it were a lie? I don't think so. They testified to the truth and were willing to die for it if necessary. (See Foxes Book of Martyrs)
6. Thousands of Believers, over several centuries have testified of how Jesus helped them and blessed them.
7. I can personally testify that I have seen the hand of the Lord in my life and communicate with Him daily. I know He is the Christ.

The provability that one man could fulfill all prophecies about a Messiah that God Himself said would come, (Gen.3:15), and perform fantastic miracles while here on earth, and be raised from the dead, and ascend into heaven while hundreds looked on is astronomical. But Jesus did just

that...fulfilled everything that was foretold about the coming Messiah. He had to be who He said He was and therefore is truly the only way to God.

Jesus Is The Only Way

Chapter Five



The Bible As The Final Authority

Let's talk about the Bible. I use it as my main source to validate all that I say. But most people, including Christians, do not read the Bible with any regularity and therefore do not know the God of the Bible. They know only what their pastor or others tell them. Here's a brief history lesson.

The history of the Bible starts with a phenomenal account, the creation of all things. It's not one book like many think -- It's an ancient collection of writings, comprised of 66 separate books, written over approximately 1,600 years, by at least 40 distinct authors. The Old Testament contains 39 books written from approximately 1500 BC to 400 BC, and the New Testament contains 27 books written from approximately 40 to 90 AD. The Jewish Bible (*Tanakh*) is the same as the Christian Old Testament, except for its book arrangement. The original Old Testament was written mainly in Hebrew, with some Aramaic, while the original New Testament was written in common Greek.

Starting in about 40 AD, and continuing to about 90 AD, the eye-witnesses to the life of Jesus, including Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter and Jude, wrote the Gospels which were letters and books that eventually became the Bible's New Testament. These authors quote from 31 books of the Old Testament. They widely circulated their material so that by about 150 AD, early Christians were referring to the entire set of writings as the "New Covenant." During the 200s AD, the original writings were translated from Greek into Latin, Coptic (Egypt) and Syriac (Syria), and widely disseminated as "Inspired Scripture" throughout the Roman Empire and

beyond. In 397 AD, in an effort to protect the scriptures from various heresies and offshoot religious movements, the current 27 books of the New Testament were formally and finally confirmed and "canonized" in the Synod of Carthage.

What I hope you will see from this snapshot of the Bible in history is that God took great pains to validate His Word to man over many years, keeping it clear, and indisputable as the only true source of His revelation. These eyewitness accounts and prophetic revelations all connect to make a complete proof of God's existence, character, power, love, salvation, judgment, compassion, mercy and forgiveness. His entire plan of salvation and the ages to come is all written down so we could benefit from them.

Time and time again I have asked the Lord questions and found the answers in the Bible. I can remember one in particular. I was attending a small Christian fellowship that met in a barn. The leadership was teaching that God's judgment upon America was to come soon and that they could escape it by leaving the states and going to a remote desert-like place in another country. Several families had already moved to this undisclosed destination. I was a very young believer and not as knowledgeable as I am now in the scriptures...so I turned to Jesus and asked Him if these people were correct and if I should go with them. Here's what I read during my prayer and Bible reading.

Mathew 24:26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

This is just one example of many that God has communicated to me through the Bible. Try it...when you are troubled, confused or worried about life or just need an answer to life's never ending questions, pray and ask Jesus to show you in His Word, the Bible.

The Bible was written under "Inspiration" from the Holy Spirit. The word, "inspire" means "To breathe upon or into something". God revealed Himself through individuals who penned the written word.

As a young Christian, I often witnessed to un-believers, using the Bible as my source. Some of those I talked to told me that the Bible was not a source they would believe. I went to my pastor and asked him what I should do because folks were not open to hear what the Bible had to say. He led me to Hebrews 4:12 and said. "Use it anyway," for the reasons stated in chapter

four. Listen to what it says. “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12) I did just that and began to see the words of the Bible break down barriers and soften hearts.

I know that anyone who is really seeking God and wants to know about Jesus will find everything in the Bible. Words will leap off the page, bringing fresh revelation, historical facts, wisdom, divine counsel and victory over life’s every trial. All you have to do is spend some time every day in prayer and Bible reading.



The Steps of A Good Man Are Ordered By The Lord

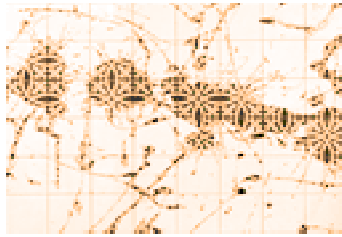
The steps of a good man
Are ordered by the Lord.
He leads us by still waters
Until our souls are restored.

Our pain and suffering
Are all taken away.
Replaced with great hope
For a brand new day.

He orders our steps
By Holy Spirit’s breath,
That we may overcome
Satan, Sin and Death.

The steps of a good man,
Are not entirely his own.
They’re given by God
So he doesn’t walk alone.





Chapter Six

Free Will And The Sovereignty of God

Am I in control of my own destiny or is it all planned out already and I am just a pawn in a much larger scheme? Sometimes I feel like I have no control over my life. Do you feel that way? The issue is of “Free Will” verses the Sovereignty of God. This has been a source of controversy in the church for centuries. Is God in control or am I?

The **Sovereignty of God** is the Biblical teaching that all things are under God's rule and control, and that nothing happens without His direction. God works, not just some things, but all things, according to the counsel of His own will (see Eph. 1:11). His purposes are all-inclusive and never thwarted (see Isa. 46:11); nothing takes Him by surprise. The sovereignty of God is not merely that God has the power and right to govern all things, but that He does so, always and without exception. In other words, God is not merely sovereign in principle, but sovereign in practice.

"Although the sovereignty of God is universal and absolute, it is not the sovereignty of blind power. It is coupled with infinite wisdom, holiness, and love. And this doctrine, when properly understood, is a most comforting and reassuring. Who would not prefer to have his or her affairs in the hands of a God of infinite power, wisdom, holiness and love, rather than to have them left to fate, or chance, or irrevocable natural law, or to shortsighted and perverted self? Those who reject God's sovereignty should consider what alternatives they have left." Loraine Boettner.

God created all beings including the angels but some have fallen. Let us be sure that this does not make God the author of sin, for, as man, they fell from their created state. This includes all false gods. But God is over them, whether they be angels, demons, or the god of this world, the devil. The Psalmist said, "..Thou are exalted far above all gods", Psalm 97:9, and again, ".. Our Lord is above all gods," Psalm 135.5, and also "O give thanks unto the God of gods." Psalm 136.2.

Man may fight against God but he cannot win over Him. He often uses evil man to accomplish His will in the battle. Jesus is said to have been slain from the foundation of the world, and the cross is one of the most credible evidences of Gods Sovereignty. "Crucify him," "Crucify him", was their cry, but when they nailed Him to the cross, they did not realize they were fulfilling God's will for His Son. Peter said, "Him (Christ), being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Acts 2:23. But this God of all power was not defeated in this evil act, for the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead. By it the devil was defeated and all his ministers of (self) righteousness. This is also a great example of Sovereignty and free will operating at the same time.

Judas, the one who betrayed him, had betrayed himself, and met his just due. John wrote, "...Jesus knew from the beginning...who should betray him. And he said, .. no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father .. Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil (i.e., slanderer) ... He spake of Judas ... for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve." (John 6:64-71.) Our God cannot fail, lie, or sin. Neither is He frustrated at man's failure.

God is the author of His sovereign grace and mercy. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy... And whom he will, he hardeneth." (Rom. 9:15-16, 18.)

Many Christians have doubts about God's sovereignty. Yet there is one aspect of the Christian life where they profess, maybe unknowingly, that God is sovereign. They may say, as many do, "God has done all He can do, now the rest is up to you." How contradictory! They may stand on their feet and deny this blessed, comforting, enabling doctrine, but when they bend the knees in prayer, asking God to save, do they not realize they are calling on a sovereign God, who only He has the right and the ability to save? The question is, If God has done all that He can do, why pray to Him? But we pray knowing He is the only one who can do what man cannot otherwise do. This power belongs to God, and not man. (Excerpts from Sovereign Grace Baptist Proclaimer)

Now that you have a clearer understanding of the Sovereignty of God, let's talk about the Free Will of man. It's important to see that man is not sovereign. He is rarely in control of the events that shape his life. However, God has still given man a free will to choose his own lifestyle. In effect, we can be evil, nice, straight, gay or be and do anything we want. Our choices, however, comes with consequences. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (Gal. 6:7)

Pastor Steve Weaver writes, "A good definition of free will is the ability of the mind to make choices in accordance with our natures." This definition of "free will" also applies to God's free will. He too is bound by His nature. Therefore, He cannot sin! Why? Because it is not His nature! But God does have a free will and, unlike human beings, He has an accompanying good and holy nature."

Jonathan Edwards, a 17th century Christian preacher and theologian, said that the will is the mind choosing: though there is a distinction between mind and will, the two are inseparable in action. We do not make a choice without our mind's approving that choice. We choose according to our strongest inclination at a given moment.

The Bible teaches that I'm not free to choose God because it is contrary to my nature. That's why we need new natures that are given to us by the Holy Spirit at regeneration. Unless a man is "Born Again" he cannot enter or even see the kingdom of God (John 3).

Though man is commanded to seek the Lord while He may be found, and to come to Christ, we watch in vain for man to do so. Romans 3:11 literally reads, "There is no God seeker." John 6:44 says, "No one can come to Me, (Jesus), unless the Father who sent Me draws him and I will raise him up on the last day." Literally, the verse says, "no one is able."

Gerhard Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says that the word translated draw in John 6:44 means "to compel by irresistible authority." It was used in classical Greek for drawing water from a well. We do not entice or persuade water to leave the well; we force it against gravity to come up by drawing it. So it is with us. We are so depraved that God must drag us to himself." (Chosen by God)

The controversy is in whom God has chosen to be His sons and daughters. Hyper-Calvinists believe that some are chosen and some are not from the

foundation of the world. Free Will folks, of which I am one, believe that what Jesus said, as recorded in John 3:16, qualifies all that accept His invitation. Listen to the verse and pay particular attention to the word, “WHOSOEVER” “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Jesus died for the sins of the whole world...every man, woman, boy and girl. The compelling call of God, through Jesus is an open invitation to whosoever will. These are the chosen of God that are pulled out of sin and given a new heart that can believe and worship Him.

Now let's look at how free will and sovereignty work hand and hand in our daily lives to fulfill God's master plan for the ages. Miles Monroe, a famous evangelist, once explained it this way...when God created the earth; He drew up a master plan, like an architect, that took into account every soul and every action that man would take. Nothing was left out.

God is never taken by surprise because He saw it before the world was. It was put into His plan. Then He began to create, taking into account who would accept Jesus and who would not; who would need deliverance; who would need help, etc. Every prayer and every need was seen beforehand. Your provision was made way back then and is waiting for the time you need it. You just need to grab it by faith.

This pre-design gives us free will to choose without violating God's Sovereignty. I know that some will say, I prayed and believed but didn't get what I asked for. My provision didn't materialize. It could be as James 4:3 says, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.” David Wilkerson, the author of *The Cross & The Switchblade*, offers six reasons that prayers go unanswered.

1. Our Prayers Are Aborted When They Are Not According To God's Will.
2. Our Prayers Can Be Aborted When They Are Designed To Fulfill An Inner Lust, Dreams, Or Illusions.
3. Our Prayers Can Be Denied When We Show No Diligence to Assist God In The Answer.
4. Our Prayers Can Be Aborted By A Secret Grudge Lodged In The Heart Against Another.

5. Our Prayers Can Be Aborted By Not Expecting Much To Come of Them.
6. Our Prayers Are Aborted When We Ourselves Attempt To Prescribe How God Should Answer.

See his full explanation at

<http://www.tscpulpitseries.org/english/undated/tssixrea.htm>

The devil's final strategy in deceiving believers is to make them doubt the faithfulness of God in answering prayer. Satan would have us believe God has shut His ears to our cry and left us to work things out for ourselves. That's just not true. If you do not see the hand of God, you can bet that the problem is with you, not God. I'd suggest that you go back before the throne of God and stay there until you get an answer. Don't forget to take your Bible with you. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

One final thought. You may not be hearing the Lord because you are not "Born Again." Listen to what Jesus said, John 10:26-27, "but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." If you are not hearing His voice, well, what should I say? You are not of His flock? Only you can determine that. It's a total life-changing commitment to follow Jesus. Maybe you did not make that kind of commitment. He must be Lord of all or He is not Lord at all.

Chapter Seven

Is Heaven A Real Place?



Is there a real heaven? I would say yes because the Bible tells us so. However, the Bible actually speaks of three heavens.

The word Heaven is found seven times in the first chapter of the Bible alone. It is the seventh word into the Bible. In Genesis 1, we see that it means more than the Celestial City.

The First Heaven is spoken of twenty-one times in the Bible. It is where the atmosphere is and where we see blue skies, clouds and birds. The Bible speaks of the birds or fowls of the “air.” For example: Psalm 104:12, “By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.” The “Dew of Heaven” is mentioned nine times. One example is Genesis 27:28, “Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine:” The 1st heaven is commonly referred to as the firmament which means “expanse or sky.” (Genesis 1:8)

The Second Heaven is where the stars and planets are. We would refer to it as “Outer Space.” Here are a few scriptures that refer to the 2nd heaven

1. Genesis 1: 14-17, “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,” The phrase “stars of heaven” occurs eleven times in scripture.
2. Isaiah 13:10, “For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.”

3. Psalm 8:3, 4, “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?”
4. Psalm 19:1, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.”

The Third Heaven is the current heaven where God dwells. Although this is a glorious place, this is not the New Heaven described in Revelation 21 and 22. It is far above the sky and our entire known universe. It is a physical place that is full of angels, saints, animals, and much more.

Paul went to the third heaven and came back. (II Corinthians 12:2-4.) “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth; such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth; how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

Isaiah saw a glimpse of Heaven. (Isaiah 6:1-7), “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.”

This text reveals several things about the third heaven:

- The Lord is sitting upon a throne
- The Lord is wearing a robe with a very long train (hem).
- There is a temple in Heaven where He sits.
- Six winged seraphims ceaselessly fly above the throne of God and cry one to another announcing the holiness of the Lord of Hosts.

- There is an altar of live coals.

John also saw the third heaven and penned the book of Revelation. Here are a few observations:

- There is a door in Heaven (4:1). The door is opened to all who hear the first audible voice and the sound of the trumpet.
- There is a throne set in Heaven. It is the same one Isaiah saw (Isaiah 4:2).
- God who sits on the throne is described as being like jasper (clear crystal) and a sardine stone (dark red). This was the best way John could describe God's glory (4:3).
- There is a rainbow about the throne (4:3). Our rainbows on earth are made of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. This one appears as an emerald, which is green. Green represents life.
- Around God's throne are twenty-four seats. There are twenty-four elders, clothed in white raiment, sitting on the seats. They wear crowns of gold (4:4).

For a full list of what the book of Revelation discloses as being in the third heaven, visit http://www.fbbc.com/messages/kohl_doctrine_ouranology.html and read Art Kohl's article.

One day these three heavens will no longer exist. (Isaiah 65:17) "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." We do not know what the new heavens will look like but we will see a heaven on earth where Jesus is King and we will reign with Him. We shall dwell with Him, on the new earth, forever.

John 14:1-4 records Jesus telling His followers that there were many mansions in His Father's house. He even said that He would not have told them if it were not so. I do believe that God has a house/place where He dwells and it is full of redeemed saints, angels and lots more. If we die before Jesus returns, we will see it and dwell there too until we take that glorious ride on heavenly horseback through time and space with Jesus at His 2nd coming.

Chapter Eight



Does Hell Really Exist?

Hell is a literal place, just like Heaven. They both play a big part in man's future. For the redeemed; heaven is waiting, for the lost or unsaved, hell is their final destination.

According to Gallup research, 94% of U.S. adults believe in God or a universal spirit; 84% believe Jesus Christ is God or the Son of God; and 53% believe in a literal hell.

A Newsweek poll found that 94% of Americans believe in God; 77% believe in a heaven; 76% think they have a good or excellent chance of getting there. 58% of those surveyed believe in hell.

According to church historian Martin Marty, hell began to disappear from man's thinking in the 19th century, and no one seemed to notice. In rejecting heaven and hell, one also rejects the awesome seriousness of moral and immoral behavior. But for those who take God seriously, human freedom means the capacity to make moral decisions, which have radical and enduring consequences.

In general, more adults in the U.S. believe in hell now than did 40 years ago. The concept was losing ground as recently as 1980 when just over half of those surveyed said they believed in hell. By 1990 the percentage had risen to 60%. One 2011 survey reported only 52% believed in hell.

Mathew 7:13-14 records Jesus saying, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (KJV) There are

only two roads in life, one leads to Hell, characterized by destruction and the other road leads to life or heaven. The masses, all the religions that do not accept Jesus as the only way, walk down the broad road. It is wide enough for all to fit. But the road to life is narrow...One Way...Jesus, the Christ of God.

Hell is a reality; a real place for real people. It is so bad that Jesus told the crowd in one of his sermons, (Mathew 18:8-9), “Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offends thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire”. (KJV)

Here are some other references concerning the reality of hell.

Mathew 10:28 “ 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.” (KJV)

Rev. 20:10 “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” (KJV)

Mathew 25:46 “ And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” KJV)

Mathew 25:41, “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:” (KJV)

In our modern vernacular, hell signifies a place of fire and punishment and this is indeed taught in the scriptures.

Hell is mentioned in the Bible (KJV) 54 times. Hell appears 31 times in the Old Testament and 23 in the New Testament. In the OT, hell is translated from the Hebrew word “Sheol.” In the NT, hell was translated from three words, Tartaroo, Hades and Gehenna. All words express some or all of these characteristics: an eternal separation from God, a place of darkness, suffering, pain and torment. It is not a place where you want to visit or move to.

In my earlier days, we used to say, flippantly, that we'd probably end up in hell, having a party with all our friends. I have since come to my senses, realizing that hell is a place of isolation. Those that go there will be alone forever. Can you imagine being in total darkness, all alone with just your suffering and pain to keep you company? Don't think that your punishment will be administered by demons or the Devil. They will be cast into the lake of fire. There are no jailors to talk to or to call out to...just you, all alone, suffering forever.

Why would God do this to me? you might say... because you rejected the only way to Him, Jesus. He made the way possible by sending Jesus to die for your sins so you could be free to worship Him. He allowed you to live this long and has constantly called you to Himself in a variety of ways, all with no response. You sidestepped His invitation, ignored His call and refused to accept his destiny for you. However, God does not send anyone to hell. They chose not to be with Him and Hell is the only other place. The rich man lifted up his eyes in hell, in torment when he died and so will you if you reject so great a salvation. Luke 16:23

Have I scared you? I hope so because it is no laughing matter. Your eternal destiny is at stake and I want you to know the reality of hell and hopefully keep you from going there...so, here's what you do... "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Chapter Nine



The Devil, Fact or Fiction?

According to the Barna Group, the majority of Christians **do not** believe that Satan or that the devil actually exist. However, according to an AP-AOL news poll, up to 97% of evangelical Christians believe that angels exist.

God is the only eternal self-existent being represented in the Bible (Isaiah 41:4; Isaiah 44:6,8; Isaiah 45:6,21; Revelation 1:8). Satan is not self-existent. Satan must have, therefore, had a point of origin (Romans 11:36;

Colossians 1:16;John1:3;Hebrews1:2).God is the Father of all spirits including Satan (Job 12:10; Ephesians 2:2; Hebrews 12:9). He is a created being that rebelled against God.

Satan did not abide in truth (John 8:44). Satan “fell” into condemnation (1Timothy3:6).Angels (demons) were cast into Hades when they sinned (II Peter 2:4). Angels didn’t keep their own domain. They abandoned their proper abode and were cast down (Jude 6-7). War in heaven against Satan’s army vs. Michael, the Arc Angel & other angels...Satan was cast “out” of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9). Satan has already lost his war against God (I Corinthians 15:54-57; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:12-15; Revelation 1:18).

Satan is a defeated foe. Here are a few examples found in the Bible of when he was defeated.

1. God won the war in heaven – Satan cast to earth (Revelation 12:7-9).
2. God “tests” Job with the Devil – “you think Job is good, take away blessings...he will curse you” (Job 1:11-12; Job 2:4-6).
3. Jesus overcame the Devils temptation in wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11).
4. Jesus cast out demons during Jesus’; ministry (Luke 10:17-20).
5. Jesus’ sinless life, death & resurrection defeated Satan (Colossians 2:14-15; Hebrews 2:14-16; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 1:18).
6. Every time a “sinner” becomes a Christian the Devil loses (Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13), “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God...” (Luke 15:10).

Mike Riley in The Preacher’s Files gives five ways we are attacked by Satan. They are:

1. Keep you out of the church (Hebrews 10:25).
2) Get Christians back into the world (Hebrews 6:4-6; Hebrews 10:26-39; 2 Peter 2:20-22).
2. Render Christians useless (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; 1 Timothy 5:14-15; 2 Timothy 2:17).
3. Cause trouble and division among brethren (Proverbs 6:14, 19; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

Jesus defeated Satan (The Devil). “And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in

it.”(Colossians 2:15). The idea here is that Jesus bound all of His enemies and paraded around the city dragging them behind, tied to the back of His chariot. It was an “Open Show” for all to see.

I know what you are thinking because I used to think the same thing. If Satan is defeated, having no power, why is he still attacking us? When the Bible says that Satan is defeated, it means he has no real power of his own but is still loose to attack the saints. Before, he had power and was even called, “the god of this world.” (II Corinthians 4:4) Adam gave that power; his God given authority to rule, to Satan and Jesus took it back. (Colossians 2:15) After the resurrection, just before he ascended into heaven, He gave His followers their marching orders, saying “All power is given unto me in heaven and earth, go ye there for... (Mathew 28:18) “All power” is all power. That leaves none for evil to use except that which you and I give him. Satan can draw power from us but must deceive us into giving it to him. Eve was a good example of one who was deceived and relinquished her power otherwise known as authority...and Adam followed her example. If we stand on God’s Word, we hold on to our authority and cannot be overcome. That’s what Jesus did. He said to Satan, “It is written.”

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” (1Peter 5:8) I see several things here:

1. He roams the earth.... always looking and checking on us.
2. He is like a roaring lion...it’s a scare tactic.
3. He is looking for someone whom he can devour...that means there are many he cannot devour. He looks for those of us that are weak in the faith and are willing to give up on our principles. Remember, the lost are taken at his will because they operate in the flesh and are easily influenced. The believer is whom he is seeking to devour because he does not want us to reveal Christ to the world.
4. We are to be sober, constantly on the lookout for an attack.

We are instructed to steadfastly resist him in the faith...or by faith. How?, by saying, “it is written” and quoting what is written and believing it with all our hearts. Example! You are in a bad economy and you lost your job. Satan brings fear to you that everything is going to crash and you will soon be on the street begging bread. You read the scriptures and see Romans 8:28, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to

them who are the called according to his purpose.” Who do you believe? the voice in your head or the voice speaking to you from the pages of the Bible?

But why does God allow us to be attacked? He tossed Satan out of heaven and Jesus defeated him on the earth in the flesh, as the 2nd Adam, so why is he still here, tempting us? It’s all about authority. God gave Adam the authority to rule or subdue the earth. He lost that position of authority when he fell into sin. He went from king to slave. Satan took over as the “god of this world” and held that position of authority until Jesus came and took it back. (Colossians 2:15) Man lost it and man got it back. As I have already mentioned, Jesus said, just before He ascended into heaven, “All Power Is Given Unto Me” in heave and earth. (Mathew 28:18) That was the defining moment that gave His followers the legal right to rule in His stead. He had already given them the authority but now it was time to enforce the law... go and make disciples. The judgment of death to Satan had been decreed by heaven and Jesus gave us the task of ruling over Satan until his final sentence is carried out which is to be tossed into the lake of fire. Here are a few more scriptures to show the transfer of authority.

1. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Mathew 16:19)
2. Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”(Luke 10:17-20)
3. “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly”(Romans 16:20)
4. “For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says.” (Mark 11:23)

There are other scriptures but these should do as to the general idea that Jesus passed on the authority to rule to His church. I will agree that the church has not done a good job in ruling over the earth. The church has

allowed demons and all the other ills of this world to rule over it but we can still take authority individually anytime we want and rule over our immediate world. The loss of authority came by man's disobedience. The restoration of authority to man also came by the man, Jesus but was through His obedience. Now that it is restored and in the hands of the redeemed, we need to use our authority in Christ to rule over Satan and the evil of this world...to take dominion as God originally intended. "And they **overcame him** (Satan) because of the **blood of the Lamb** and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. (Revelation 12:11) NIV

So Satan is allowed to roam the earth, seeking whom he may devour while he waits his final end. We are admonished to resist him steadfastly in the faith. (1Peter 5:8-9) which keeps us in authority until Jesus returns. However, It's not enough to just hear the Word. You must act upon it for it to be effective. That means you speak it out, over and over until you believe it and Satan is convinced that you will not move off your premise. If you wavier from what God said, Satan can steel your authority and will keep at you until you fall. Romans 8:28 says in effect, that if I am called according to His purposes and love Him, I can say that He will work EVERYTHING together for good. This defeats the attack because it gives me faith and hope to go on and believe God for all my needs. Understand?

So there is a real Devil and he roams the earth seeking to devour any believer who is not aware of his tricks and schemes. Ephesians 6:11 says, "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Read the chapter and see if you are wearing all the armor. Most Christians don't even know they need armor and some pick and choose which part of the armor they want to wear but never wear it all at one time. As you review the different parts of God's body armor, realize that all but one, the sword of the Spirit, is defensive. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God. That is offensive to the pulling down of accusations, lies, tormenting spirits, fear and all the other stuff Satan can throw at you. It has two edges and can cut deep every time.

Jesus compared Himself to Satan as opposites (John 10:10a). He said, "The thief cometh 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." Satan will try to steal your peace, hope and everything else that you do not give to the Lord. Jesus, on the other hand, will give you a life that is full of

abundance...Love, peace, longsuffering and all the rest of the fruits of His Spirit.

John 10:10b should not be used as though it gives some promise of an improved physical life for the Christian. Such a view, in light of the context of the chapter, is shallow, and it overlooks the profound truth of the passage. The passage promises superior, superabundant spiritual life, life empowered by the indwelling of Jesus Christ. This is what Paul meant when he said he counted all things loss that he might win Christ. John 10:10 promises a spiritual dimension to life, not physical abundance. A focus on the physical trivializes the profound depth of John 10:10. That's why I tied abundance, in the previous paragraph, with the fruit of the Spirit.

Some preachers use John 10:10b to support an abundance of stuff, saying that is why Jesus came...so we could get out of debt and live as a rich person. Their focus is on materialism instead of Spiritual Fruit. Jesus also said, as Mathew recorded in 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The emphasis has never been on seeking material things. Jesus clearly says man's first priority is the Lord and His righteousness. Things will be given to us because we need them to live and do His will. Wealth, i.e. the abundance of things, is relative to the society we live in. In some countries, families with a tin roof instead of a thatch style roof are considered wealthy.

It is true that God gives us the power to gain wealth. "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day." (Deuteronomy 8:18) However, the wealth gained is to be used to establish the covenant between you and the Lord.

It's time to declare victory over Sin, Satan, Death, Worry, Fear, All Demons, and Anything Else that keeps you from ruling your immediate world and experiencing the love of God.

Chapter Ten

The Rapture of The Church...Yes or No?

It's been said that Jesus will come for His church on earth and rapture them into His presence. It is a catching away of all Christians, real ones, not religious, fake or even churchgoers that play church for other selfish reasons.

The word *rapture* (in Greek *harpazo*, in Latin *rapere*) means to be caught up or taken away suddenly. The rapture refers to the sudden removal of all of God's people on the earth. In the twinkling of an eye, "Born Again" Christians will suddenly be transformed out of their human bodies and will rise up into the air to join Jesus Christ.

There is a reason Christ warned his followers 13 times in the New Testament to not be deceived, and to watch and be ready. He wanted us to be excited about His glorious appearing.

Satan, on the other hand, does not want us to be excited. He is the master deceiver; the father of lies and wants us to believe his deception rather than the signs of Christ's return given to us by Jesus himself. He will send many lies to deceive us and to rob us of the joy of living every day in anticipation of Christ's return.

For those who believe that the Bible is the truth and is the very Word of God, it's easy to believe in and rejoice in the prophecies that tell of the rapture of God's church. The Bible tells us of others who have been taken up into heaven in very much the same way that we will be at the time of the rapture. Elijah was taken up into heaven like a whirlwind. I Kings 2:11-12 "As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel! And Elisha saw him no more."

Enoch was also taken from this life so that he would not experience death. Hebrews 11:5 "By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. for before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God, and

without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." So, when will the church be raptured? We know there is more evidence today that He is coming for His church soon, than at any other time in history. As these signs intensify, all of us who know Christ as our savior will be looking toward heaven and awaiting the coming of our Lord.

Many biblical scholars feel that the rapture will occur prior to the "Tribulation Period", or a pre-tribulation rapture. Thus God will spare His church from the persecutions of the Antichrist and the wrath of God that will fall upon the inhabitants of the Earth during the end times. Those who come to Christ following the rapture will live through the persecution of Christians by the Antichrist. Some will face martyrdom for their faith. There are several other views of the timing for the rapture of the church; however, here we will examine the pre-tribulation view and the biblical support for it.

One of the best supporting verses from the Bible for the rapture of the church is found in Revelation 3:10. "Because you have kept my command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth." I would assume that God would not bring the same type of judgment to His children, as He will on the wicked. This scripture seems to support my premise. The assumption is that Believers will be taken out of harms way.

Listen to what Paul tells the Thessalonians in his second letter, chapter two verses 2-15.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

² That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

³ Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

⁴ Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

⁵ Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

⁶ And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

⁷ For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: **only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.**

⁸ And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

⁹ Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

¹⁰ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved.

¹¹ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

¹² That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

¹³ But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

¹⁴ Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁵ Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions, which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

I wanted to show the context so there is no misunderstanding. Note verse seven...he that letteth is God's Holy Spirit. He is a restraining force in the world, holding evil back from its ultimate expression. When the Spirit is taken out of the way, guess what? the Spirit is in us and Jesus said He would never leave us comfortless but will be with us until the end of the age. (John 14:18) The moment has come. It is the end of the age and we will go with the Spirit to meet Jesus in the air as Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

There you have it. The rapture or sudden removal of God's children is at hand. The big question now is will you be left behind? Non-believers will be left to face the great tribulation where God pours out His wrath upon the wicked. You don't want to be in that group of folks. Get your heart right with God, make Jesus your Lord and Savior, and start looking and being ready for His return.



Chapter Eleven



Final Judgment...Upon Whom?

The Bible clearly states that Judgment will follow death. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" (Hebrews 9:27) We all will die some day and according to this scripture, we all will face judgment. The time and date is out there somewhere in the future, closer for some of us than for others. It's interesting to learn that death is an appointment. Did you know that 55,300,000 people die every year? That's over 150,000 every day, 6316 every hour, more than 105 every minute and 2 people every second. They all had an appointment with death. That's one appointment that we wish we could break but it is inevitable.

There are different judgments. We will not all be summoned to the same court. By the way, these judgments have no court of appeal. The Bible talks about two judgments, one for the lost or unsaved and one for the saved.

The believer will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."(II Corinthians 5:10) The resurrected saints will be rewarded.

Remember, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 8:1). The application of "no condemnation" is exclusive to those who walk after the Spirit. The Christian that walks in the flesh will also appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ. They will experience loss but will not lose his or her salvation.

Paul pictures Christ seated on a magistrate's judgment seat, The Bema, as though He were a judge of an athletic competition, a place where rewards were given out and losses clearly seen by all in attendance. In other words, it is a reward seat and portrays a time of rewards or loss of rewards following examination, but it is not a time of punishment where believers are judged for their sins. Such would be inconsistent with the finished work of Christ on the Cross-, because He totally paid the penalty for our sins.

This event will occur immediately following the rapture or resurrection of the church after it is caught up to be with the Lord in the air as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. J. Hampton Keathley III , of Bible.org, offers three great scriptures in support of rewards instead of judgment.

(1) In Luke 14:12-14, reward is associated with the resurrection and the rapture is when the church is resurrected.

(2) In Revelation 19:8, when the Lord returns with His bride at the end of the tribulation, she is seen already rewarded. Her reward is described as fine linen; the righteous acts of the saints—undoubtedly the result of rewards.

(3) In 2 Timothy 4:8 and 1 Corinthians 4:5, rewards are associated with "that day" and with the Lord's coming. Again, for the church this means the event of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

He further states...So the order of events will be (a) the rapture which includes our glorification or resurrection bodies, (b) exaltation into the heavens with the Lord, (c) examination before the *Bema*, and (d) compensation or rewards.

The Positive Aspects of the Bema

(1) To evaluate the quality of every believer's work whether it is good or bad, i.e., acceptable and thus worthy of rewards, or unacceptable, to be

rejected and unworthy of rewards. Actually an evaluation is going on every day by the Lord (Rev. 2-3).

(2) To destroy and remove unacceptable production portrayed in the symbols of wood, hay, and stubble. All sinful deeds, thoughts, and motives, as well as all good deeds done in the energy of the flesh will be consumed like wood, hay, and stubble before a fire because they are unworthy of reward. Why? This will be answered as we consider the basis on which rewards are given or lost.

(3) To reward the believer for all the good he or she has done as portrayed by the symbols of gold, silver, and precious stones, that which is valuable and can stand the test of fire without being consumed.

The Negative Aspects of The Bema

Here are a few negative aspects of this judgment, which are indicative to the believer experiencing loss.

(1) The loss of rewards (1 Corinthians 3:15). The phrase “he shall suffer loss” would be better expressed as, “the reward shall be forfeited.”

(2) The disqualification mentioned in 1 Corinthians 9:27 means disqualified from rewards, not loss of salvation.

(3) The “recompense” or the “receive back” (KJV) of II Corinthians 5:10 refers to receive back what is one’s own as though it were given and then taken away.

(4) 1 John 2:28. This verse undoubtedly refers to the *Bema* and shows there will be both boldness as a result of abiding, and shame before the Lord as a result of failing to abide.

I see it as an examination of how well we abide in Christ while on earth. How well did we walk in the Spirit, revealing God’s love and grace to others? Did our lights shine or did they dim and eventually burn out?

Theologians tell us that the “Bema Seat” experience will happen immediately after the rapture. I think it will be a glorious time of fellowship with other believers and great joy to be in the presence of Jesus. Yes, there will be loss of rewards because they were not motivated by the Spirit but

rather done in the flesh. Wood, Hay & Stubble that will burn away, characterizes these deeds done in the flesh.

The final Judgment will be the “Great White Throne Judgment.” It is reserved for all people who have rejected God's call to salvation. Every person who has lived upon the planet earth and has refused to accept God's way to redemption from sin will face their creator and be judged.

Many that thought they were safe will be shocked. Jesus, as recorded in Mathew 7:23 will say to them, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." I believe these to be all the religions of the world. But also, many who were called Christian but were members of a church and not truly “Born Again.” Verses 21 & 22 tell the story. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? This is religion without the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit. These are also they that will go through the tribulation and still not believe.

The concept of a great white throne comes from Revelation 20:11-15, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead, which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead, which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire".

Note that there is a, “Book of Life” filled with the names of the redeemed. If your name is not there, you can put it there now, before it's too late by asking Jesus to save your soul and committing yourself to Him.

Another point is that the dead, both great & small, are all there. That's famous and nobodies. The text seems to suggest that all mankind including the redeemed are there but it is important to see that the verse says, “The

Dead". All the folks that are living are listed in the Book of Life and are enjoying eternal bliss.

I know what you are going to say, "Why then is the Book of Life" at this judgment? I believe it is there as a final condemnation. It's to prove that they did not receive God's plan of salvation.

Guess who is sitting on this great white throne? "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him". (John 5:22-23) "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." (Romans 2:16) You guessed it. It is none other than Jesus. He would know if your name is in His book, right?

The Greatness of this Throne is not in the size of it, nor is it the number of the multitude who stands convicted before it, but in the greatness of the Judge who presides over it--the Lord Jesus. The white color is representative of His holiness and purity, and of how fitting it is that He should judge mankind.



Chapter Twelve

The End of The World

The end of the world is near—December 21, 2012, to be exact—according to theories based on a purported ancient Maya prediction and fanned by the marketing machine behind the soon-to-be-released 2012 movie. But what does the Bible have to say about the end of planet earth? Noel Horner's article in The Good News says this about that.

Horner said, nearly two millennia ago the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth asked Him a question that has intrigued people ever since: "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Mathew 24:3). People in every generation since have wondered about this. Will the world literally

end? If so, how? Why? And when? What does the Bible really say about this crucial and disturbing question?

Religious people aren't the only ones asking these questions. In recent decades people from many walks of life have expressed concern about the possibility of the end of the world, as we know it. Politicians, educators and scientists foresee the potential destruction of our world from a number of causes—including nuclear warfare, environmental disaster, planetary pollution, overpopulation, killer diseases and collision with a comet or asteroid.

Here are a few signs of the times that Jesus told His disciples, there would be many wars and other conflicts between nations and ethnic groups. He also spoke of famines, massive disease epidemics and earthquakes.

Robin Calamaio, in her article, *The End of The World And The Bible*, says, the heavens and earth will be melted down and recreated (II Pet 3:7-13). The new heavens and earth will be eternal and very different from our current order. There will be no decay (Romans 8:19-22) and no longer any curse (Gen 3:17-19 and Rev 22:3). There will be no need for the sun or the moon's light (Rev 21:23) and yet, there will be no nighttime (Rev 21:1,25). Death will no longer exist. Mourning, crying and pain will pass away (Rev 21:4). All animals will peacefully coexist (Isaiah 11:6-9). Only righteousness will exist, (II Pet 3:13 and Rev 21:8,27), with Jesus visibly ruling this active eternal state (Rev 22:5). The coming marvels are incomprehensible (Rev 21:24 and I Cor 2:9).

Many of the references related to the end of the world, actually mean the end of the age. The age that will end is the one we live in where Satan, sin and materialism flourish. The actual earth will be cleansed and refitted as a new earth for habitation by Jesus and His saints. I guess we can look for better days ahead.

Jesus said, “ No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken

and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. **Therefore, keep watch**, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come."(Mathew 24:36-42) NIV

Why doesn't God show up now and end all this? C.S. Lewis, a novelist, poet, academic, medievalist, literary critic, essayist, lay theologian and Christian apologist from Belfast, Ireland, (1898-1963), gives this answer. "God will invade. But I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world quite realize what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage, the play is over..."

"God is going to invade, all right, but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else--something it never entered your head to conceive--comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others, (The lost), that none of us will have any choices left? For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side... That will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realized it before or not.

"Now, today, this moment is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last forever. We must take it or leave it."

The Bible gives many examples of signs that should warn us of the coming end of the age. Jesus gives six such signs, Paul gives two characteristics, and eleven other occurrences are given by the prophets to occur prior to or soon after the end of the age. While we are also told we will not know the time of the "End", God obviously wanted us to know when that time was getting closer. As the Christian church is increasingly drawn into the interfaith movement, and as more and more churches go into isolation, preparing to sleep through the growing attacks on their faith, perhaps God knew it would take a few signs to wake us up and remind us that we have work to do.

It is increasingly obvious that the time of our Lord's coming is drawing near. Prophecy is being fulfilled daily, and at a faster pace than ever before. Whether you believe in a pre-tribulation rapture, or believe Christians will be witness to the full tribulation, wrath, and final judgments, matters not. The beginning of birth pains and the signs of the times should have the same effect on all of us. It should motivate us to save as many souls as we can in the time that we have left. The Great Commission tells us to make disciples of all nations, bringing the message of salvation through Christ to all people. If the Church is raptured before the tribulation, it is important that we leave behind an explanation for the trials and judgments those left behind will face. How else will they recognize the deception of the anti-Christ and seek instead the truth of the Bible? If you believe that we are to endure the tribulation along side the lose left behind, you will need to be prepared to not only share the message of salvation, but share with them the reasons for God's judgment and hold it up as further proof of their need to be saved.

Here's what to look for to know we are in the end times and the end of the age is near.

1. Matthew 24:11 "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many."
2. Matthew 24:6 "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end."
3. Matthew 24:7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes."
4. Matthew 24:8-9 "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake."
5. Matthew 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come."
6. II Timothy 3:1-5,7 "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of god; holding to a form of godliness, although

they have denied its power; always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

7. I Timothy 4:1-3 " Now the Spirit speaketh 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; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.."

The Apostle John, author of the book of Revelation, prophesied of seven deadly sins that were prevalent among those living in the, "End Times." (Rev. 9:13-21) These sins are; demon worship, idolatry, murder, magic/witchcraft, sexual immorality, theft, and refusal to repent. Rev. 9:13-21 This a portrait of the period of time during the tribulation but it is important to know that most of the seven deadly sins are present today in our society.

Luke gives us the record of what Jesus said to do when we see these things, (Luke 21:28), "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." NIV

Chapter Thirteen



Spiritual Warfare...For Everyone?

We already know, from previous chapters, that we indeed have a real enemy that roams the earth looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8) We also know that God has made armor for us to wear so we can stand against the wilds of the Devil. (Eph. 6:11) What most Christians don't know is that there is a war raging in their minds, that they are expected to fight the enemies of God that try to deceive them, and how to identify those that seek their harm. Why fight, because we are under attack, the purpose of which is to stop the image of God from being revealed in us.

Paul tells the Ephesian believers, chapter 6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." It is critical to know that our battle is not with flesh and blood. That takes into account family, friends, co-workers, folks that do not like you, those who have betrayed or hurt you, those who have slandered your name and good character and everyone else with a bad attitude. We are not in a battle with people. However, we are in a battle with unseen powers of evil that use people against us. The people are just thorns in our flesh. God's grace should be sufficient.

I always thought that I could not assert myself against folks that were mean to me because of Ephesians 6:12. I just took the blow and tried to forgive...until I realized that the Devil was behind it all, coming through certain folks to destroy my confidence, and self-respect. The Bible tells us that Satan is the accuser of the brethren. (I Timothy 4:13) He uses arrogant puffed-up people to sling accusations and attitudes against us so we will fall from our faith. In reality, we are instructed in I Peter 5:8-9 to resist the Devil steadfastly in the faith. Here's what that means to me.

1. We can and should respond to the attacker's lies with what is true, even if that person will not listen. By standing up, we are listening to what we are saying and it will strengthen our faith to do so.
2. When we resist, "In The Faith", we are standing on the Word of God demonstrating our resolve that; we have been forgiven; that the past sins no longer exist; that we are under the Lordship of Christ and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)
3. Our primary focus is to do the will of God. Other things just do not count. Jesus told one who wanted to bury his father before he could follow Him. Here's what Jesus told the man, "Jesus said unto him, let the dead bury their dead: but you go and preach the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:59-60)

We must know our enemy. We must also know the scriptures and ourselves to be victorious in spiritual warfare.

Knowing the enemy is to acknowledge that he exists and that he is here with one single purpose in mind, to steal, and to kill, and to destroy (John 10:10) We have already established that his power and authority were stripped from

him when Jesus died on the cross. He is a defeated foe. (Colossians 2:15). However, he is a master at deception. He must get you to agree with his lie. This gives him power over you. With it, he suggests actions that will lead you to destruction...things like; it's ok to have sex outside of marriage, abortion is the right thing to do, homosexuality is just an alternate lifestyle and not a sin, smoking will not kill you, drugs are cool, and so on. If you fall for the lie, you end up participating in it, even if it's just in your mind. The end result is the pollution of your soul and the destruction of your spiritual walk with God.

Knowing yourself is also half the battle because most of the lies that fall from Satan's bag of tricks are about you...all the things you've done wrong and the way you were 10 or 20 years ago. He will constantly bring past sins up, even if God forgave you, until you believe that you are still the same guy or gal as back then. A reformed prostitute, who is now a wife and mother, saved by the blood of Jesus, will face her past many times. If she does not know that God has washed away her sins, she will stay in regret, guilt and depression. However, if she holds on to the "New Creature" teaching of Paul, the Apostle in Romans chapter 12, she can easily say, "that is no longer me." I am a new creature in Christ and do not have to go back. The victory is so great that her new life is like a butterfly that came out of a transformation from a caterpillar. They are just not the same creatures anymore.

Knowing the Word of God seals your victory and is how you walk in the Spirit. Applying the truths found in the Bible causes you to walk in them. They are not only Spiritual but alive with power to raise you up from being the tail to being the head. "And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them" (Deuteronomy 28:13). It is our responsibility to know the truth and to walk in it. Colossians 2:10 says, "and you have been given fullness in Christ who is head over every power and authority." He is the head and wants us to rule with Him in this life as well as the one to come. We must see ourselves as He sees us, redeemed, blessed, and righteous in Him.

The Lord showed me an acrostic that helped me to remember the offensive weapons available and how to use them to keep me free. Here they are.

1. **K-The Knowledge of God**, “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (II Corinthians 10:5) We are to cast down imaginations and we could have many from sexual to being rich and powerful to almost anything. These thoughts are to be brought captive by obeying Christ and His word.
2. **N-Name of Jesus**. “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth” (Philippians 2:10). It is important to know that every knee, meaning everyone or thing, must yield to the Name of Jesus. In the name of Jesus, demons have to flee.
3. **O-Obedience of Christ**, (II Cor.10:5) We must be obedient to the call and will of God. Rebellion does not sit well with the exercise of victory. Christ’s obedience was exact and fulfilled the Law of God perfectly. If we are obedient and we bring every thought in obedience to His righteousness, we destroy the evil thought before it takes hold in our minds.
4. **B-Blood of Christ**, “But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (I Peter 1:19). Jesus was God’s spotless lamb, a portrait of all the sacrifices from times past that were a foreshadow of Him. He was the ultimate sacrifice. His blood forever paid the price for our sin. I John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Knowing we are forgiven keeps us free from Satan’s attacks that dwell on past sins. We can boldly declare that the blood of Christ continually cleanses us.
5. **S-Sword of The Spirit**, "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."(Ephesians 6:17.) The Word of God is the Bible. There are over 3,000 promises and lots of wisdom, knowledge and help to meet all your needs. Use it.

Charles Spurgeon, a famous minister in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s, said this about spiritual warfare and Christians. (Spurgeon was called the Prince of Preachers. He had the very first mega church in England)

Spurgeon said that to be a Christian is to be a warrior. “The good soldier of Jesus Christ must not expect to find ease in this world: it is a battlefield. Neither must he reckon upon the friendship of the world; for that would be enmity against God. His occupation is war. As he puts on piece by piece of

the panoply provided for him, he may wisely say to himself, this warns me of danger; this prepares me for warfare.”

”Many try compromise; but if you are a true Christian, you can never do this business well. The language of deceit fits not a holy tongue. The adversary is the father of lies, and those that are with him understand the art of equivocation; but saints abhor it. If we discuss terms of peace, and attempt to gain something by policy, we have entered upon a course from which we shall return in disgrace.”

“We have no order from the Captain of our salvation to patch up a truce, and get as good terms as we can. We are not sent out to offer concessions. It is said that if we yield a little, perhaps the world will yield a little also, and good may come of it. If we are not too strict and narrow, perhaps sin will kindly consent to be more decent. Our association with it will prevent its being so barefaced and atrocious. If we are not narrow-minded, our broad doctrine will go down with the world, and those on the other side will not be so greedy of error as they now are. **No such thing.** Neither may we hope to gain by being neutral, or granting an occasional truce. We are not to cease from conflict, and try to be as agreeable as we can with our Lord's foes, frequenting their assemblies, and tasting their dainties. No such orders are written here. You are to grasp your weapon, and go forth to fight.”



Chapter Fourteen

Salvation By Grace or By Works

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8.) This scripture seems to leave out any kind of works of righteousness as part of man’s salvation. Man’s salvation is just that, a gift of God. It comes to us through faith, not works. If I have faith in

the finished work of Christ, I am saved. “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:9)

Paul, the author of the Ephesian letter, makes it clear that works will not save you and is not necessary as a qualifier for salvation. Maybe he got this idea of, “Grace Only”, from Jesus. John’s gospel records Jesus saying these words, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

Believing in the Son of God is the qualifier to be saved, so Jesus says. He also says that the Son was sent or given as an act of God, who so loved us that He gave. When you add works to this equation, you change the foundation and make man’s eternal destiny subject to his or her deeds and not the Blood of Christ. We were hopelessly lost and dead in our sins when Christ died for us. “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8 NIV)

“Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)”.(Ephesians 2:5) “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” (Colossians 2:13)

Paul tells the Roman, Ephesians, and Colossian believers that they were dead in sin when Christ died as the sacrifice for sin; that God quickened them together with Christ, which means; made alive with Him; and even has forgiven ALL trespasses. He never added man’s works. In fact, he said that it was by grace that they were saved.

If man could work his way to heaven, he’d have to obey the Laws of God perfectly. If he were to falter, even on one small point, he would be a sinner and guilty before a holy and righteous God. (Ezekiel 18:20-**The soul who sins shall die**) NIV. Why then does the church, for centuries, argue over grace or works? I believe that Christians who add works feel that grace is just too good to be true.

Why would God give us so great a gift with no strings attached? Grace is actually, un-merited favor. That means you do not deserve it...that you did nothing worthy enough to merit it, yet God favored you with it anyway. The only reason God would do such a thing is because He sent His Only Begotten Son as a sacrifice for sin and condemned sin in the flesh, His

righteous flesh, on the cross. Jesus paid the penalty for sin, which was death. God can now give us the great gift of salvation by Grace through which we can access His love and affection and enjoy Him as He originally intended. When God looks at us, He sees Jesus. Why? Because we are “Born Again” and have put on the new man, (Jesus), that is created after God in righteousness and true holiness. We are in Him and our sins are washed away forever. (I Corinthians 1:30)

If Satan can get you to believe in works for salvation, you will begin to operate in the flesh. Your belief in Grace will diminish and that’s just what is happening today. Some churches even claim that Jesus’ death for sin was only for our past sins and all from the point of salvation forward must be confessed or our salvation is lost. The problem with that is that we are not aware of most of our sin. It is built into our nature and we do it without thinking. No man could catch every sin to confess it. We would be constantly confessing sins and hoping we didn’t miss any. Our ultimate salvation ends up resting in how well we perform and not on the Finished Work of Christ. He died once for all sin. So, how does works fit into anything? Do we sit back and do nothing because we are saved? God forbid! The church has confused faith and salvation for centuries. Listen to what James says about faith and works.

The apostle James said, “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.” It’s important to see that James is not talking about salvation. He is talking about Faith. The evidence of faith is found in the actions of the believer. On the other hand, the evidence of salvation is seen in whom the believer puts his or her trust. James said he would show his faith, not salvation, by his actions. If you are not involved in the work of your Heavenly Father, you do not need faith. However, you should be involved. It is God’s Will.

I read an article on the web recently about Adam & Grace by Bilfrankas. Listen to what is being taught.

“Adam and Eve, before they fell into sin, were not "worthy" of God's presence. Before the fall, they were innocent, but not holy; and innocence is not worthiness. In their initial state, they had fellowship with their Creator by means of His grace, not because they deserved it. They hadn't done anything yet...to neither deserve nor disrupt it.

We all agree that God alone is Holy. God Himself is the only being in existence that has intrinsic holiness contingent upon nothing but His own nature. The sheer radiance of His glory would consume any lesser being - so that one must be equally holy in order to withstand His presence. Since God could not create His equal, Adam and Eve, like us, had a conferred holiness, except theirs was contingent upon themselves (ours is anchored in the indwelling Spirit). Thus, fellowship with their Creator would continue as long as they remained submissive to His supremacy. As soon as they desired to be more than what God intended them to be, they fell. Their sin was the desire to exceed their God-prescribed boundaries - to trespass.” So grace was active even before man fell and carried through the Old Testament and is still active in our day. Paul said the law was a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. (Galatians 3:24)

Chapter Fifteen

The Gifts of The Spirit



Are the gifts of the Holy Spirit available for use by today’s believer? Or did they cease with the death of the Apostles? This is another source of friction in the 21st century church. I personally believe that the gifts are for today and are in operation even as we live and breathe.

I want to separate Spiritual gifts from Spiritual fruit because they are very different. (Galatians 5:22) offers a list of Spiritual fruits but they should be looked at as “Fruit.” It is the fruit of the Spirit. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are listed in I Corinthians chapter twelve.

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. ³ Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” (I Cor. 12:1)

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all. ⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. ⁸ For to one is given by the Spirit **the word of wisdom**; to another **the word of knowledge** by the same Spirit; ⁹ To another **faith** by the same Spirit; to another **the gifts of healing** by the same Spirit; ¹⁰ To another **the working of miracles**; to another **prophecy**; to another **discerning of spirits**; to another **divers kinds of tongues**; to another **the interpretation of tongues**: ¹¹ But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” (I Corinthian 12:1-11)

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (I Corinthians 12:12)

It’s again important to see that the gifts are listed in the context of a teaching related to the body of Christ. They are all given by the Holy Spirit and are for the purpose of edification and ministry...so that there would be no schism in the body. They were intended to bring the various believers together, (Jew & Gentile), as one, reliant upon each other to get the job done. One believer cannot have all the gifts because the body is comprised of many members operating with several gifts each but not all gifts. See what is taught about the body in the next paragraph.

“For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵ If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶ And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where is the smelling? ¹⁸ But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where is the body? ²⁰ But now are they many members, yet but one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. ²² Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: ²³ And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. ²⁴ For our comely parts

have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked. ²⁵ That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. ²⁶ And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. ²⁷ Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” (I Crointhians12: 14-27)

“ And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? ³⁰ Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.” (I Corinthians 12:28-31)

Which gifts are better? Isn't it the best gift the one that meets the need? We need to discover the gifts that are already operating in us and utilize them for the ministry and glory of God. Holy Spirit gifts are not such things as being a good wife or mother or some other expected talent. They Are All Supernatural Gifts.

Here are some gifts and definitions that are evident in I Corinthians 12:28-31.

12:8 **Word of Wisdom and Word of Knowledge**...these are two gifts that are supernatural in nature. They operate by the Holy Spirit and are focused to specific events or problems that allow the Believer to experience foreknowledge or to obtain the ability to utilize that knowledge that would otherwise not be known. These gifts usually operate together.

12:9 **Faith**...to be firmly persuaded of God's power and promises; to accomplish His will and purpose and to display such a confidence in Him and His Word that circumstances and obstacles do not shake that conviction.

12:9 **Gifts of Healing** to be used as a means through which God makes people whole physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. They are gifts of Healing, not just one.

12:10 **The Working of Miracles...** to be enabled by God to perform mighty deeds which glorify God. They are of supernatural origin and means.

12:10 **Prophecy** ...to speak forth the message of God to His people (Greek Word: prophetes - the forth-telling of the will of God; 'pro'=forth; 'phemi'=to speak)

12:10 **Discerning of Spirits**...The ability to discern the Spirit of God, the spirit of the Flesh and the spirit of the Devil in everyday life.

12:10 **Diverse kinds of tongues and their interpretations**...This gift of tongues is given to Believers as a heavenly language so that the Believer can communicate spirit to Spirit with God. The experience edifies the Believer as his or her spirit speaks mysteries. Should this be part of a public gathering, it must be conducted in order and must be accompanied by an interpretation so all Believers can be blessed.

Question? Are the gifts no longer needed in the body of Christ? At first glance, Paul's word to the Corinthians seem to agree with the idea of diminishing gifts.

I Corinthians 13:8-11 says, "Charity, (Love), never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. ⁹For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. ¹¹When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

Take another look at verse 10, "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" We see in part. That's why we need the gifts. It is the Holy Spirit's way of uniting the body but it is still seeing in part, not fully. This is evident in the type of gift given. For example: A Word of Wisdom & A Word of Knowledge. They are just a bit, not all but just a part. Tongues are the same because it requires an interpreter. However, when that which is perfect is come, meaning Jesus at His 2nd coming, we will see in a full and complete view, leaving no more need for that which was in part, or gifts. Until that time, the gifts are needed to bring the body together for ministry here on earth. Sadly, the enemy has distorted the idea and confused the teaching causing a great divide.

The biggest issue is found in speaking in tongues. This has divided many a fellowship. Some use the gift to edify themselves and communicate spirit to Spirit with God. Others insist that this century has no need for tongues and

they, with all the rest of the gifts, were stopped with the death of the Apostles.

Here's some food for thought.

1. The gifts validated Jesus' claim that He was the Messiah, the Christ. They were bestowed upon His followers to continue that validation. Why would that not be needed now in our generation?
2. The gifts were given to the followers of Jesus to help the body to grow and become one. The words of wisdom, knowledge, miracles, and even tongues were all aimed at bringing unity and purpose to God's people. Isn't that still needed in today's world?
3. There are way more people in today's world, (20 times more), than back in Jesus' day. Isn't the need for Holy Spirit power through the gifts needed more now than ever before?
4. The Apostles laid hands on new believers, that were not Apostles, and they received the gifts and began to operate in them. They were passed on and on from anointed believer to new converts. Why would that need to stop? That which is perfect has not yet come.

Satan's deception is obvious in this matter. He has deceived many in believing they do not need even one Holy Spirit gift because it is a thing of the past. This is a practical stripping of power and steeling of authority. If you do not believe that you can discern spirits, you'll never try. If you do not believe that God can and will give you a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge, you'll miss out on His will and end up groping in the dark for answers. The gifts are needed today more than ever before.

Chapter Sixteen



The Body of Christ

The first epistle, (Letter), to the Corinthians was written by the Apostle Paul to address some problems, which had arisen in the church at Corinth. In the early chapters of the epistle, Paul addressed the Corinthian believers concerning unity, fornication, discipline, and marriage. The Corinthians also appear to have had some problems in the area of public worship, for Paul moved on to address the subjects of the Lord's Supper and the use of spiritual gifts within the local assembly. The Body of Christ includes all "Born Again" believers, not all church members or all religions. "By one spirit are we all baptized into one body." (1 Cor.12:13) Two factors are involved here.

1. First, there is a body, which is The Church. (Eph. 1:22,23)
2. Second, a person becomes a part of "The Body" by a baptism, not by water but by the Holy Spirit. BAPTISM: means To Place Into, or on; For The Purpose of Identification.

"John baptized with water, but Jesus Christ will baptize with the Holy Spirit." (Mathew 3:11) This was a reference to the Day of Pentecost which took place after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ back into heaven - see Acts 1:5-8 and Acts 2:1-5. From heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ "Poured Out" or placed His Spirit on that believing remnant of Israel, just as John the Baptist promised and as was predicted in Joel 2:28-32.

This is also the baptism to which Paul refers in Ephesians 4:1-6."Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." All is a reference to Believers, not unbelievers.

Paul uses the human body to describe the Church. In Eph. 4:15,16, he said, "Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of

itself in love." I think that Paul got this partly from Psalm 122:3. "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compacted together." Again, in Eph. 2:21,22, he said, "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Obviously these statements can in no way be used to describe Christianity in general. It is the destiny of all true believers.

Of all the cities in Israel, God chose Jerusalem to "put His name there." Even so, of all the groups in Christendom, God will yet choose one group from among all of the groups, which make up Christianity, to put His name there. (Mal. 3:16-18) This "one group" is those that are "Born Again." These are the redeemed of the Lord. Later, in His prayer with His Twelve, He said to the Father, "Keep through thine own name those whom Thou hast given me. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name." (John 17:11,12). They were the spiritual city, which God had chosen to put His name.

All the redeemed are noted in The Book of Life, but those in the Body of Christ are written in another book also. This is made clear in Rev. 22:19. "God shall take away his part out of The Book of Life, and out of the Holy City." The same point is made in Heb. 12:22,23. "Ye are come unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the church of the firstborn which are written in heaven." (Some paragraphs are excerpts from Christ Series, authored by C. Elden McNabb.)

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly (innermost being) shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" (John 7:38-39) So, from the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost was given... to our current day and until Jesus returns, Believers are being added to the church, which is His body.

After the Rapture of the church, at the Marriage Supper of The Lamb, we will become the Bride of Christ and as events unfold, end up dwelling with Christ on a new earth, fashioned just for us for all eternity. How great is that?

Some Misconceptions

About The Character of God

How many times have you heard someone say, "Where was God when this happened?", as though He were responsible for the tragedy or bad thing. This way of thinking is a clear misunderstanding of the Character of God. It shows that the one asking the question does not know the character of God. Here are some references that will help you to understand who God really is.

- "God is **spirit**, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24)
- "Now to the King **eternal, immortal, invisible**, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." (1Tim. 1:17)
- "For God is greater than our hearts, and **he knows everything.**" (1 John 3:20)
- "To God belong **wisdom and power; counsel and understanding** are his." (Job 12:13)
- "...a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, **who does not lie**, promised before the beginning of time..." (Titus 1:2)
- "For the LORD is **good** and his love endures forever; his **faithfulness** continues through all generations." (Ps. 100:5)
- "...**God is love**. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16)
- "The LORD, the LORD, the **compassionate and gracious** God, **slow to anger**, abounding in love and **faithfulness...**" (Ex. 34:6)
- "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the **God of all comfort...**" (2 Cor. 1:3)
- "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, **abounding in love.**" (Ps. 103:8)
- "**Holy, holy, holy** is the LORD **Almighty**; the whole earth is full of his glory." (Is. 6:3)
- "The **God of peace** be with you all. Amen." (Rom. 15:33)
- "He is the Rock, **his works are perfect**, and **all his ways are just**. A **faithful** God who does no wrong, upright and just is he." (Deut. 32:4)
- "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is **perfect.**" (Matt. 5:48)

There are more references but these will give you a pretty good idea about who God is. He does not tempt us with evil (James 1:13). Nor does He cause bad things to happen to man. That happens as a result of the Fall of Man into Sin and Man's misguided free will.

About Forgiveness of Sins

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (I John 1:9) Popular belief is that whenever you sin, day after day, you can confess, be forgiven and cleansed. However, the text of chapter one of I John tells us a different story.

Ian Mackervoy's commentary on I John gives a good background. John was in Ephesus when he wrote this letter. He sent it to the churches in that region. He wrote to the Christians in those churches. He knew them well and he loved them. He thought of them as his own family. So he spoke to them as if he was speaking to his own children.

Some people in these churches believed wrong things. The people who had taught them these wrong things had been members of the church. However, they had moved away from the faith and they had left the church (1 John 2:19). So John intended to correct these wrong ideas in his letter.

One wrong idea was that Christ was not really a man. He seemed to be a man but was not a real man. John taught quite clearly that the Son of God came as a real man. He lived his life here on earth as a man. The Christ actually died as a man. The man, Christ Jesus, rose again from the dead.

Some people taught that Jesus was merely a man. They taught that he was not really God. They did not believe that God could die. They said that the Christ came upon Jesus, then the Christ left Him again before He died. John answered this. He showed that Jesus is one with God. He is the Christ, who gave His life for us. No mere man could take away our sins as the Lord Jesus Christ has done.

These people taught other wrong things. This is what they argued:

· *The body is bad, but the spirit is good. True life is in the spirit. What we do in the body does not affect the spirit. So it does not matter how we live in the body.*

These people thought that their evil actions did not matter. They said that they loved God. However, they lived for themselves. John shows that such ideas are false. If we love God, our lives must be good. We must not continue to sin. We must live as Jesus lived. We must live right and good lives because God is good. Thus comes the message of I John 1:9. It is a message of repentance, (If we confess) It is a message of God's faithfulness to forgive, (He is faithful) It is a message of forgiveness, (He will forgive) and it is a message of being delivered from guilt, (He will cleanse from ALL unrighteousness).

The cleansing is where most folks go astray in their theology. If we had to ask forgiveness for every little thing, we'd be praying for forgiveness 24 hours a day, because we are of a fallen nature that is prone to sin, almost without thinking. John was writing to a group of folks that NEVER considered the deeds in their flesh, until John confronted them. They saw no need to ask forgiveness.

The Blood of Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness all the time. **It's a continual process** in His work of redemption. If we deny the continual process of cleansing through the blood and move to having to have every sin confessed before we are clean, we shift the process of redemption to a haphazard system that ends up as a hit or miss approach that misses the purpose of God's grace towards man and leaving him in doubt of his salvation.

I do not mean to say that it is not necessary for us to seek forgiveness when we have done wrong. I do want to clarify that we have assurance that God's grace is sufficient and we can rest in Him for our redemption. The enemy will have you in a world-wind, trying to get free from sin unless you receive God's grace and rest in His finished work.

About Generational Curses

The first passage in the Bible that mentions God's warning about the consequences of idolatry affecting the third and fourth generation is found in the book of Exodus. It says "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me" (Exodus 20:5b). This is a warning about

the grave consequences of worshiping other gods. The Old Testament record is filled with such warnings as well as narrative passages that describe the horrible consequences of idolatry in the life of Israel. Even this warning is tempered with a greater promise of God's mercy: "But showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments" (verse 6).

Biblical scholars have pointed out that if the children turn to God they shall avert this punishment. For example, John Calvin commented about Exodus 20:5 that, "When God declares that He will cast back the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of the children, He does not mean that He will take vengeance on poor wretches who have never deserved anything of the sort; but that He is at liberty to punish the crimes of the fathers upon their children and descendants, with the proviso that they too may be justly punished, as being imitators of their fathers. Contemporary Old Testament scholar, Walter Kaiser writes, "Children who repeat the sins of their fathers evidence it in personally hating God." Kaiser takes "those who hate Me" to apply to the children as well as the fathers. The children themselves carry on with hating God as shown by their continued idolatry and covenant breaking. God is just and merciful and nothing in this passage suggests otherwise. He honors His Word, The soul who sins shall die (Ezekiel 18:20)

About A 10% Tithe

Rev. John Walvoord, a Christian theologian, pastor, and president of Dallas Theological Seminary from 1952 to 1986 has a right perspective. Here's what he says, (*Major Bible Themes*, Revised) Grand Rapids: Academie Books

"In matters pertaining to the giving of money, the grace principle involves the believer's recognition of God's sovereign authority over all that the Christian is and has, and contrasts with the Old Testament legal system of tithing which was in force as a part of the law until the law was done away with (John 1:16-17; Rom. 6:14; 7:1-6; 2 Cor. 3:1-18; Gal. 3:19-25; 5:18; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14). Though certain principles of the law were carried forward and restated under grace, tithing, like Sabbath observance, was never imposed on the believer in this dispensation. Since the Lord's Day superseded the legal Sabbath and is adapted to the principles of grace as the Sabbath could not be, so tithing has been superseded by a new system of giving which is adapted to the teachings of grace, as tithing could not be."

Their giving was not by commandment 1 Cor. 8:8, nor of necessity II Cor. 9:7. Under the law, a tenth was commanded and its payment was a necessity; under grace, God is not seeking the gift, but an expression of devotion from the giver. Under grace no law is imposed and no proportion to be given is stipulated, and, while it is true that God works in the yielded heart both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13), He finds pleasure only in that gift which is given cheerfully, or more literally, "hilariously" (II Cor. 9:7)...."

The early Christians, first of all, gave themselves. Acceptable giving is preceded by a complete giving of oneself (II Cor. 8:5). God never imposed tithing on any other than the nation of Israel (Lev. 27:34; Num. 18:23-24; Mal. 3:7-10).

God sustains the giver. God will sustain grace giving with limitless temporal resources

(II Cor. 9:8-10; Luke 6:38). In this connection it may be seen that those who give as much as a tenth are usually prosperous in temporal things, but since the believer can have no relation to the law (Gal. 5:1), it is evident that this prosperity is the fulfillment of the promise under grace, rather than the fulfillment of promises under the law. No blessings are thus dependent on exact tithing. Remember, Jesus said in Mathew 6:33 that these things, meaning stuff that the world seeks after, will be added to the believer as he seeks God and His righteousness. He did not say if you tithe 10%.

God loves a cheerful giver that offers his or her entire being and fortune. Grace giving is what God lays on your heart, not what an Old Testament law dictates.

About The House of God

How many times have you gone to church and heard the pastor say, "welcome to the house of God" The New Testament makes no provision for a house of God that is of brick and mortar. The correct theological view is that we, all "Born Again" believers, are the house of God. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."(I Peter 2:5) Next time you go to church, call it a believer's fellowship, not the house of God. You are His house.

About Man's Purpose

Most folks, even Christians, have very little understanding as to where they came from, why they are here and where they are going when they die. We are told that we need to find our slot in life, our purpose, as though it were a profession or job. Only then will we be happy and find peace. This is not in line with Biblical teaching.

God gave us our purpose in Genesis chapter one, **to be the image of God**, His very reflection on the earth. That's a lot different than being a Doctor, Marketing Director or some other profession. His Divine will, will prevail in leading us to a work related job, if we listen to Him and follow His lead. What we take with us along life's way is our character. If we are tuned into God's Spirit, allowing Him to bring forth the life of Jesus in us, we will begin to manifest the fruit of the Spirit as shown in Galatians 5:22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

If we are filled with the Spirit, as we are commanded, (Ephesians 5:18), we will display Godly fruit in our lives. I believe that doing this is letting our light so shine as Jesus asked us to do. (Mathew 5:16)

About Prosperity

The Prosperity debate is still with us today. Some Christians believe in taking a vow of poverty while others say that God wants His children to prosper in all things.

Biblical prosperity is part of the definition of wellness and wholeness that is nothing missing and nothing broken. The good news of the kingdom of God teaches that you can attain success in the here and now using the principles of Jesus. It's supernatural how this manifests as you submit to the Word of God and the leading of His Holy Spirit.

The perfect will of God is a wellness that is wholeness in every area of your life, including finances. (II Cor.8:9)...“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” God's will is for us to Prosper!

Here are a few scriptures that support the idea that God wants to prosper us.

1. Deut. 29:9 Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.
2. Proverbs 10:22...The blessing of the LORD brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it.
3. ECCLESIASTES 5:19 Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God.
4. Deut 8:18 "And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.
5. Proverbs 13:22 A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.
6. Proverbs 10:22 The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

Have I convinced you yet that God wants us to prosper? If not, I will offer one more scripture that pits poverty against wealth and how Jesus clarifies it for us. John 10:10 “The thief cometh 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.”

Prosperity is given so we can establish our covenant with God, to fund the gospel, to be a blessing to the poor and others around us. We are not to set our eyes on riches for it will destroy us. Jesus instructed us in Mathew 6:33 “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things (The stuff the world seeks after, like wealth) shall be added unto you. “

About Sexual Immorality

If you are a Christian, you must know that Adultery, Homosexuality, Abortion and other sexual sins are absolutely wrong. It's the indifference of so many Christians---the lack of voices speaking out against this tidal wave of immorality that worries me.

According to U.S. News & World Report, web surfers spent \$970 million on pornographic websites in 1998, a figure that was expected to rise to more than \$3 billion by 2003. One researcher estimated that 60 million Americans have visited sexually explicit web sites. Tragically, the percentage of Christian men involved is not much different than that of the unsaved. According to most surveys in 2003, at least 17% of Christians regularly

viewed pornography. The Internet has made the raunchiest sexual images available at a click of the mouse in the privacy of one's home or office. When 2007 ended, there were in the neighborhood of 700 million pornographic websites out there. Here in America we're producing 11,000 new porn films every year and Americans are renting 800 million adult videos & DVDs annually. HALF of all hotel guests watch pornographic movies and PORN accounts for 70% of the in-room revenue raised by hotels.

Believe it or not, studies show that half of the people in our nation who call themselves Christians don't see a problem with couples living together. 39% think there's nothing wrong with sexual fantasizing. Incredibly more than 1/3 of today's church going women have intentionally visited pornographic websites. And get this 1/2 of church going men struggle with pornography.

Oddly enough, many Christians vote for a woman's right to chose, even when that choice kills an unborn baby. Doctors now tell us that they can detect a heartbeat within 18 days from conception yet the law allows abortions even up to the 9th month..

Take a look at all that will **not** inherit the kingdom of God. Homosexuals are among this list. (I Corinthians 6:9-11). "Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."

Listen to what the scriptures say about Adultery

Proverbs 6:23 He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.

Hebrews 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

Mathew 5:27-8 You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Sexual immorality is the worst kind of sin yet many Christians today explain it away, ignore it and make excuses for those who participate therein.

About Seed Faith

The idea of “Seed Faith” began with Oral Roberts, the famous healing evangelist. I had an occasion to go to one of his meetings and actually saw people healed, including my wife. I know he was called of God and has done all that our Lord called him to do. However, I have always had a problem with “Seed Faith.” It just didn’t sit right on my theological nerve. I know that all pastors and teachers do not have all the knowledge so I do not fault him for being wrong in this one area. Nevertheless, I feel that his teaching related to Seed Faith is misleading. Here’s why:

1. Seed Faith focuses on planting to get a harvest. The, Name Your Seed, idea came from this doctrine. However, evangelist and many pastors now use it mainly to motivate listeners or faith partners to send donations with a promise that God will multiply their gift, as a seed would grow into a harvest. What is not taken into consideration are motives, obedience and relationship of the giver with Jesus. It presumes upon God to repay in abundance no matter what is going on in the lives or hearts of those that plant the seed.
2. It is in contradiction to the promise of Mathew 6:33 that says, “All these things will be added unto you”... as you seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.
3. It puts the final outcome of God’s blessings in the hands of man and his donation. This binds God to man’s dictate, which is wrong.
4. It focuses the eyes of the giver on a windfall harvest instead of God’s will.
5. The text of Galatians chapter six relating to sowing and reaping deals with the consequences of walking in the flesh or spirit, not money. The seed time and harvest scriptures in the Old Testament does not deal with money either.
6. It strips the believer of genuine faith in God and His provision, reducing it to a return on an investment, not an answered prayer.
7. It teaches the giver that God can be bought with money. All the believer has to do is figure out how much.

Galatians 6:7 is one of the primary text in support of Seed Faith. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he

also reap.” Let’s read on through verse eight to see the text. V-7-10 “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. **9** And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. **10** As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

Nowhere does Paul speak of money. To do so would be taking the meaning away from its original intent, which was to teach the Galatians that they should not walk in the flesh because if they do, they will create a harvest that will bring corruption to their souls.

The reaping aspect of Galatians 6 is associated with well doing, walking in the spirit, and doing good to all men. The inference is that you should not assume that you could plant in the flesh and expect a spiritual harvest.

About God Allowing Bad Things To Happen

I talked to a person just the other day that believed that God was responsible for children born blind, cripple or deformed. The belief was that this was God’s will in accordance with His Sovereignty. The theological premise was that it pleased Him to do so. The “problem of pain,” as the well-known Christian scholar, C.S. Lewis, once called it, is the atheism’s most potent weapon against the Christian faith.

An Atheist might say, how can a God of love permit or allow such things as war, sickness, pain, and death, especially when their effects often are felt most keenly by those who are apparently innocent? Either He is not a God of love and is indifferent to human suffering, or else He is not a God of power and is therefore helpless to do anything about it. In either case, the Biblical God who is supposedly one of both absolute power and perfect love becomes an impossible anachronism. Or so they claim!

Here are some points to consider:

1. Since the fall of man, sin has ruled mankind by nature. This affected man’s DNA and caused man to walk a path that leads to death. I call it, “ The Sin effect.”
2. Disease, deformity, sickness and other abnormalities developed as a result of man’s rebellion. (Sin entered the world and man’s DNA)

3. The Bible says: "Far be it from the true God to act wickedly, and the Almighty to act unjustly!"-Job 34:10. James 1:13, when being tempted, let no one say: "I am being tempted by God." For with evil things God cannot be tempted nor does he himself tempt anyone."

Ultimately the skeptic always has a problem with the issue of freewill. You cannot create a freewill moral agent and then interfere with his freewill decisions. This would violate the basic attributes of God Himself. God cannot violate His own word. It is impossible. If I give you the choice between doing (X) and (Y) and I tell you that if you choose (Y), you will be punished, and then you choose (Y), I must punish you. If I don't punish you, I am a liar. One who lives in a world of lies is incapable of understanding a world of complete and perfect truth.

The question also assumes that God created the world like it is today. This is not the case. It was made good but became defective as a result of our poor choice. The fall of man also resulted in the fall of all creation. Thus, man's world changed and is now being slowly destroyed by sin. Life's happenings are a result of man's sinful choices.

"For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. "For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."(Romans 8:19-22) (NLT)

About The Spirit World & Ghosts

The Bible says, that death is an appointment but after that comes Judgment. (Hebrews 9:27) Some folks, Christians included, feel that human spirits remain in a "Spirit World" after they die and can haunt or watch over the living. This scripture makes it clear that immediately after death, which is an appointment with God, dead folks are judged. In the story that Jesus told about the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man died and immediately was cast into hell. "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments"(Luke 16:23). You should note that he is in torments, more than one. The story continues to say that he could see Abraham. He even called him Father Abraham. He asked Abraham to send someone to warn his brothers of that terrible place. He could not escape hell nor was he able to wander the earth.

The Christian's destination after death is also immediate with no lingering to roam the earth as a ghost. Every "Born Again" believer should be encouraged not to lose hope in the promise we have in the Holy Scripture which is to be absent of the body is to be present with the Lord (II Cor. 5:8-9). "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. **9** Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him..(II Corinthians 5:8-9). This is a clear teaching that Christians that die (Absent from the body) are immediately with the Lord. *There is no lingering or soul sleep.*

The T.V. shows about ghost hunting and all the paranormal activity is not from departed human beings. Demons have been around for centuries and know everything about humans. They even are assigned to specific regions and families. They also are like their leader, the Devil, liars. Don't be fooled by spirits that pose, as departed loved ones. It's a lie of the Devil to draw you away from the truth and the power and authority of God.

About God's Wisdom

God followed a design in creation that took great wisdom to plan and execute. We usually do not give much thought to how He keeps it all working. Listed below are a few interesting facts.

God's accuracy may be observed in the hatching of eggs... . . . For example: -the eggs of the potato bug hatch in 7 days; -those of the canary in 14 days; -those of the barnyard hen in 21 days; -The eggs of ducks and geese hatch in 28 days; -those of the mallard in 35 days; -The eggs of the parrot and the ostrich hatch in 42 days. (Notice, they are all divisible by seven, the number of days in a week!)

God's wisdom is seen in the making of an elephant. The four legs of this great beast all bend forward in the same direction. No other quadruped is so made. God planned that this animal would have a huge body, too large to live on two legs. For this reason He gave it four fulcrums so that it can rise from the ground easily.

The horse rises from the ground on its two front legs first. A cow rises from the ground with its two hind legs first. How wise the Lord is in all His works of creation!

God's wisdom is revealed in His arrangement of sections and segments, as well as in the number of grains.

Each watermelon has an even number of stripes on the rind. -Each orange has an even number of segments. -Each ear of corn has an even number of rows. -Each stalk of wheat has an even number of grains. -Every bunch of bananas has on its lowest row an even number of bananas, and each row decreases by one, so that one row has an even number and the next row an odd number.

All grains are found in even numbers on the stalks, and the Lord specified thirty fold, sixty fold, and a hundred fold all even numbers.

The waves of the sea roll in on shore twenty-six to the minute in all kinds of weather.

God has caused the flowers to blossom at certain specified times during the day. Linnaeus, the great botanist, once said that if he had a conservatory containing the right kind of soil, moisture and temperature, he could tell the time of day or night by the flowers that were open and those that were closed!

The Lord may order the lives of each of you in a beautiful way for His glory, if you will only entrust Him with your life. If you try to regulate your own life, it will only be a mess and a failure. Only the One Who made the brain and the heart can successfully guide them to a profitable end.

When you carry "the Bible", Satan has a headache, when you open it, he collapses, when he sees you are reading it, he loses his strength, AND when you stand on the Word of God, Satan can't hurt you!

**"Life without God is like
an unsharpened pencil – it has no point."**

Conclusion

I have only touched the surface of these Biblical truths. I tried to utilize other scholars and students of the Bible so you wouldn't conclude that the opinions expressed in this book were exclusively mine. I hope you were challenged to Think About It and were blessed as a result of reading it.

It is high time for Christians to be Believers and walk in the teaching of Jesus. This is the true way to walk in the Spirit and not the flesh. I realize also that some, if not most of my readers, are seeking the Lord and are o.k. with their Christian walk. If in fact that is you, I hope you have been refreshed in the Word and encouraged to continue in your faith. If this book has been a blessing to you, please email me and let me know. johnmarinelli@embarqmail.com. If you desire a spiral bound hard copy, send your check, made out to John Marinelli, to P. O. Box 831413 Ocala, FL 34472. The price is \$15, includes shipping.

Appendix

I have added some more Christian Poetry in hopes that you will be blessed. I encourage you to visit www.christianpoets.com for more Christian Poetry. We offer over 50 categories and poetry from Christian poets from all over the World.**out The Author**



Rev. John Marinelli

Rev. John Marinelli is married and the father of two grown children. He is the co-founder, with his wife Marilyn, of the Fellowship of Christian Poets, a worldwide non-profit Christian ministry that currently hosts the largest Christian poetry library in the world. He and Marilyn are also co-authors of "Together Forever" a marital enrichment home seminar. John has also authored "Rhyme Time", children's poetry book, "The Art of Writing Christian Poetry," "Pulpit Poems," and "Forever Thoughts From The Heart

of God”. He and his wife, are co-authors of, “The Story of Jesus”, a CD set in musical poetry.

Rev. Marinelli is a bible teacher, poet, songwriter and playwright. Over a dozen of his poems are displayed on three foot by four-foot signs in the 250-acre nature sanctuary of Holy Land USA in Bedford, Virginia. He is also an ordained minister, being associated with Faith Christian Fellowship International, a full gospel worldwide ministry. He has formed and been pastor of one church in Wisconsin and was the pastor of another in Alabama. He has also been a youth minister and evangelism director over the years.

John is now retired. He helps his wife with her animal rescue ministry, www.haveaheart.us and promotes fundraising events. He is the producer of The Johnny Mello Show, a 50/60 musical extravaganza.

Other published books by Rev. John Marinelli can be found in, “Book Offers” located on the home page of The Fellowship of Christian Poets, www.christianpoets.com.