

## CHAPTER FIVE – PART FOUR

### SECTION 3 — TITUS TO JUDE

#### The Epistle to Titus

Paul had commissioned Titus to set things in order for the Church in Crete. The believers in Crete lacked leadership and, as a result, were suffering. Because of false teachers who were preaching for dishonest gain, the morals of the congregation were disrupted. Paul relied on Titus to help them establish their leadership by appointing elders in every city and bringing in sound doctrine.

*For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. (Titus 1:10, 11)*

Titus was to instruct the congregation on the qualities of a sound Church, focused on Christ and the His coming glory rather than observing a list of rules that have no Biblical support, but come from the commandments of men.

*Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth...*

*To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving [in "the faith"] nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.*

*They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. (Titus 1:13-16)*

In **Titus 1:13-16**, Paul highlights the asceticism of the Cretan false teachers. They had identified certain foods and practices as defiled when

in reality it was their minds that were defiled and unbelieving. These teachings led to the initial corruption of the Church, when Satan placed his "tares" to deceive Christians and corrupt the Word of the kingdom. Satan accomplished this corruption by convincing the Church to become married to the world. Whereas the Church had been separate from the world system under Satan, now it was intertwined within that system of rulership and with all its lusts.

This is where the Church finds itself today. This letter to Titus is as relevant today as it was then. A clear indication can be seen through the deception, divisions and immorality in the Church today. The carnal Christians in Crete were living no different than unsaved individuals. Paul says *they profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient and disqualified for every good work (Titus 1:16).*

In order to bring the Church back to the truth, Paul wanted the Church to understand what is involved in attaining their salvation [of the soul].

*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age,*

*looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. (Titus 2:11-14)*

The Epistle to **Titus** centers on the Christian's "blessed hope" for the coming age. The word "hope" is the Greek translation (Strong's # G1680) for "*elpis*" meaning "to anticipate with pleasure; expectation or confidence." The word *hope* is associated with a "mature knowledge of the truth," which is inextricably connected to the Word of the kingdom, having to do with a future inheritance. In **Titus 2:12**, there is a connection to the two phrases, "*blessed hope and glorious appearing*;" the latter giving further description to the former. Christians who possess this hope are the ones who will be partakers of Christ's glory. For the last two thousand years, God has been looking for a bride for His Son. The bride will be "His own special people" who have produced good works for

Christ and who have kept the “blessed hope” of His "glorious appearing" and of entering His kingdom.

The whole purpose of Christ's death and resurrection was to give us this *blessed hope*, to offer us Millennial life. In **Titus 3:7**, the word “eternal” has been translated from the Greek word “aionios.” However, in this particular verse, the meaning is derived from its textual usage, not from the word itself. *Anionios* [from *aion*, Strong's #G165] refers to “a period of time; an age — a Messianic period.” In this case, the word “eternal” is best translated “age-lasting,” referring to the coming age, the Kingdom Age of 1000 years.

*...according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal [age-lasting] life. (Titus 3:5-7)*

The change in us must come from within, allowing the Spirit to change our hearts and minds. The blessed hope changes our perspective regarding our desires, determination and purpose. When we have this blessed hope we no longer seek for things on earth to satisfy our flesh, but we seek things above to satisfy and please Him. This is the hope that Paul wanted to convey through Titus to the Church in Crete.

This hope looks forward to the Day when we can partake of Christ's glory in the kingdom of the heavens. In that Day, the kingdom of heaven will resound with beautiful voices. The angels will cast their crowns before the throne of God and they will be given to the saints, the overcomers, who will now rule and reign with Christ on His throne. The overcomers will possess the image and likeness of God, and will be given authority to rule over the earth with great joy and anticipation. As king-priests, the overcomer's work will be the most stimulating and rewarding work imaginable. Imagine what it will be like to dwell with Him and have this most precious and profound life.

## The Epistle to Philemon

This short Epistle from Paul is addressed to Philemon, Apphia, Archippus and to the Colossian Church, but specifically is directed to Philemon as it uses the singular "I" and "you" throughout the Letter.

During the time the Epistle was written, a large portion of the population of the Roman Empire was made up of bondservants or slaves. These people were considered property and could be abused and even killed by their masters. But within the Church, wealthy slave owners and their slaves worshiped together as equals. Some slaves were gifted spiritual leaders and ministered the Word to people far above their status (according to the world). The Church evidently was meeting in Philemon's house and he was likely an active leader in the Church.

Onesimus, a slave of Philemon, ran away and became a Christian under Paul's ministry. In this Epistle, Paul tells Philemon that it was God's plan that Onesimus ran away, as it led to his salvation. Furthermore, he was very useful for the work of the Lord. Paul wanted to keep Onesimus in Rome, helping in the ministry, giving aid to him while in prison. He wanted Onesimus to "*minister to me in my chains for the gospel*" (**Philemon 1:13**). Paul told Philemon that he was sending Onesimus back to him for a decision. Now that Onesimus was a believer in the faith, Paul encourages Philemon to view him as a "beloved brother" and no longer as a slave.

Before Paul makes his plea to Philemon to keep Onesimus, he first addresses Philemon's faith and love toward his brethren. This is the subject in which his plea would be built upon. Paul was overjoyed with Philemon's love for the Church and that he was sharing his faith in word and in deed.

Therefore, Paul pleads with Philemon that he would forgive Onesimus for his transgressions and offered to pay for any loss Philemon suffered because of Onesimus's actions in the past. Paul promises to pay his debt to assure the runaway slave's gracious reception by his owner. Paul wanted Philemon's consent to keep Onesimus with him. As a Christian brother, faithful to God, Paul is expecting Philemon to be compassionate

to his former slave and to be obedient to God in this matter. But whether Philemon chooses to do what is correct or not is between him and God.

For what does God say about how bondservants and masters should treat each other?

*Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers,*

*but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.*

*And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him. (Ephesians 6:5-9)*

In **Ephesians 6:5-9**, bondservants of Christ (Christians) are to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, so that our conduct will be honorable amongst the Gentiles with whom we dwell as pilgrims in this world. Likewise, Christian masters are to be gentle with their bondservants, knowing that they will be judged by their Master in heaven. As employees, we are to be submissive to our boss or supervisor where we work, whether he is a saved or unsaved individual. Likewise, Christian supervisors are to be gentle to their employees as obedient sons of God.

*Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.*

*For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. (1 Peter 2:18-20; cf Isaiah 53:7-9)*

A Christian bondservant is commanded to be submissive to his master whether that master is "good and gentle" or "harsh." If the bondservant endures grief and suffering because of a constant harsh master and does not revile against him, then this is commendable to God and leads to the salvation of his soul. Jesus Christ, being our greatest example, did not revile back when he was being accused wrongfully by the Pharisees, but stood silent, despising the shame and enduring the Cross.

*For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return, when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. (1 Peter 2:21-23)*

Likewise, Philemon had the opportunity to extend forgiveness, love and grace to his slave, just as God did by sending His Son to die for us while we were yet His enemies.

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us...For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Romans 5:8-10)*

It is therefore apparent that we should be submissive to harsh masters, "for to this you were called." Suffering always precedes glory. This is a requirement of faithful obedience to the commands of Scripture in whatever circumstances we find ourselves. Therefore "suffering wrongfully" (suffering for doing right) involves putting to death the deeds of the flesh so as not to react in a reviling way. In this way, we are walking according to the Spirit and this is pleasing to God.

*Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance, for you serve the Lord Christ.*

*But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.*  
**(Colossians 3:22-4:1)**

If we are walking according to the flesh, "suffering wrongfully" would be an extremely difficult thing to do. However, if we allow the Spirit to control our actions when we are accused wrongfully, knowing that we must suffer for the sake of serving Christ and to receive the reward of the inheritance into the kingdom, then it would be easier to do. Focus on Christ when you suffer wrongfully and not on men. The same applies to masters or supervisors. If they are walking according to the flesh, it would be difficult to extend humbleness, gentleness and fairness as equals, but not if they are focusing on the fear of the Lord.

It is clear to see that Onesimus was living according to the flesh when he ran away from his master, because he did not yet have the Spirit in him. But after he became a new man in Christ, he made the choice to return to Philemon and ask for forgiveness. Even so, what is more pleasing to God is if Onesimus, returning as a Christian, experiences harsh treatment from his master and he does not revile back in any way, but stays silent, focusing on the promises of God. The natural response to this would be to retaliate, but retaliation was not Christ's response and neither should it be ours if we are reviled. God says in **1 Corinthians 4:12**, *And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure...*

A Christian's old walk, according to the course of this world, led him to be un-submissive to his master, spouse, or parents, and therefore not obedient to God. But because of his new walk (in the Spirit), he now practices obedience to the Lord and is submissive no matter the circumstance. He desires then to draw near to the salvation of his soul.

*Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.*  
**(1 Peter 4:19)**

## The Epistle to the Hebrews

In the opening Epistle to the Hebrews, the author does not identify himself and it is left unknown as to who wrote this Letter and when. What we do know is that the structure of this Letter is quite unique among the Epistles of the New Testament. The author, led by the Breath of God, structures the Letter around five major warnings to Christians. So what is at stake? Obviously, if God presents warnings to His sons then it must mean there is something to lose. What can Christians lose?

The central subject matter surrounding the Hebrew warnings has to do with the salvation of the soul. And these warnings presented by the Spirit of God revert back through the use of Old Testament Scriptures throughout the entire Book of Hebrews.

*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*

*who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. (Hebrews 1:1-4)*

(Companion Scriptures to **Hebrews 1:1-4** are revealed in **Colossians 1:15-20; John 1:1-4; Genesis 1, 2.**)

In order to properly understand the reason for these warnings and the enormity of what is at stake, the author of Hebrews directs our attention to God's plans and purposes for His only begotten firstborn Son, Jesus Christ, who is the heir of all things. **Hebrews 1:1** begins with the foundation, Christ, Who, in the beginning, made the worlds and then made man *in His image and likeness* — for this purpose: *to have dominion*. Because of the fall of man, we see God's redemptive work of bringing man back to the purpose for which he was originally created: *to have*



*dominion*. Therefore, these warnings have to do with *firstborn sons and thereby with rulership*.

After the fall, man no longer possessed the image and likeness of God because of sin. As a three-part being, man's spirit died, the soul became corrupted and the body began to decay. Adam and the Woman lost their covering of glory and found themselves naked. And because their spirit was dead, they were no longer in the three-part "image" of God. Furthermore, they no longer had the covering of glory, which denotes the purpose for their creation: *to have dominion or to rule*, therefore they no longer possessed the "likeness" of God.

For this reason, God began his redemptive work with the sacrificial death and shed blood of a lamb, using the skin as a covering for Adam and the Woman. The sacrificial death and shed blood of a substitute lamb had always been the means for covering sin as recorded in **Hebrews 9:22**,

*And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.*

Then, God created his firstborn son, Israel, through adoption. Throughout the generations thereafter, Israel fell into disobedience. Their redemption out of Egypt required the death of a lamb and the placing of blood over the doorposts in order for death to pass over them. But regardless of their salvation, Israel continued in disobedience. God then sent His only begotten Son to minister to Israel so that they may be restored and fulfill God's purpose for them: *to have dominion*. But Israel rejected this offer and their Messiah. Therefore, Christ laid down his life as the substitute Lamb to take away the sins of the whole world, to save His people from death.

Jesus Christ came in the flesh as a humble Servant of God, made lower than the angels (*You have made him a little lower than the angels-**Hebrews 2:7***), so that He could lay down his life as the sacrificial Lamb, enduring the horrific task of being humiliated, persecuted, and nailed on the tree for the sake of not just covering sin, but taking away sin once and for all. Because of His death (and our faith), we have our eternal salvation secure. And because of His resurrection, we have been given the

opportunity to have life in the Millennial kingdom, *to have dominion* with Christ.

Christ's death and shed blood made possible the creation of the Church, God's adopted firstborn son (a positional standing to be realized yet future.) For those who overcome, they will be adopted into the kingdom as "firstborn sons" of God--- for only firstborn sons can rule and reign. *For the goal that was set before Him*, Jesus Christ suffered and died knowing that His obedience to God would result in obtaining His inheritance as King-Priest on that Seventh Day.

At this present time, He is seated at the right hand of the Father: *"Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."* Christ is presently ministering as our High Priest according to the order of Aaron. He will occupy the position of King-Priest in the order of Melchizedek during the Messianic Era. In the Old Testament, Melchizedek, a type of Christ, was a king-priest of Salem (meaning "king of peace").

*This hope we have as an anchor of the soul...where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 6:19, 20)*

*Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man...*

*But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. (Hebrews 8:1-6)*

Christ, through His Word, ministers to us all things surrounding the inheritance of the kingdom, in order that we may obtain it just as He did. Furthermore, He has left us His Spirit to guide us into all truth and to lead us into all righteousness which will be able to save our soul on that coming Day. Because of Christ, we now possess the "image" of God again, our spirit made alive. The moment we believed in Christ, God breathed the Holy Spirit into our spirit. We now have the "image" (a tripartite being) but we lack the "likeness" of God, which is our glorified

body, and this will not take place unless we have been found worthy at the Judgment seat of Christ on that Day.

At present, Christ is our Mediator, making intercession for us when we sin. When we confess our sins, He is just to forgive us our sins.

*Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25)*

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)*

Christ came in the likeness of man, *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, but without sin, apart from the covering of glory. He was sent to Earth as the “*Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” so that He through death could destroy Satan and the power of death. Christ’s death fulfilled God’s will and was accepted for man’s eternal redemption. And because Jesus suffered in the flesh He can relate and provide aid to us when we suffer and are tempted by Satan.

*Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

*For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (Hebrews 2:14-18)*

Christ is anticipating that Day when His role as King-Priest over the earth will be manifested. His work in the Millennium will be to destroy all unrighteousness, to rule and reign until “*He has put all things under His feet.*” The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death. Once this has been completed, covering a period of one thousand years, then the

kingdom will be delivered up to God the Father for the Eternal Ages beyond (**1 Corinthians 15:24-28**).

What does this Day mean for Christians? For those who overcome, Christ promises that He will grant them His glory, sharing the throne with Him in the kingdom of the heavens and being exalted above the angels on that Seventh Day. When Christ takes the scepter of rulership from Satan and his fallen angels, immediately before the Millennial Kingdom, the whole purpose of man's creation will be fulfilled. Angels were never in God's plans to rule and reign forever. This was God's purpose for man. Angels were meant to be *ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14)*. Perhaps Satan knowing this, out of envy and pride, fell and took one-third of the angels with him. And for this reason, he is going to and fro the earth, deceiving and tempting Christians, for he knows that he has little time left.

Following the Messianic Era, Christ will continue to reign as King-Priest, not just over the earth but over the entire universe on *the throne of God and of the Lamb [Revelation 22:1-3]*. The overcomers will continue to occupy the throne with Him [**Revelation 21:5**] and Christ will also continue to rule over *the throne of his father David over the house of Jacob forever [Luke 1:32, 33]*.

This is God's awesome plan and purpose. Such an *enormous* offer we have been granted! Even so, many will take this offer lightly and many will fall away after they have received this offer. Hence, we are given the warnings. These warnings simply have to do with different facets of teaching surrounding Christians either realizing or not realizing the inheritance of the firstborn at a future time. And the Lord presents examples drawn from the experiences of the Israelites as they either realized or failed to realize the inheritance of the firstborn in past time.

**The first of the five major warnings** in this Epistle deals with "*SO GREAT A SALVATION.*" It is not the salvation we presently possess, the salvation of our spirit, the free gift of eternal life, but the salvation that is to come, the salvation of our souls, which requires our faithful obedience to God's Word in order to inherit.

*Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,*

*how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? (Hebrews 2:1-4)*

If we do not *give the more earnest heed* to all that the Lord Jesus Christ taught during His ministry concerning the coming Seventh Day and the establishment of the heavenly kingdom (with Christ as the Head and His coheirs sharing His throne), then we run the risk of *drifting away* and thereby neglecting or caring nothing for this *so great a salvation*. This neglect will inevitably result in the greatest loss ever imagined.

What does it mean *to give the more earnest heed* to this *so great a salvation*? This phrase can be translated to say:

*"We must superabundantly pay attention to this so mighty a salvation,"* or it can also be translated to say, *"We must more frequently hold the mind to this so vast a salvation."*  
(Strong's # G4056, G4337 and G5082)

If we keep this great salvation in our hearts and minds daily, then we are walking in the right path, seeking the kingdom first and producing good works, allowing us to one day realize this *"so great a salvation."* But if we do not focus on this great salvation daily, then the Word says that we will neglect it and drift away, so that eventually we care nothing for it. If we fail to keep our eyes focused on the coming kingdom, then we will fall back into the world, into Satan's territory. This is why our cares are not to be of this world, but on things above.

Numerous examples set forth in the Old Testament with the nation of Israel are given for our admonition. The saved Jews, who believed God and put the blood over the doorposts, were delivered out of Egypt, passing through dry land and up from out of the waters (depicting baptism), were

offered the land of promise flowing with milk and honey *if* they were obedient to the commands of God. But Israel did not give the more earnest heed to their great salvation and this led to their transgressions and disobedience. They turned away from their inheritance, reverting to sin. And because of this, they received their just reward -- destruction and loss of inheritance. Did they escape their judgment? No! Therefore, the answer to the question: "*how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?*" is "we won't."

We have been given the Word and the indwelling Holy Spirit to include the fruits (**Galatians 5:22**) and gifts of the Holy Spirit (ministry, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading and showing mercy: **Romans 12:1-8**), to apply to our hearts and minds daily. We have no excuses. If we fail to apply and we drift away, we will be left speechless at the end of the age. An example of this very thing is set forth in the parable of the wedding feast:

*So he (Christ) said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "For many are called, but few are chosen."*  
**(Matthew 22:12-14)**

We must continually focus on the enormous sacrifice God made of His Son because He loved us and is faithful to keep His plans and promises. Therefore, we must be faithful to Him. We must love Him by not neglecting this So Great a Salvation, for if we do then at the Judgment seat Christ may say,

*"Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent."***(Revelation 2:4, 5)**

Rather, let us faithfully work in pleasing God through the Spirit and in keeping our focus on the inheritance out ahead. If we do, we will hear His words at the Judgment seat proclaiming,

*"Well done good and faithful servant! You were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord."* **(Matthew 25:23)**

*"You have been faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."* **(Revelation 2:10b)**

**The second of the five major warnings** concerning "So Great a Salvation" is directed to: *"holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling..."* We can determine within the context of this second warning that God is addressing *Christians of the heavenly calling*. We can further understand this calling by drawing from the type, *Israel's earthly calling*.

This warning uses examples from the Old Testament surrounding the nation of Israel to show how they lost their inheritance and did not enter His rest. Many theologians teach that the first generation Israel was a lost people, but this is entirely not so. The nation of Israel was saved as recorded in the following Scriptures:

*So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.* **(Exodus 14:30, 31)**

*Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink.*

*For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ, But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.* **(1 Corinthians 10:1-5)**

The Israelites are God's chosen people, His firstborn sons, but because of their unfaithfulness and disobedience, the Lord banned them from entering the Promised Land. God judged them for being unfaithful to Him.

*Because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it. (Numbers 14:22, 23)*

*The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the Land which I swore I would make you dwell in. But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. (Numbers 14:29-31)*

These things became our examples, we (Christians) also having been redeemed by the blood. The warnings given to Israel are no different for Christians ---- if we fail to be faithful to God's Word, we also will surely not enter the Promised Land, the heavenly land to which we have been called.

*Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.*

*Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. (1 Corinthians 10:6-12)*

Judgment fell upon the people of Israel and it will fall upon Christians as well. When our focus and love for other things in this world takes precedence over Christ, then we are committing idolatry, such as the love



of money, selfish ambitions, material possessions, and the like. At Christ's second coming, most Christians will be busy eating, drinking and playing just as Israel did before judgment fell upon them. Throughout the entire Word, God makes it clear that a condition must be met in order to partake of the inheritance. This condition is *"faithful obedience to His Word."*

*And they have not known My ways. So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest. (Hebrews 3:10, 11)*

This "rest" relates back to the beginning of **Genesis 2:1-3**, patterned after the six days of work, followed by a Seventh Day of rest which God blessed and sanctified, as it pointed to the future Sabbath Rest, the Messianic Era and the establishment of the kingdom of the heavens. If we are to enter His rest, enter the Millennial kingdom to come, we must take His Word very seriously. Entering into this future "rest" currently requires diligent work on the Spirit-filled Christian, allowing the Holy Spirit to govern his life continually.

The first warning is about neglecting *So Great a Salvation*, the salvation of the soul. The second warning is about failing to be "doers of the Word." A doer of the Word is one who is faithfully obedient to God's Word -- such as being set apart from the world, living holy, exhorting and teaching others in the faith, suffering for Christ's sake, and dying to flesh. Failing to do these things will result in us not entering His Seventh day of rest.

*Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. (Hebrews 4:1)*

It is only through the knowledge of His Word that we can realize what it is we need to do and what is at stake. The fear of not entering His rest will motivate us to work hard at being found worthy. This is the fear of the Lord, the fear of standing before Him in judgment on that future Day.

*And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:13)*

**The third of the five major warnings** to Christians simply magnifies the importance of the previous warnings concerning "So Great a Salvation" and gives the consequence for falling away. In **Hebrews 5:12**, importance is stressed in continuing our maturity in the meat of the Word, the Word of the kingdom. The author was addressing a group of Christians who at one time had been advancing towards spiritual maturity, but had regressed to the point of being spiritually immature once again; and was incapable of understanding anything but milk. The author warns the Church about the dangers of an immature spiritual condition. Though they had plenty of time to continue in the faith and to teach others, they remained complacent in their knowledge. Their negligence resulted in them needing to be taught again "*the principles of the oracles of God,*" which is based on the foundation set forth in the beginning account of **Genesis**, having to do with an inheritance on the seventh Day. Their regression was due to their carelessness and unbelief in the Word of the Kingdom, only desiring the milk of the Word. But they were warned that milk was not sufficient to produce good works acceptable to God.

*For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. (Hebrews 5:13)*

The milk of the Word strictly pertains to the gospel of grace. The Church was seen repeatedly discussing "*the elementary principles of Christ,*" which is the beginning point of a new believer's faith. The elementary principles of Christ were revealed to be the doctrine of baptisms, of healings and blessings, and repentance from dead works (sin). The Church regressed, speaking repeatedly of the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment for unsaved individuals; and failed to continue in the faith and teach Christians about their resurrection, purpose and judgment for the Messianic Era.

There is a real danger for Christians who do not diligently continue in the Word of the kingdom, if they fall away and commit the sin of unbelief — God may never permit them to "move on" to maturity. Therefore, the author urges the Church not to remain complacent, but to leave the basics and *go on to perfection*.

Solid food, or the meat of the Word, brings one to a level of maturity, to the deep things of God. This enables a Christian to realize an inheritance

and to know the rules pertaining to the qualification of this inheritance. Furthermore, the meat of the Word enables the Christian to discern both good and evil. The Christian is able to discern between true and false messages and gain strength and protection against spiritual warfare.

*The progression of the Word does not end until death or rapture.* One must continually prepare himself and remain focused on the goal out ahead. The peril of not progressing or remaining focused on this “so great a salvation” is very serious for Christians. The following Scripture is the third warning of **Hebrews 6:4-6**:

*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.*

Christians who were once enlightened are those who possess the full knowledge (*epignosis*), the Word of the kingdom. They have tasted the heavenly gift, meaning they possess the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Next, they have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, meaning they have allowed the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth and righteousness. They also have tasted the good Word of God; therefore they are skilled in the Word of righteousness. Last, they have tasted the powers of the age to come, meaning they are skilled in the knowledge of prophecy --- particularly, in the second coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom.

Then, after they have been given this incredible offer and gift of knowledge, if they fall away from “the faith,” God says it will be **impossible** to restore them again to repentance. The word, “fall away,” refers to deliberate “apostasy” (*a defection from the faith*). To turn back is a slap in the face to God. It is as though they crucify Jesus Christ all over again and put Him to an open shame. Therefore, severe judgment awaits one who willfully forsakes. Even though they repent (change their mind), God will *not* change His mind. The severity of their judgment will be great at the Judgment seat of Christ.

A regression from that which they had once believed to a point where they turned away from their inheritance and what God had said can be seen in the example presented with Israel refusing to go into the land that God had given over to them as an inheritance. Then, in **Numbers 14:39-42**, having realized what they had done Israel repented and later chose to move into the land to receive their inheritance, but God would not permit them to do so. Though they repented, the Lord would not permit them to inherit because they had crossed over a boundary from which there was no return. The same applies to Christians. God will not permit them to make that journey to the kingdom if they fall away, *if* they have reached a point of no return, regardless if they repent. If they have not reached a point of no return, then God *may* permit them to move on. God's lack of permission is in direct response to our choices. We must never "fall away" or apostatize.

The Books of **second Peter** and **Jude** cover great detail concerning apostasy. Peter describes the strict judgment that these apostates will receive from the Lord in **2 Peter 2:20-22**:

*For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.*

*For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, then having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb:*

*"A dog returns to his own vomit," and, a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."*

Throughout the Word of God there are many warnings concerning apostasy and the dangerous consequence that it poses. Every mature Christian has the potential to fall away from the faith and this is the reason the Word *pleads* with us to maintain our focus and hope on the upward call of Jesus.

*For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Hebrews 6:10-12)*

**The fourth warning in Hebrews 10:26** surround the judgment of Christians in a more intense manner than the previous warning. After we have been given the mature knowledge of the kingdom we are *"to hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful."* And then we are *"to consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."*

*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope* is to hold firm (with every muscle of our being) the confident expectation of the future Millennial kingdom. Then we are to *stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together* and this we are to do because of the tremendous impact believers can have on each other. This is why the author exhorts believers who are like-minded to gather together. "Exhorting" means coming alongside and inspiring one another with the Truth.

If we do not do these things, then we are weakening our defense system against the evil one and in time we may be led astray. Without even realizing, we can fall away and once again be intertwined with the things of the world until we are completely withdrawn from the faith. Then we have committed the willful sin, the deliberate sin of apostasy for which there is no repentance.

*For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. (Hebrews 10:26, 27)*

This warning is not directed to immature Christians, but to those who are mature. It is directed towards Christians who have the full knowledge of

the Truth, the Word of the kingdom, and then apostatize. In order to distinguish the severity of this punishment surrounding this “willful sin,” the author first directs the attention to the nation of Israel and their idolatry. When any Israelite rejected the Law of Moses he was sentenced to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Keeping this in mind, the attention then reverts to “the willful sin.”

*Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he (Christian) be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:29)*

The judgment for Israel’s idolatry was death by stoning. If idolatry was punished with physical death, how much worse punishment should someone receive who treats the Word of Christ with disrespect? Apostates are regarded as those who consider the blood of Christ of no value or of little importance — a common thing, as in any ordinary man’s or animal’s sacrifice.

When apostates have committed this willful sin they have insulted the Spirit of grace, Who teaches us all things pertaining to godly wisdom. A believer who commits this “willful sin” or apostasy will be judged with a punishment worse than physical death. And to have deliberately committed this sin and then stand before the Lord at His Judgment seat will be the most terrifying experience. We see this in **Hebrews 10:30, 31**:

*For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Therefore, we must engage this warning in a very serious manner. We must be strong in the Lord so that we do not apostatize. If we remain steadfast, having done the will of God, He will reward us.

*"For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."*

*But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. (Hebrews 10:37-39)*

**The fifth and final warning of Hebrews 12:25** is revealed following the examples of the heroes of faith from chapter **eleven** and the race of faith from chapter **twelve**. All of these heroes were faithfully obedient to God's Word, looking beyond their present world to a heavenly inheritance. Though the promise of the heavenly inheritance was not received during their lifetime, they were assured of it, remaining faithful until death.

*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11:8-10)*

The testimony of Abraham, as well as the other heroes of faith, was an example written for our admonition. Christians are to take these examples and to model the faith of these heroes. *Faith* is simply believing everything God says in His Word. This is true faith; this is Scriptural faith. Faith means trusting fully in God's promises and in Christ's return. And because we believe in His Word, we obey His commandments. Faithful obedience on the part of the hearers of His Word will be the basis in which Christians will be evaluated at the Judgment seat of Christ. This will determine if they will receive rewards in the kingdom or not.

When we have faith in Christ's return and the coming kingdom, we are motivated to obey and endure. This hope instills a mindset of receiving Christ's grandest share of estate. There is also the present hope of seeing Jesus Christ in His glory face to face and sharing life with Him in His kingdom. This is the reason why we run the race with endurance and perseverance. This is why we endure trials and suffering. This is also why we endure chastening from God, more so because God does it for our profit, so that we may be prepared as partakers of His holiness. All this may be painful to us at present, but afterwards it will yield its rewards. Consider it a competitive race that you are training for. The training and

competition may be painful, but afterwards it seems well worth the efforts when you receive the rewards with great enthusiasm.

Overcomers will be surrounded with a glorious company in the kingdom of the heavens, as **Hebrews 12:22-24** so describes,

*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*

Yet, in knowing of this tremendous offer, there are some who will ignore it, fall away and reject it. This brings in the fifth warning, which is a command for Christians to hear His Word and not reject it.

*See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth;*

*but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. (Hebrews 12:25-27)*

Christians who fall away and reject the Word of the kingdom, who stop their ears from listening to the voice of God, shall not escape their judgment at the Judgment seat of Christ, but shall be removed from the kingdom for one thousand years. Like Esau, who lost his inheritance, *who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.* (**Hebrews 12:16b, 17**)



The fear of the Lord should be reason alone to not disrespect Him. An example of what this fear looks like is shown with the nation of Israel during the Exodus. If the intensity of God's voice which shook the earth during that time caused fear in the hearts of the Israelites because of their unfaithfulness, how much more will the magnitude of His voice which will shake both heaven and earth produce terror in the hearts of unfaithful Christians on that Day?

*For our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:29)*

Although the warnings are severe, they are just and they should produce an incentive to remain faithful. Following these five strict warnings, the writer of Hebrews encourages the readers to "run with endurance" and exhorts them to keep the faith and persevere. This Letter is one of motivation and admonition. Let us therefore comfort ourselves with knowing that God is always faithful with His promises.

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8)*

Let us constantly bring to mind, *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (Hebrews 12:28)*

## THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

During the time James wrote his Epistle, the Church was made up mostly of Jews who became Christians. This was the beginning of Church history when very few Gentiles were added to the Church. Jerusalem was the place where the Church began and was the center of Christian worship in those first few years. This is why this Epistle is addressed *to the twelve tribes who are scattered abroad*, to Christians living outside of Palestine. James wanted to encourage and exhort the converted Jews who had been scattered amongst the Gentile nations because of ongoing persecution. Therefore, James begins his Epistle to Christians who were Jews by birth, exhorting them to be strong in the faith and endure trials. "*Patient endurance during trials*" was the center of James' message surrounding

the salvation of the soul. Trials are testing's of our faith which produces strength, patience and maturity:

*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (James 1:2-5)*

Why were the scattered Christians to consider their trials as *all joy*? These trials were for the testing of their faith to bring them to a level of maturity in order to prepare them as king-priests for the coming kingdom.

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:10)*

Exercising patience is the manner in which we are to endure trials. The Greek definition for *patience* (Strong's #G5281) is “cheerful or hopeful endurance; constancy.”

In **Hebrews 6:11, 12**, we see that having this "living hope" of a glorified future with Christ will help us to maintain the faith and patience we need to endure these trials:

*And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

We are to establish and hold fast the hope of glory in our hearts and minds, looking unto the coming of the Lord.

*Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. (James 5:7, 8)*

We are to set our minds strictly on things above and not on things of this world. The world deters us from our heavenly inheritance and provokes us to embrace deceitful lusts. One of these deceitful lusts is the love of money. The desire and love for riches only leads to destruction; *He who trusts in his riches will fall* (**Proverbs 11:28**).

*Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.*

*But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.*

*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* (**1 Timothy 6:6-10**)

Those who desire to be rich lack godliness and contentment which leaves a hole filled with greed. This greed drives individuals into temptation, snares, and foolish and harmful lusts. Paul was painting a graphic word-picture of a greedy person drowning under the tremendous weight of material desires. In actuality, worldly wealth brings a false sense of security, for it quickly passes away as no one can carry anything out of this world. A life focused on material things produces only pain. But true riches are in the heavenly kingdom, which are secure and will last forever. James provided the following warning to the rich and those who desire worldly wealth:

*Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away.* (**James 1:9, 10**)

Money in and of itself is not the problem, but the love of money is. The love of money can drive a person to do evil. It causes Christians to be blinded by greed and materialism to such a degree that they lose focus on the Lord. Greediness may even cause a believer to stray away from the faith completely.

This warning is given to those whose desire and love of money is greater than the desire and love of God. Rich men or those who desire worldly wealth are self-seeking, greedy, and carnal. They care nothing for God's heavenly riches or to know Him. Their pursuits are strictly for storing up treasure for themselves and living a life of pleasure and luxury. The end result for them is this—that *the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.* (**James 1:11**)

A picture of the rich man is presented by Jesus in **Luke 12:15-21** in the parable of the rich fool:

*And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." Then He spoke a parable to them, saying:*

*"The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years, take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'*

*But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."*

In the parable of the rich fool, the rich man is described as being self-centered, involved with the world and all its lusts. His main concern was his wealth; therefore at the Judgment seat of Christ, he will lose his soul for age-lasting life.

*"Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*(**Matthew 6:19-21**)

God commands that we abstain from worldly lusts and fleshly desires. The desire and love of money derives from the lust of the flesh and is not of God but of the world and therefore of the god of this world — Satan. Jesus says,

*“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24)*

Part of our sanctification involves being set apart from the world to pursue godliness. The poor man, or the brother of humble circumstances, does not lust over worldly wealth. He is a humble servant of God and seeks Him first above material possessions. He is content with what he has and is not self-seeking, but seeks to help others in need. And this is the direction an overcomer is to take, to *let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. (Hebrews 13:5)*

Note what Jesus says in comparing the rich man to the poor man:

*“Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God....But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.” (Luke 6:20, 24)*

Another cross-reference passage can be seen in **Luke 18:18-25**:

*Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery; Do not murder; Do not steal; Do not bear false witness; Honor your father and your mother.” And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”*

*So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.*

*And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*

The rich ruler is not asking about receiving the free gift of eternal life. He already possesses spirit salvation because he knows the commandments and he tells Jesus that he has followed them. The young ruler is asking about the *inheritance* (soul salvation) as he uses the word "*inherit*" eternal [age-lasting] life. He realizes that he lacks the qualification to inherit and Jesus makes him aware that it is because the man's focus is on his riches.

But the young ruler was not willing to give up all and follow Christ. His heart and soul remained in his riches and worldly possessions. The focus presented here is that we not covet or desire worldly riches but that we desire to follow Christ. If we have been blessed with riches, we are to give to those in need. Our goal should be to live as humble servants of God. Our actions will discover our condition on that future Day of the Lord. We can choose to either live for the desires of the flesh or live for Christ — we cannot choose both. Satan, through his "tares," has deceived many Christians into believing that God desires we seek worldly wealth in *this* age in order to obtain happiness. But this is a lie of the devil. In doing so, the Christian's primary focus becomes self-centered, desiring only the things of this world.

We must overcome trials by dying to flesh and walking according to the Spirit. Do not be deceived into thinking that someone else's pathway is easier than your own. Such thinking would be contrary to the evidence of Scripture, for Scripture repeatedly says that *all* Christians must go through tribulations and must endure in order to enter the kingdom of God:

*...strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in "the faith", and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22)*

*Resist him (Satan), steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish,*

*strengthen, and settle you. (1 Peter 5:9, 10)*

Everyone experiences trials and tribulations in their life as a test of their faith towards God. Temptations, trials, tests and tribulations carry nearly the same meaning and falls upon every individual for two reasons: One, to be tested with a solicitation to evil (by Satan) and two, with a solicitation to faith and righteousness in order to strengthen (allowed by God). It is Satan who attacks and tempts with trials and tribulations under God's control. We have the choice whether to follow our flesh or the Spirit. When we are drawn away from God by our own desires, this produces sin and we are overcome. But when we remain faithful during trials, we are strengthened and we overcome. Trials produce strength and maturity through faith. And the greater the faith is, the greater the trials may be. This moves us from faith to faith and from glory to glory. **James 1:12-15** reveals that temptations are a test of our faith.

*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

*Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*

*But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death (separation from God).*

If necessary, God allows Satan to tempt believers to test their faith, but God Himself does not tempt. God can only act in one way: He can only act righteously. There is no evil in God — therefore, He cannot tempt for evil. He cannot choose evil. What God does do is provide everything we need in order to overcome. The Scriptures have been given to us, the mysteries of the Kingdom opened to us and the admonition of the Lord made available to us through the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit in order for us to be victorious in the race of the faith. These are His good and perfect gifts, holy and acceptable, which is the Word of truth, the knowledge of the kingdom.

In summary, tests or trials in Scripture come in two forms. First, God uses trials in connection with the maturing process, always for good, with a view to the Christian being approved at the Judgment seat of Christ. Second, Satan tempts individuals in his efforts to bring about defeat in a Christian's life.

*Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. (James 1:16-18)*

The qualities needed under trials and tribulations are these good and perfect gifts that God provides. We must hear them, through the Word of truth, and then do them. But first we must lay aside all filthiness and wickedness, to include pride, wrath, and evil speaking in order to receive the Word of the kingdom with meekness.

*Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:21)*

The Greek definition for *filthiness* (Strong's #G4507) is "dirtiness; unclean; unrighteous;" in the moral sense it means to be dirty minded or carnally minded. In **Romans 8:7**, we see that the carnally minded, the mind of the flesh, is an enemy of God because it can never submit itself to His commandments. And because a carnally minded Christian has a dulled spiritual perception, he will be restricted from receiving the Word of God in a proper manner. The Christian must put away the carnal and renew his spiritual mind so that he is morally clean.

In this way, he will be able to receive the Word of truth. In addition, the Christian is to lay aside the overflow of wickedness in his life. The Greek definition for *overflow* (Strong's #H7857) means "to gush; to inundate; to drown" and "wickedness" (Strong's #G4189) means "to plot; vicious; evil; to harm." This denotes an extreme measure of sin. Transformation must take place from the "old man" to a "new man in Christ" in order to receive the implanted Word. The word *implanted* means "to place on the inside."



*And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. (John 14:16, 17)*

*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (John 14:26)*

The indwelling Holy Spirit teaches us *all* things pertaining to His plan and purpose for us. When we have fixated our minds in the Word, laying aside the old man and transforming to the new spiritual man, then the indwelling Holy Spirit can assist us to grow spiritually. This enables us to do good works and to overcome trials.

*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)*

During trials, we are to trust in the Lord and be bountiful in prayer that He will make the way of escape; that we may be able to bear it and overcome. It is our faith and works, our faithful obedience to God's word, which will bring about our justification at the Judgment seat of Christ. Faith and works go hand in hand; faith produces works; and works makes faith perfect, meaning "mature" or "complete." Our works is a declaration of our faith, just as baptism is a declaration of our faith — both relative to the salvation of our soul.

When the Lord allowed Abraham to be tested with the sacrifice of his son, Isaac, Abraham reveals remarkable faith knowing that God would provide a substitute. Because of Abraham's faithful obedience, God was faithful with His promises to him.

*Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And*

*the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. (James 2:21-23)*

In connection with the saving of the soul, James deals extensively with *faith* and *works*. The passage in **James 2:23** deals with Christians relative to faithfulness and the millennial kingdom, not with the unsaved relative to eternal verities. "Works" emanate out of faithfulness, something which can only occur among those who are spiritually alive, able to act by faith in God. The Epistle of James pertains to the saved, not the unsaved. By faith, Christians have the ability to produce good works, with the proffered kingdom in view. And by faith, Christians have the ability to endure trials, realizing an inheritance with Christ in the coming kingdom.

We have Christ as our greatest example. Immediately before Christ began His ministry, He asked John the Baptist to baptize Him. John tried to prevent this, but Jesus said to him in **Matthew 3:15**,

*"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."*

Christ was setting the pattern, showing us the Way to the kingdom. A believer must acknowledge his commitment to be faithfully obedient (faith and works) to the Lord for inclusion into the coming kingdom.

Immediately after His baptism, God permitted Satan to tempt Jesus. With each temptation, Jesus did not condemn Satan, but rather drew near to God by quoting the Scriptures.

These temptations proved that Jesus was the eternal Son of God, our Redeemer, absolutely incapable of sin. Through suffering, Jesus was faithful to the end, even to His death. We also must suffer and endure through trials to prove our worthiness to God.

*Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in*

*the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. (1 Peter 4:1, 2)*

*For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps. (1 Peter 2:21)*

*...that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. (1 Thessalonians 3:3)*

Observing how Christ handled His trials and sufferings give us insight as to how we may endure our trials. This is part of every Christian's calling, a condition that must be met in order to be partakers with Christ. Therefore, trials should come as no surprise to those who are mature.

If a Christian is well armed (being led by the Holy Spirit) against the temptations of the devil (temptations through the lusts of the flesh) he will be delivered by God. His prayer should be that God "...not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (**Matthew 6:13**). However, if the Christian is not well armed, God may not assist in delivering him. Trials come to all. God allows trials for good, in order to refine, restore and strengthen with a view to his future redemption. Yet, Satan tempts for the purpose of making the Christian succumb to evil.

The Word of God is our defense against Satan's temptations and is able to prepare us when trials come our way. Through the practice of abiding in God's commandments, we will learn to put away our old self so that during our trials, the practical righteousness of God will be evident in our lives. A part of this involves putting away the evil tongue.

*But no one can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. (James 3:8-10)*

Only through the work of the Holy Spirit within us can we bring this destructive force under control. James was speaking primarily to teachers,

warning them that they shall receive a stricter judgment. These pastor-teachers used their tongue to gain praise for themselves, spoke lies against the Word and boasted about things they did not know. The root of this unruly tongue stems from pride. Paul referred to this wisdom as demonic; doctrines of demons.

But Christians who speak wisdom that is “from above” is done in meekness, in truth and without hypocrisy. Scripture is very clear that every Christian will have serious consequence if he maintains an unruly tongue. In reference to the Judgment seat of Christ, the Lord says this in **Matthew 12:37**,

*“For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

God knows our heart. The true condition of our heart will inevitably be revealed by what comes out of our mouth. And according to James, we cannot condemn or revile our brother one moment and bless God the next. No matter how passionately we bless or praise God, if we speak evil of our brother, our praising and blessing of God is a lie.

*If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? (1 John 4:20)*

We can see then, that nothing good filters out of an evil and prideful heart. It was because of pride that God’s anointed cherub, Satan, whom He made to be ruler of this age, fell away.

*You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.*

*By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned. Therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones.*

*Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you. (Ezekiel 28:16, 17)*

Therefore, pride and an unruly tongue cause all kinds of evil and sin. When the tongue continually condemns other believers, they are placing judgment on what they do not know. This is someone who continually speaks evil of other believers because they harbor ill feelings of jealousy, envy, pride or a hardened heart. Putting to death the flesh enables us to refrain from speaking evil or condemning others, rather we are to speak in love and humility. Even if a believer wanders from the truth and reverts back to the world, we are not to speak evil of or condemn him but we are to bring him back in a loving and humble way, so as to save his soul from death in the coming age.

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

But there is something often misunderstood — the act of habitually judging others for the sake of evilness or to condemn (**James 4:11**) is entirely different from the Church's responsibility to judge carnal works within its members (**1 Corinthians 6:2**) or the ability to discern between true or false messages from pastor-teachers (**Hebrews 5:14; 2 Peter 3:17**). **1 Thessalonians 5:21** and **1 John 4:1** clearly states that we are to *not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

Let us therefore understand that everyone will experience trials and tribulations throughout their lifetime. But the good news is that the Lord will bless those who are faithfully obedient in the midst of trials and suffering. Blessings will come in the way of an abundant entrance into the future heavenly kingdom!

## THE EPISTLES OF PETER

Christ commissioned Peter to witness to the Jews and together with Paul to build the Church.

*He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

*Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*

*And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:15-19)*

This moment revealed the establishment of the Church and that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God* to the disciples. And this moment marked not only the revealing of Christ and the creation of the Church, but the revealing of “the mystery” (*“the mystery” is the Church being the recipient to the offer of the heavenly kingdom*) to Peter and the other disciples. Jesus based Peter’s confession — *“Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God”*— as the foundation or the rock in which the Church would be built upon. Christ is “The Rock.” Hades would not prevail over the Church, the Church having victory “in Christ.” At Christ’s second coming, those who are chosen from among the Church will be given the keys to the kingdom of heaven to rule and reign over the earth. In the future, Death and Hades will be destroyed.

*After six days* from this announcement, Jesus took Peter, James and John up to a “*high mountain*” (depicting the kingdom) and was “*transfigured before them.*” (Christ showed them His glory [**Matthew 17:2**]). This revelation on the Mount occurred “*after six days*” which is the seventh day and is a picture of God’s timeframe in His dealings with man (The 6th Day or Man’s day) to the Millennium (The 7th Day or The Day of the Lord). Peter, James and John were given the vision of the future kingdom and of the glory of Christ as King. In addition, Moses and Elijah appeared

to them, which revealed the future rapture and resurrection of the saints and the redemption of man. Just as Moses was resurrected on the third day during the resurrection of Christ (**Matthew 27:51**) and Elijah was raptured by God on the third day (**2 Kings 2:11**), so also will Christians be removed from the earth by resurrection or rapture on the Third Day (the third one-thousandth year from Pentecost). Peter, James and John were shown this great and wondrous event on the Mount!

This event led Peter some thirty years later to begin his Epistles with a view to the Lord's return, the establishment of His kingdom, and a heavenly inheritance.

*...yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.*

**(1 Peter 1:9)**

Peter addresses the Churches in Asia and opens his Epistle summarizing the whole purpose for Christ's death and resurrection — the salvation of the soul. It was Peter's commission to introduce the Word of the Kingdom so that the Churches would arrive at a level of maturity and prepare themselves for their inheritance. Peter opens his Epistle with blessings to God for His abundant mercy in providing man with this great salvation. This salvation was dependent on Christ's death and resurrection. *His death and shed blood* provided the means to wipe away our sins and grant us spirit salvation, the gift of eternal life. Furthermore, *His resurrection* provided the possibility for us to inherit the kingdom, the offer of Millennial life.

We have been born again. Our first birth was our physical birth, born without the Spirit — *born dead in trespasses and sin*. In order for us to be able to have access to our inheritance, our soul salvation, it is required after we have believed, that we be *born again*. The phrase *born again* means "*brought forth from above*," and is acknowledged through the act of baptism. When we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we passed from death unto life and our spirit was made alive through the Holy Spirit. Then, we acknowledge our commitment to putting to death the flesh and walking according to the Spirit. This is our new birth, our spiritual birth and thereby we have been born again. The Spirit of the Lord breathes life into our spirit and this provides the assistance we need to acquire soul

salvation.

*Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*  
**(John 3:3)**

*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air...But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ... **(Ephesians 2:1, 2, 4, 5)***

Therefore, the purpose of our spiritual birth was to give us “*a living hope*” through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Just as Christ was resurrected to the kingdom in heaven, we also will be resurrected from the dead. He sent us the Holy Spirit as our Helper in guiding us into all truth and teaching us things to come, who is also the guarantee of our inheritance. If we allow, the Holy Spirit enables us to gain understanding and faith in the living hope, which is the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

*In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. **(Ephesians 1:13, 14)***

*...to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. **(1 Peter 1:4, 5)***

The word *inheritance* means “heir-ship” or “possession” in the Greek definition (Strong’s #G2817) and signifies a position as joint-heir with Christ in the kingdom of the heavens. This means that those who inherit the kingdom will be king-priests with Christ, ruling and reigning from His heavenly throne.



This inheritance has been God’s plan and purpose for man since before the foundation of the world and *has been reserved in heaven for you (1 Peter 1:4)*. But of course, the condition that we remain faithfully obedient to Him until the end must be met. If we act accordingly, on that Day, we will be found worthy to receive the inheritance. And according to Scripture, those who live by “the faith,” who consistently practice faithful obedience to God, are those *who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:5)*. In other words, those that have their faith in the power of God will receive the salvation of their souls on that future Day of the Lord.

*...that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:5)*

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (Ephesians 6:10, 11)*

**Ephesians 6:14-19** presents the six parts of the spiritual armor of God that we are to put on. Putting on the armor shows that our faith is in the power of God and not in the wisdom of men. The armor of God provides us strength and protection against evil forces. But this armor is not automatic — we must put it on by exercising our faith. (Part five of this chapter presents a further study surrounding the armor of God.)

Peter exhorts the Church to greatly rejoice in the inheritance, even though *now for a little while* (compared to one thousand years!) *if need be, you have been grieved by various trials... (1 Peter 1:6)*. Knowing that our strength comes from the power of God, we can withstand any type of trial that comes our way. These trials come our way only “*if need be*”; only if God allows it in order to strengthen our faith.

*...that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,...*  
**(1 Peter 1:7).**

“Genuineness” means “to put someone or something to the test.” Therefore, this is saying that our faith now (including our faith under

trials) will be tested at the revelation of Jesus Christ and is more valuable than gold that perishes. Our faith will be tested by fire at the Judgment seat of Christ and our hope is that we may be found worthy for praise, honor and glory (*glory* meaning “rulership”). If our faith is approved, it will have age-lasting and eternal value far beyond what gold can ever offer. It will result in the salvation of our soul, which **Hebrews** chapter **two** describes as “*so great a salvation*”—the most incredible, the most amazing salvation too profound to imagine, which eyes have never seen, and in which the all-knowing, all-powerful, loving God has bestowed upon His creation. Nothing, not even all the gold in the world, could compare to this salvation!

Peter had seen the Lord Jesus Christ face to face, and had walked in His presence for three years. He was an eyewitness to His crucifixion and resurrection. This is why Peter loved the Lord, and the Lord saw this love in Peter. For us however, we have not seen Christ. Therefore, our love for Him comes only as a result of our faith and subsequently our obedience to Him. Our faith alone gives us the assurance that we will soon see Him face to face and when we do, we will have such great joy inexpressible as we receive the end of our faith — the salvation of our souls!

*Of this salvation (the salvation of the soul) the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.*

*To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.*  
**(1 Peter 1:10-12)**

This great salvation which God ordained before the world began was kept hidden in a “mystery” in past ages (**1 Corinthians 2:6-8**). And though the Old Testament prophets were granted wisdom from the Spirit, along with signs and visions; and prophesied and wrote of this salvation that would in

their future be offered to the Church, they did not fully understand what was given to them or when this would take place. God did this for a reason — so that the rulers of this age, who are the powers and the principalities in the heavenly places (Satan and his fallen angels) would not thwart God's plan and purpose for us. Therefore, this mystery was concealed from all those who opposed God's plan. So great is this salvation that the prophets inquired and searched carefully to discover when and how this would be brought about.

It was in God's perfect time when it was necessary for Christ to have died, be buried for two days and then resurrected on the third day to complete the covenant: to take away our sins in order to have access to the kingdom. This brought about the creation of the Church, the one new man in Christ, and those from among the Church who will be chosen to replace Satan as ruler in the age to come. Now that Christ had accomplished God's plan at Calvary, the hidden mystery was being revealed to the Church by the disciples in order for us to know and prepare for this great salvation. So great is this salvation that the angels have a desire to look into, even though God has prepared them to be ministering spirits made lower than Christ and His bride.

*But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory...But God has revealed them to us through the Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:7-10)*

*To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;*

*to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ephesians 3:8-11)*

*...the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from*

*generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:26, 27)*

We can realize then that this *so great a salvation* which has been offered to us, the Church, is the greatest blessing that we can receive. And in light of this *so great a salvation*, Peter exhorts us to retain it in our hearts and minds daily.

*Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:13-16)*

In view of this great salvation we are to *gird up the loins of our mind* which means to repetitively or constantly put to mind; to invoke a mental exertion, so that we do not drift away. We should continually focus on our future salvation and not allow our minds to be hindered by the cares of this world or anything that would take our minds off of this salvation.

Then we are to *be sober* which means to “be alert; watchful; cautious; discerning,” so that we can be on guard against the enemy who works in many disguises to deceive us. We are to rest our hope on the grace of God and on His Son’s glorious appearing that we may be partakers with Him. Once we are mature, having the knowledge of the Word of the kingdom, we are to practice faithful obedience to His Word. And His Word says that since we are part of the body of Christ, we are to be holy and set apart as He is.

Therefore, our prayer should be: “*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*” (Psalm 51:10)

To *be holy* requires the act of self-control; a loving, tender, humble attitude and a kind tongue. We need to be cautious of everything we say and do. In this, we are practicing holiness and righteousness. In **1 Peter 1:17**, Peter says to “*conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay*

*here in fear.*” Our conduct or behavior should reflect the “fear of the Lord,” knowing that He will judge us without partiality, without favoritism, but justly — strictly according to our works. It is a motivating fear that gives us the desire to be overcomers as we do not want to be placed on the outside of the gate. This fear can be best described as this: *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12).*

The fact that Christ paid the price for our redemption by His blood is another reason that we should not take this salvation lightly. He did not buy us with silver or gold, but with His death and shed blood that was without spot or blemish. And He did this to cleanse us, because our conduct was corrupted. He did this, not because we were friends of God, but while we were enemies of God, because He loved us.

*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. (Ephesians 2:4)*

The good news is that we now have a choice whether we will allow the Holy Spirit to control us and to conduct our lives in accordance to the Scriptures. We have been set free from our past traditions, where in every environment we were exposed to evil, and embraced the evil practices of this world. We now have the choice to repent, forget about past traditions, and conduct our lives according to Christ. This is what Paul aspired to do, who was a former murderer of Christians, but transformed to a new man in Christ, as seen in **Philippians 3:12-14**:

*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected, but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

Let us press forward with a new start, allowing the Spirit to assist us in putting away *all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking as newborn babes...and desire the pure milk of the word, that you may*

*grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious (1 Peter 2:1-3).*

Let us desire the pure Word, not corrupted by false doctrine or the traditions of men, but that which comes directly from the Holy Spirit, allowing the Spirit to bring us to a level of maturity and great enthusiasm for the Word. Our enthusiasm will come when we study the Word and experience how God's love and grace is so awesome. And this comes when we understand that He has chosen us to be with Christ as part of His spiritual house.

*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who call you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ... (1 Peter 2:9)*

Can we even imagine how glorious and amazing it will be to gather together with Christ in His kingdom, to sing and proclaim praises to Him?

This is why Peter "begs" us, as foreigners here on earth, to consider our heavenly home and do everything possible to conduct our stay here in fear and holy conduct. Our conduct is extremely important, as it reflects on Christ. Since we are representatives of Christ, our conduct must be without spot or blemish.

Even if we are condemned by others we are to continue in our good works, our holy conduct, so that on that future Day they may acknowledge Christ and what He has done through His people. We must be submissive to our leaders, whether to government, our husband, our boss, or our laws here on earth. Even if we have to suffer, not because we did not obey, but for doing good, we must endure. We must remain submissive and holy, that they may be ashamed.

*"...knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:9b).*

*But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the*

*hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.*

*For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:14-17)*

If we suffer, it is better that we suffer for doing good. For example, let's say we are suffering because of a harsh boss, or being reviled by another. If we remain meek and do not revile back, then we are following Christ and this is spiritually prosperous for us. This is the example that Christ left us when He suffered wrongfully. He did not revile back, but remained meek and quiet. We also have to partake in Christ's sufferings as a test of our faithful obedience. Do not be deceived. We are not exempt from sufferings in this age because we are Christians. Our pain-free life will not come until the next age. So it is better that we suffer for doing good than for doing evil. If we suffer for doing evil, this brings us no profit.

*But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. (1 Peter 4:15)*

In the midst of our sufferings, we are to continue to give God the glory, entrusting our lives to Him, knowing that He cares for us and will reward us with *the crown of glory that does not fade away*. For Christ can come at any moment.

*But the end of all things is at hand, therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers...as each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:7)*

In summary, Peter's first Epistle to the Church emphasizes the salvation of the soul. Peter wanted the Church to understand the importance of this salvation and how to acquire it. In Peter's final chapter of his first Epistle, he directs his attention to the elders of the Church. In **1 Peter 5:2-4**, Peter states:

*Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.*

The Greek definition for the word *shepherd* (Strong's #G4166) means to "tend, feed, teach; a pastor." Peter was clarifying the duties of the elders of the Church to include the pastor-teacher, exhorting them to willingly teach the flock in accordance with the will of their Master and not for dishonest gain. The pastor-teachers and the elders are not to concern themselves with how many people they can bring into the Church for the building of their funds. Nor are they to sell their ministry inside or outside of the Church in order to profit from it. Their desire should be to teach their flock according to the Scriptures, holding the mystery of the faith, knowing that it is to their Master alone they will have to give an account. The pastor-teacher is to act and teach in all humility, spirit and truth.

Peter closes his Epistle warning the Church *to be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world (1 Peter 5:8, 9)*. And one of the ways in which the devil will seek to devour the Christian is revealed in Peter's second Epistle.

**Peter's second Epistle** centers on the biggest obstacle that a Christian must face: *false teachings*. Peter saw what had happened to the Churches in Asia. Their faith had grown in the Word of the kingdom, but then because of false teachings, they fell away. Most all had turned their backs on the Word of the kingdom and their inheritance! Therefore, Peter knew what extreme danger false teachers posed to the Church. Hence, the warnings are given. Peter's warnings parallel, to a large extent, the warnings in **Jude's Epistle**, which also cautions the readers against false teachers.

**Second Peter's** content continues with the salvation of the soul with respect to the devil's attack within the Church through the actions of false pastor-teachers. And this is not new, for Peter tells us that there were false prophets long ago



amongst believers, just as there are today. Even from the time of Moses false teachers, who fell away from the faith (concerning their inheritance), drew others away with them. Then again, false teachers arose during the beginning of Church history and were warned against in Peter's and Jude's Epistles, as they whole-heartedly attempted to destroy the message surrounding the Word of the kingdom.

We can see what a devastation this is when leaders of the Church today turn their flock against God's Word, bringing in false teachings and deceptive practices. How do you think Christ feels when this happens? Before the creation of the Church, at Christ first advent, false teachings were instilled into the Jewish people by the scribes and Pharisees, as seen in **Matthew 23:13-15**. Jesus reprimanded them, saying,

*"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.*

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."*

False teachings have continued within the Church throughout this dispensation. According to **2 Peter 2:1**, these false teachers "*secretly bring in destructive heresies.*" The Greek definition for the word *secretly* means "to bring in alongside." Therefore, the work of false pastor-teachers could be recognized as this: *they teach what is scripturally correct, but then alongside the truth they would introduce heresies or their own opinion that is contrary to Scripture.* If this is followed by their flock, it would lead to a false belief and understanding of the Word, that which would ultimately bring about their destruction. Many individuals will seek to draw Christians away from the central teaching of Scripture — the salvation of the soul. The "doctrines of demons," promulgated by false teachers, is the most dangerous and deadly teaching that has ever been proclaimed. And, because of this, Peter and Jude exhorted Christians to strain every muscle of their being in the race of "the faith," so that they

do not fall away or succumb to these false teachings. Satan will use everything in his power to bring down faithful believers.

Jesus warned us in **Matthew 13:19**, in the parable of the sower, about “*When anyone hears the word of the kingdom...*” The believer will be strayed away from the truth in several ways. Satan does all he can to prevent those who hear the Word of the kingdom from maturing and producing fruit; either by stealing the Word before it can take root, or by causing the one who hears it to give up before they have a mature foundation through the cares of this world or through the deceitfulness of riches. But there are some believers who do hear the Word of the kingdom and do mature and begin to produce fruit — these are the overcomers.

Keep in mind that the false teachers of the past and the present proclaim false doctrine relative to the salvation of the soul, not false doctrine relative to spirit salvation, the salvation presently possessed by Christians. Many of these false teachers are saved individuals who possess spirit salvation but speak against the Word of the kingdom. It is teachers of this nature that Peter warns against. Today, the message of the kingdom is seldom heard within the Church. The destructive work depicted by the leaven at the beginning of this dispensation in **Matthew 13:33** and the state of deterioration revealed in **Revelation 3:17** at the end of this dispensation, seen as: “*wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*” was and is carried out by false teachers under the influence of Satan and his seed. It is important to realize that for those who hear the Word of the kingdom and begin to produce fruit, their *greatest danger* would be to stray away from this truth which would stop their fruit production and result in their exclusion from the Kingdom in the age to come.

A false message concerning the Word of the kingdom today would come more likely from ignorance rather than from knowledge. Pastor-teachers in general have little to no understanding of the message surrounding the Word of the kingdom. Most pastors today are so involved with the busyness of their programs and the acceptance of their congregation that they seldom even open the Scriptures. Some order their sermons and teachings from religious organizations in which they are members, following it line by line. And because of this, they teach a contaminated form of Scripture. After this fashion, they do their damaging work of

deceiving their flock, who in turn, never hear the truth concerning the kingdom message. And because the Word of the kingdom has never been mentioned, and is not recognizable, Christians (teachers and flock) tend to reject, despise and then ignore it when it is given to them. Instead, they continue to follow their destructive doctrines, as seen in **2 Peter 2:2-4**:

*And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment...*

What do you think will be the outcome of pastor-teachers today whose bad works against God derive from their false teachings? God did not spare the angels who sinned; neither will He spare false teachers. This is why Scripture warns Christians who desire to be pastor-teachers about false teachings, as they will receive a stricter judgment. Much is expected of teachers who rule over their flock. They must be careful to teach the truth of the Word in all humility and they must be an example of godliness, being faithfully obedient to all the Scriptures.

Peter provides us with warnings in **2 Peter 2:18** as to what these deceptions look like. False teachers “*speak great swelling words of emptiness, and allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness...*” and “*While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption.*”

Beware of pastor-teachers who speak big, intellectual words of promise that have no foundation in the Word of God. They promise freedom from sickness, pain, finances and worldly things, yet they themselves are in bondage, being corrupted in the things of the world. These messages they speak are doctrines of demons. We are not to be persuaded by these un-Biblical false messages, but we are to exercise discernment by and through the assimilation of God’s Word.

The false prophets of the past had escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; through the

knowledge of the kingdom. At first, they were speaking perverse things against “the faith.” Then, through the knowledge [Greek definition is “higher knowledge; *epignosis*”] concerning the Word of the kingdom, they had engaged in the race of the faith after a correct fashion. Yet, they fell away and turned against “the faith” and began spreading error, misleading numerous Christians.

**2 Peter 2:20b** says that *“the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.”*

They are referred to as this: *“A dog returns to his own vomit,”* and *“a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.”* (**2 Peter 2:22**)

This warning is given to *all* Christians who have received the Word of the kingdom and then fall away from it to go back to false teachings and to the world. This warning is also given in **Hebrews 6:4** and **10:26**; and is a surety that those who fall away will receive no mercy at the Judgment seat of Christ, but a fiery indignation. These false teachers will get the same exact punishment as the fallen angels, angels who knew the holy commandments of God yet fell away and caused impending damage on earth. At their judgment, they will receive the worst, most horrific punishment ever to be dispensed.

The way in which we can exercise discernment from false teachers is to receive and mature in the knowledge of the Word of the kingdom. The way in which we can refrain from falling away is to keep our minds, our eyes and our ears focused on the Word of God — *daily*. Peter reveals the sure path to the Kingdom — fruitful growth in the faith. God has given us all that we need in order to grow in the knowledge of Him (the Word of God) so that we can run the race of the faith until the end, produce fruit and overcome. This is what **2 Peter 1:2-4** is all about.

With this in mind, Peter gives the attributes needed in order to produce fruit for the Kingdom. This will guard us against the works of Satan, false teachers, and anyone who tries to turn us away from our inheritance. This fruitful growth is a segment of the attributes needed and when tied together with many other related Scriptures, will provide us with the tools

necessary to run the race and win.

### **Fruitful Growth in the Faith**

*But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance, godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.*

*For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. (2 Peter 1:5-9)*

In **2 Peter 1:5**, Peter begins with the first attribute:

*But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue...*The phrase “add to your faith” addresses the issue that “*faith without works is dead*” in **James 2:14**. This reassures us that faith and works go hand in hand in order to produce fruit for the Kingdom. This message has to do with things surrounding the salvation of the soul. First, we are to add to our faith the work of *virtue*. The Greek (Strong’s #G703) definition for the word *virtue* means “moral excellency, praise, honor, valor, strength.” We can translate this to mean someone with a high standard of excellent moral character; a character of goodness, honesty, righteousness. It is someone who chooses right from wrong.

An example can be seen in the “virtuous wife” in **Proverbs 31:10**. The virtuous wife is representative of the bride of Christ. Her acts of goodness, honesty and strength *all the days of her life* to her Husband and her household bring her praise and honor and qualifies her in the gates (of the Kingdom). This type of individual will be hard to find at the end of this dispensation. God asked the question in **Proverbs 31:10**: *Who can find a virtuous wife?* A similar question is addressed in **Luke 18:8** when Christ says: “*Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find [the] faith on the earth?*” The way in which these questions are worded in the Greek text necessitates a negative answer. Christ will *not*

find “the faith” being taught in the Churches nor will He find a virtuous wife throughout the land at the time of His return. One must possess the characteristic of “virtue” in order to produce fruit necessary to be qualified to enter the gates into the heavenly kingdom.

Second, we are to *add to your faith*, which means to “abundantly supply your faith” going **from virtue to knowledge**. The Greek translation for *gnosis* (Strong’s #G1108) is “knowledge” meaning “to understand, to allow, perceive, be aware of by applying oneself in a great variety of applications.” Knowledge of the Word comes from studying the Word. By dedicating ourselves to learning God’s Word and allowing the Spirit to lead us into all truth, we may be able to go from “gnosis” to “*epignosis*” which means “super-knowledge.” We must have the desire to eagerly seek the Scriptures so that we may know the truth and build upon the correct foundation.

Throughout the New Testament there is much emphasis in acquiring knowledge of God’s Word, specifically the Word of the kingdom. The main reason is that His Word leads to life. By knowing His Word, we know His plan and purpose for us. Our fruitful growth in the faith will come by the assimilation of God’s Word, as **Romans 10:17** tells us:

*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

In many of the opening Epistles, a prayer is introduced asking God to give the Church knowledge of Him through His word and through the power of the Holy Spirit. In **1 Corinthians 1:4-7**, we see the importance of the knowledge of the gospel of Christ:

*I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ...*

In **Colossians 1:9, 10**, Paul prays that the Church may be filled with the “super-knowledge” of Christ:

*For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...*

In **2 Peter 1:2, 3**, again a prayer for knowledge is given:

*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who call us by glory and virtue...*

By acquiring the super-knowledge [*epignosis*] of the Word and then abiding in it, we are able to know Christ and the attributes necessary to gain life in the age to come.

*And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts... (2 Peter 1:19)*

*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)*

**Third, we are to abundantly supply self-control.** This word means “temperance, self-restraint” and refers to the control of our conduct and our fleshly desires. Only by allowing the Holy Spirit to govern our lives can this be accomplished. Otherwise, our emotions and the indulgences of the flesh will control us. The old habitual conduct can be cast away when we continually replace it with our new godly conduct. The more we renew our minds by the Word and then allow the Holy Spirit to convict us of our old conduct, the easier it will be to put down the conduct of our flesh. With continual determination and adherence, we can be overcomers.

**The fourth attribute following self-control is perseverance,** which means “persistency, to be earnest towards, to be constantly diligent, to wait on continually” (Strong’s #G4343), and means the same as “patient

endurance.” If we are to master self-control, we must have perseverance. Otherwise, a person will be easily discouraged and be tempted to quit. We must be persistent in our efforts to apply self-control by allowing the Holy Spirit to work through us. Whether trials or tribulations, suffering for Christ’s sake or suffering for doing good, we are to endure patiently until the end.

**Next, we must abundantly supply godliness** in our lives, which means “holiness, to be devoted to God, well-reverent” (Strong’s #G2150). This is the way in which we are to conduct ourselves throughout our life, even during trials. Christians represent the temple of God therefore we are to be holy.

*Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:13-16)*

*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17)*

**Then from godliness, we are to add in abundance, brotherly kindness.** The Greek translation *phileo* (Strong’s #G5360; 5368) is brotherly kindness meaning “fraternal affection, love of the brethren (denoting personal attachment, as a matter of feeling).” This type of brotherly kindness is a love of keeping company with those who are of like-mind. It is the desire to be around our brothers and sisters in Christ, and to show our brotherly affection and kindness to them. Scripture exhorts Christians of like-mind to continue assembling together in order to encourage one another in the faith, to pray for one another and to assist one another when in need.

*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more*



*as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24, 25)*

When our life is centered on seeking the Kingdom first, we are no longer interested in spending time talking about worldly nonsense and fleshly desires. Our interests are now centered on gathering together with like-minded Christians to talk about Christ and His word. This fellowship brings about a bond of brotherly love [kindness] for one another.

A similar picture of what brotherly love and kindness looks like is in **Romans 12:10-13**:

*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another, not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.*

And when considering “brotherly kindness” the question we must ask is: who are our brothers and sisters? Our answer is in **Matthew 12:47-50**:

*Then one said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.” But He answered and said to the one who told Him, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers!”*

*For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.”*

Those who exercise the will of the Father, who are like-minded in “the faith” are those who make-up our brothers and sisters in Christ.

**The final attribute after brotherly kindness is to abundantly supply love.** The Greek translation for *agape* is “love” (Strong’s #G25); and in the Hebrew the translation is “much love, excessive love; a charitable, kind and affectionate act; beloved, dear” (Strong’s #H5690). It is an unconditional love not based solely on feelings, but on obedience, as seen in **John 14:15**, Christ saying, “*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*”

*Agape* comes from God, for He is love.

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love [agape]. (1 John 4:7)*

This is the greatest and most valuable attribute that a Christian can attain, because love is eternal. At the end of this age when we have been removed from this earth to the heavens, our faith and our hope will be finished. But love will remain forever. It is the greatest gift that God has bestowed upon His creation.

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.*

*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.*

*When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.*

*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love [agape]. (1 Corinthians 13:1-13)*

In the following chapter, we will study about faith, hope and love. These three attributes points to a mature person, one who has the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and who is able to produce fruit for the kingdom. Knowing this, Peter exhorts us to press on and fight to acquire that higher calling to the kingdom:

*Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting [age-lasting; millennial] kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:10, 11)*

Peter closed his second Epistle with both a warning and an encouragement. After the Messianic Era, Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father. At this time, *all things* will be dissolved, including the earth and the heavens. Knowing that this world is passing away, ought we to be determined to mature and attain these attributes to be ready for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

*Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?*

*Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:11-13)*

These profound events will take place following the Millennium and should encourage us to be diligent to be found worthy, looking up unto Jesus and the coming kingdom.

*You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:17, 18)*

## The Epistles & Gospel of John

John, a disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ, centers both his Gospel and his first Epistle on the foundation, Christ, and begins with a parallel to **Genesis** chapter **one**. The Gospel and the Epistles of John are quite unique in its arrangement from the other Gospels and Epistles. John's arrangement clearly addresses who God is and His purpose, in Christ, for His creation.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

*And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-5, 14)*

John's Gospel opens in a similar manner to the first four chapters of the Book of **Genesis**. And John begins in this manner for a particular reason — to reveal that it was God Himself, in the person of the Son, whom the Jewish people had crucified. **John 1:1** deals with the Deity of Christ. First, the Word, identified as both God and His Son, was with God in the beginning. Second, the Word who became flesh is seen as God Himself becoming flesh. And in many parts of the Gospel of John, Jesus equated Himself with God the Father:

*“If you knew me, you would know my Father also”*  
**(John 14:7)**

*“Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father”*  
**(John 14:9)**

*“Believe Me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (John 14:11)*

*“He who hates Me hates My Father as well.” (John 15:23)*

*“No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*  
**(John 14:6)**

*“He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”* **(2 John 9)**

*Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”* **(John 8:58)**

*“...as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us...”* **(John 17:21)**

*“I and My Father are one.”* **(John 10:30)**

Jesus is God who came in the flesh (**1 Timothy 3:16**). He is completely human without sin and completely divine. From the beginning, God chose the seed of Adam by which Christ [the Seed of the woman] would come.

*“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed...”* **(Genesis 3:15)** [The word “seed” meaning *descendants*]

From Jacob’s twelve sons, forming the twelve tribes of Israel, a nation was created by God through which He gave man the Redeemer, Christ. We see this realized in **Matthew 1:1**, listing the genealogy of Jesus Christ from Abraham, and then again in **Luke 3:23**, listing the genealogy of Jesus Christ from Adam, the son of God. And this particular seed was chosen so that God’s plans and purposes would be fulfilled.

Some within Christendom deny that Christ is a descendant of Adam – but what do the Scriptures say? If Christ is not a descendant of Adam, He cannot be the second Man, the last Adam, exercising federal headship in the place of the first man, the first Adam. He would then have to be seen as One from a different type creation (not as a man, not coming in the flesh) which the Scriptures clearly reveal doesn’t exist. Nor could He be the Savior if he were not a descendant of Adam. The Savior must be a *Man* from Adam’s lineage in order to redeem fallen man, which the Scriptures revealed numerous times throughout the Old Testament to Israel, revealing that the Savior would come from their descendants.

And exactly how this could all be possible --- Someone from Adam's lineage, being without sin and able to act in the capacity as Savior – is dealt with, from a medical standpoint, in the book, “The Chemistry of the Blood,” written by M.R. DeHann. In **Leviticus 17:11**, Scripture reveals this:

*For the life [soul] of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”*

The animating principle of life or the soul is in the blood, that which houses our sin. Because of Adam's sin, his spiritually dead condition [his sin in the blood] was passed on to his progeny, all except Jesus Christ [because of the virgin birth]. In summary, DeHann pointed out that the blood to the fetus is not transmitted from the woman, *but from the man*. This would be the reason why Christ did not become contaminated with the blood of the virgin, and therefore not acquiring the sin that is linked to the blood. And this is how Jesus Christ was born of a woman, yet born without sin --- a virgin birth, born of the Holy Spirit. He was born of a woman without one drop of human blood in his veins, and thereby was able to avoid the sin of Adam which is only transmitted through the blood which the male contributes to his offspring. This is the reason for *the incarnation*; the reason for *the virgin birth*. God manifested in the flesh, incapable of sin, through the birth of a virgin, coming from Adam's lineage. God chose to come in this manner in the person of the Son, Jesus Christ, who is the Seed of the woman, for one sole purpose --- redemption.

Other Scriptures identify that Christ was indeed a descendant of Adam, of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, and of David (**2 Samuel 7:12-14; Ezekiel 37:24; John 7:40-42; Galatians 3:16-18; 29**). Christ was born of the woman (from Adam's lineage) *and* of the Holy Spirit. He was both man and God at the same time, without sin. Yet, as a descendant of David, Christ would be superior to him. In fact, He would be David's Lord and Savior. (**Mark 12:35**)

From the beginning, Jesus Christ was the Word of life:

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our*

*hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us...and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1-3)*

*In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. (John 1:4)*

*Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. (John 8:12)*

Jesus Christ is the Word, the Life and the Light. He gave light to this dark world. Just as the creation of light was the beginning of the restoration of the ruined creation (**Genesis 1:3**), so also believers upon receiving the Light become part of a new creation. Light then signifies Christ, life, goodness, brilliancy, and truth, whereas Dark signifies Satan, death, evil, darkness, deceitfulness and blindness. And because Israel was in a darkened and blinded state, Christ, as the Light, imparted light and truth to them by the use of “signs” during His ministry.

John, in his Gospel, records *eight signs*, specifically to the nation of Israel, the ones who required a sign (**Matthew: 12:39; John 4:48; 1 Corinthians 1:22**). The Holy Spirit singled out eight signs from among the numerous signs which Christ had performed and moved the pen of John to record them in his Gospel, for a purpose — “*that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God; and that believing you might have life through His name*” (**John 20:31b**).

These eight signs were performed and later recorded in order that those requiring a sign, Israel, might believe that Jesus is the Messiah. And these signs were performed during a time when the kingdom of the heavens was being offered to the nation. These signs had to do strictly with Israel and the kingdom [millennial life], not with eternal life. The recording of these signs in John’s gospel was directed to a people who were already eternally saved. An offer of the kingdom could *never* be extended to the unsaved. The Jewish people believed in God, but the signs were given so that they

would repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah and in the heavenly kingdom.

Signs, wonders and miracles were always in relation to *Israel and the kingdom*. The very first revelation of signs, wonders and miracles was through Moses and Aaron during Israel's deliverance from Egypt, with a view to the offer of the Promised Land. Then, Moses' successor, Joshua, continued to perform these signs with a view to Israel's entrance into the Promised Land.

The second revelation of signs, wonders and miracles in the Old Testament was through Elijah and his successor Elisha. These signs were performed about five hundred years after Moses, during the days in which Israel had already been established in the land. During this time, the Jewish people were to recognize that these signs had been sent by God and that they were to repent and follow Him as their sovereign Leader of their land, within a theocracy. However, the people of Israel failed to heed the message and the nation did not repent. God, therefore, allowed the surrounding nations, particularly Assyria and Babylon, to take Israel into captivity and scatter them amongst the Gentile nations.

This is when the *times of the Gentiles* began and it will last until the end of the Tribulation. This is a period of 2600 years during which Israel must dwell apart from a theocracy and remain scattered, allowing the Gentiles, among whom Israel dwells, to hold the scepter throughout this time. Many people today believe that Israel has already been restored as a nation and no longer remain scattered; however, this goes against God's Word. According to Scripture, Israel will not be restored to their land permanently as a nation until God restores them at the end of this age. Israel today is in the land temporarily because of their own will, not according to God's will. Their position will once again change when Antichrist drives them out of the land. Then, when Israel repents, God will hear their cries and restore them back to their land — forever.

After 1500 years, from the first manifestation of signs under Moses, Israel's Messiah appeared to them with a message pertaining to the kingdom of the heavens; and this message was accompanied by numerous signs, wonders, and miracles (**Matthew 4:17-25**). Christ commissioned twelve disciples to help carry this message and they also were empowered



to perform signs, wonders and miracles (**Matthew 10:5-8**). Christ later “appointed” seventy others to go into every city and deliver the message, empowering them to perform signs, wonders, and miracles as well (**Luke 10:1-19**). Christ and the disciples had been sent only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (**Matthew 10:6; 15:24**). Both Christ and His disciples went to Israel with the same message and the same revelation of supernatural powers. These supernatural powers depicted Israel’s present spiritual condition — *the head “sick” and the heart “faint”* (**Isaiah 1:5, 6**). This was the reason that most of the supernatural powers centered on bodily healings. Israel’s present sick condition could be healed if they would repent. The signs of healings *signified* that Israel could be restored.

The Jewish religious leaders were to see these miraculous healings and know that they were completely divine. Then, upon believing, they were to carry this message to the people of Israel. However, the religious leaders not only rejected the message, but also the Messenger, having crucified the Lord. This resulted in the offer of the heavenly kingdom removed from Israel and given to the “one new man” in Christ. But though the Church was called into existence to be the recipient of the offer of the heavenly kingdom, there was a re-offer of the heavenly kingdom to Israel after the inception of the Church (from 33 A.D. to about 63 A.D.). This is evident due to the continuance of signs, wonders and miracles given to Israel during this time. These signs had nothing to do with the “one new man” in Christ, but for Israel alone. It was not until after Israel’s rejection of the re-offer of the kingdom and their subsequent setting aside, did these signs, wonders and miracles cease to exist.

The first of the eight signs delivered to the nation of Israel was ***The Wedding Festivities in Cana***.

*On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.”*

*Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.”*

*Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it.*

*When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine...*

*You have kept the good wine until now! This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him. (John 2:1-9, 10, 11)*

This sign performed by Christ at the wedding festivities in Cana, as well as the rest of the signs, was performed in connection with the message that was first introduced by John the Baptist and then later by Christ, having to do with a call to Israel's repentance, with a view to the heavenly kingdom.

*"Repent for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand." (Matthew 3:1-3; 4:17)*

The kingdom of the heavens was "at hand" at this time because the Messiah was present, extending an offer of the heavenly kingdom to the nation of Israel. Likewise, the first sign at the wedding in Cana was about events occurring during the wedding festivities, festivities *following* a marriage. This sign foretells the nation of Israel's future restoration as the wife of God and the wedding festivities which follow (**Jeremiah 3:1, 14, 10**). Because of Israel's past harlotry, God divorced Israel (**Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8**). Yet, after Christ returns and deals with Israel again, a remarriage will occur.

The wedding festivities began "*on the third day.*" This is symbolic of the Third Day (the third 1,000 year-period from Pentecost), and the Seventh Day from Adam, following Man's Day — the Messianic Era. Through the judgments of the Tribulation, Israel will be brought to the place of repentance, allowing for the cleansing of the nation and subsequently, allowing for the wedding festivities, that which is pictured for us in the first sign of John's gospel — the wedding festivities in Cana on the third

day. Hosea prophesied about this very thing:

*Come, and let us return to the Lord; For He has torn but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days, He will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight. (Hosea 6:1, 2)*

Although the signs, which points to the end times, were directed specifically to the nation of Israel, the Church during the end times will inevitably be affected as well. Since Israel rejected the offer of the heavenly kingdom, the Church became the recipient of this offer. Two separate wedding festivities will occur on the Third Day, the Seventh Day. One will occur in the heavenly kingdom [the kingdom of the heavens], having to do with Christ and His bride (**Revelation 19:7-9**); and the other will occur on earth, having to do with God and Israel (**John 2:1**). The wedding festivities seen in **Revelation 19:7-9** with Christ and His bride in heaven begin immediately preceding Christ's return; and the wedding festivities in **John 2:1** occur on earth with God and His wife, Israel, following Christ's return.

Christ's miraculous work of turning water into wine points to the restoration of Israel and the Third Day, forming a complete and perfect picture of events forthcoming. The symbolism of the "*six waterpots of stone*" points to the nation of Israel being restored. The number "six" is man's number and "stone" refers to the present condition of Israel's heart before their restoration. Water being "*filled to the brim*" shows the completeness of the work, signifying cleansing. The master of the feast referred to the wine which Christ had changed from water as "*the good wine,*" kept "*until now.*" This was a reference to the wine being *the best wine at the wedding festivities, kept until last.*

The prophet Ezekiel had prophesied about this very thing 2500 years earlier:

*"For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.*

*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.” (Ezekiel 36:24-28)*

The wine which Christ made at the wedding festivities in Cana was a special type of wine which had never been produced. It was the best wine the master had ever tasted. Note at Christ’s first coming while partaking of the last supper, the Passover meal, with His disciples, Christ took His cup containing wine and gave thanks, and then gave it to His disciples, saying,

*“Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.” (Matthew 26:27b-29).*

Christ, along with His disciples, will again drink of the fruit of the vine together. But this time it will be in the Father’s kingdom — at the marriage festivities of the Lamb, seen in **Revelation 19:7-9**. Yet, the picture presented with Christ and His disciples at the wedding festivities in Cana was a picture of Israel’s wedding festival yet future. Exactly as Christ and His disciples had been called to a wedding festival in Cana on the third day, the seventh day, they will be called to a wedding festival on the Third day, the Seventh Day yet future. During the Millennium, the twelve disciples will sit on twelve thrones, judging (ruling and reigning over) the twelve tribes of Israel (**Matthew 19:28**) from Christ’s heavenly throne along with the rest of the bride (**Revelation 3:21**). And Israel, as God’s restored wife, will be at the head of the nations, ruling with Christ from David’s throne on earth.

The second sign in John’s Gospel directed to Israel with a view to the kingdom is *A Nobleman’s Son Healed*.

*So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick*

*at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.*

*Then Jesus said to him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.” The nobleman said to Him, “Sir, come down before my child dies!” Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your son lives.” (John 4:46-50)*

To properly understand the setting for this second sign, the time and events preceding this sign must be viewed. The sequence of events has to do with a *two-day period* in Judaea and a *two-day period* in Samaria before that which had occurred. For two days, Christ had spent time with the Jewish people in Judaea.

Then, coming out of Judaea, Christ spent two days in Samaria (The Samaritans were made up of both Jews and Gentiles who were despised by most of the Jewish people). And following *this* two-day period, Christ left Samaria and went into Galilee, returning to the place where He had performed His first sign, returning to Cana in Galilee, where He was received by the Jewish people, where He healed the nobleman’s son, and where belief was expressed because of the son being healed.

The time and events depicted by the two-day period spent with the Jewish people in Judaea symbolizes God’s dealings with the nation of Israel from Abraham to Pentecost. Then, the time and events depicted by the two-day period spent with the Samaritans foretells God’s dealings with the Gentiles during the present dispensation, which is a two-day period, a 2,000-year period from Pentecost to the removal of the Church. And it was after two days (on the third day) that Christ healed the nobleman’s son.

The last two-day period points to 2,000 years of Christ’s dealings with the Church (the Gentiles). After 2,000 years, Christ will return to the exact place where He performed signs — to the land of Israel. And this time, He will be received by the Jewish people and He will provide healing for them, as pictured in **Hosea 5:13-6:2** and **Jeremiah 33:6-9**. This time the Jewish people will believe in the One who provided healing (**Ezekiel 37:11-14**). Divine healing for God’s son, Israel, is typified by divine healing for the nobleman’s son.

It is evident from Christ's words to the nobleman in **John 4:48** that the man was a Jew, not a Gentile. Christ told the nobleman, "*Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.*" The Jewish people required a sign, not the Gentiles. Therefore, the matter surrounding the healing of the nobleman's son has to do with the Jewish people. It was a sign pointing to their future healing and it was performed so that they would believe that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God*, with a view to the kingdom of the heavens.

The third sign recorded in John's gospel is ***A Certain Man Healed at Bethesda*** in **John 5:1-15**.

"*Bethesda*" was the name of the pool near the Sheep Gate, a gate in the wall of Jerusalem near the temple, through which sheep were brought for sacrifice. *Bethesda* is a Hebrew name meaning "house of mercy." At this pool, *a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed waited for the moving of the water* — for an angel came down each day and stirred up the water, then whoever stepped in first was made well. Evidently, angels were sent during Christ's earthly ministry for a particular purpose — pertaining to Israel's future healing.

This third sign pertains to the same exact thing as the previous sign — Israel's present sick condition. However each sign provides further commentary regarding the time and events of Israel's present sick condition and Israel's future restoration.

The preceding sign, the healing of the nobleman's son in Cana of Galilee, is a picture of God's dealings with Israel during the present dispensation, the last of three distinct dispensations; each dispensation lasting two days (2,000 years each, totaling 6,000 years of Man's Day) and healing performed on the third day, the seventh day (the third 1,000-year period, the seventh 1,000-year period).

This third sign, the healing of the man who had an illness for thirty-eight years, on the Sabbath day, provides further commentary on the matter relating to the time and events of the sickness and restoration of Israel. Both signs deal with the exact same thing, with Israel's present sick condition and future healing.

The “sick, blind, lame and paralyzed people” in need of healing depicts the Jewish people in a non-functional state of being, relative to that which God had called them to do — to be God’s witnesses to the Gentiles, to the ends of the earth. The Jewish people are seen lying around unable to do anything other than be in need of healing at the “house of mercy.” While lying there, the Jewish people are depicted as being blind — *spiritually blind* (**Isaiah 1:4-6; 29:9-16; Lamentations 4:14**). The Jewish people, scattered throughout the whole world, are sick (blind) because of past unbelief and disobedience, whereby there has been no repentance.

There has been no change in Israel’s condition throughout the centuries and there will be no change until the Lord brings them, through judgment, to a place of repentance. Until Israel repents, God will not heal the nation (**Leviticus 26:40**).

The “certain man” who Christ chose to heal had been sick for *thirty-eight years*. “Thirty-eight years” relates back to the time when the Israelites arrived at Kadesh-Barnea under Moses. It had been two years following the Exodus from Egypt when they arrived and not until *thirty-eight* years later were they ready to enter the land under Joshua. This totaled 40 years, which is a *complete* period of time in Scripture, a time in which Israel was wandering in the desert until they experienced healing from the Lord. And the man at the pool of Bethesda that had been sick for thirty-eight years was healed by the Lord on the *Sabbath* day. The Lord had used the very day (the Sabbath) when healing would occur for the nation to show the Jewish people what they could possess. After the man was healed by the pool on the Sabbath day he then believed upon the Lord who *told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well* (**John 4:15**).

The previous sign signifies Israel’s restoration on the 3rd Day, the 7th Day. This third sign signifies the Day of the Sabbath, the Sabbath Rest. But the Jews, at the time when this sign was performed, totally ignored the miraculous work of the Lord, and instead, sought to kill Christ because “He had done these things on the Sabbath day.” They ignored the true meaning behind that which the Sabbath pointed, which is the coming Seventh Day, the Millennial Kingdom, when healing will occur for the nation of Israel. The Sabbath itself was originally given to Israel as a *sign* (a “sign” in Scripture points to something else) [**Exodus 31:16, 17**], to keep the focus ever before the nation, that following six days of work

(seen in the opening two chapters of **Genesis**; cf **Exodus 20:11**), there would come a seventh day of rest, a day that will be *all* Sabbath.

*And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying:*

*‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. (Exodus 31:12, 13)*

The fourth sign in John’s gospel surrounding God’s dealings with Israel with respect to the kingdom of the heavens is **The Feeding of Five Thousand**.

*Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased. And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.*

*Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.*

*Then Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted.*

*Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”(John 6:2-6, 10, 11, 14)*

The fourth sign points to events that will occur with the nation of Israel *following* their restoration, when they receive the earthly portion of the Millennial kingdom. Once the Jewish people have been restored to their land, and the land itself has been restored, then the Lord will provide for



the nation in the land. This is what the fourth sign is about.

The fourth sign begins with Christ taking His disciples up on the mountain at the near time of the Passover feast. A “mountain” in Scripture signifies a *kingdom* (**Daniel 2:35d; Matthew 17:1; Revelation 17:9b; 21:10**). Christ taking his disciples up on the mountain first was His way of establishing the setting for this fourth sign — bringing the focus of the kingdom first, so that they would understand the meaning behind this sign. Another key point is the timing in which Christ performs this sign — at the nearness of the Passover.

The Passover had to do with death and shed blood of the firstborn, either by way of a substitute or apart from a substitute. And the proper application of the blood of the lamb on the doorposts in which the firstborn lived showed that the firstborn had already died, via a substitute. Now “Christ” is the Passover Lamb, and Israel had slain this Lamb. And, since Christ’s death at Calvary, Israel (God’s firstborn son) has yet to apply the blood. The Passover points to that future Day when Christ returns. Upon seeing Christ, the nation will realize what they have done and they will believe in Christ, thereby appropriating the blood at that time. Therefore, the Passover foretells Israel’s national conversion at the time of Christ’s return. Only after the Passover has been fulfilled can the events which the fourth sign points to occur.

The fourth sign was Christ’s miraculous work of reproducing food from only five loaves of bread and two small fish to feed about five thousand people. And the reproduction of this small amount of food not only fed about five thousand people but carried over twelve baskets of food that remained after the fragments had been collected.

There were two key points presented in this fourth sign, both having to do with what God will provide to Israel in the future Millennial kingdom. First, God will provide the bread:

*Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on*

*Him.” (John 6:26, 27)*

After hearing this, the people drew their attention to the Manna during Moses’ day. But Christ remained on the subject of the sign, referring to His Bread, the Bread of Life, that He will give them on that future Day:

*And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. (John 6:35)*

*Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*

*For My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.*

*This is the bread which came down from heaven — not as your father ate the Manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.” (John 6:53-58)*

The reproduction of the loaves of bread and the fish signifies the partaking of Christ Himself, for He is “*The Word made flesh, and dwelt among us...*” (John 1:14a). The bread and fish pointed to the eating of the Bread of Life — eating His flesh, drinking His blood. The written Word is alive and powerful (Hebrews 4:12) and became flesh, in the person of His Son, the living Word. Therefore, when one partakes of the written Word, he is partaking of the Bread of Life, symbolically of Christ’s flesh and blood. And Christians must partake of Christ in the same manner — by partaking of the written Word — if they are to have a part with Him in His heavenly kingdom.

The nation of Israel to whom the sign points was given the written Word, and through them Christ came, who is the living Word. In the Millennial kingdom, the nation of Israel will possess the written Word in their hearts and minds; and will finally be able to produce the fruit for which they

were originally called to do — as God’s witnesses to the Gentiles; *and* they will possess the living Word — as Christ, the Rod of Jesse, will dwell in their midst.

Second, the twelve tribes of Israel (signified by the twelve remaining baskets of food) will be placed at the head of the nations, in a position through whom all the blessings will flow out to the Gentile nations and Christ will be in the midst of them.

*In that day sing to her (Israel), A vineyard of red wine! I, the Lord, keep it, I water it every moment, Lest any hurt it, I keep it night and day. (Isaiah 27:2, 3)*

*Those who come He shall cause to take root in Jacob; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. (Isaiah 27:6)*

*In that day the Lord of hosts will be for a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of His people,*

*For a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, And for strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate. (Isaiah 28:5, 6)*

The fifth sign given to the nation of Israel surrounding the kingdom is **Deliverance from the Sea.**

*Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.*

*Now when evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing.*

*So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid. But He said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.” Then they*

*willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going. (John 6:15-21)*

The sequence of events leading up to the fifth sign reveals how God would deal with the nation of Israel from Pentecost to the end of the Tribulation, a 2,000 year period. This sign begins with Christ departing to the mountain; a “mountain” signifying a *kingdom*. While Christ was on the mountain alone, the disciples went into a boat out to sea. These events point to Christ’s departure from Israel to the heavens. *And it was dark, and Jesus had not come to them* reveals Israel’s separation from the Lord, set aside as a nation, scattered amongst the Gentiles and perceived as being “dark,” symbolizing “a place of death” but also “blindness” while out among the Gentile nations (“*out to sea,*” the word “sea” referring to “Gentile nations”).

In keeping with the sign having to do with Israel and the kingdom, we can then understand this dark place, a place of death, relating to *the time of Jacob’s trouble* because of Israel’s blindness and disobedience; referring to the end times, the Tribulation. *Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing* symbolizes the second segment of this dark time (the last three and a half years remaining of Man’s Day), which is *the Great Tribulation*. The “sea” or “Gentile nations” arose because of God’s judgment (*a Great Wind*) upon the nation of Israel. The Great Tribulation will be a period of climactic distress, surpassing any other —“*such as never before.*” God will allow the Gentile nations under Antichrist to bring about such horrific conditions, in order to bring the Jewish people to the place of repentance.

*“And unless those days were shortened, no flesh will be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.” (Matthew 24:22)*

*But for the elect’s sake*, we find that the disciples in the boat were in a place of safety, just as Noah and his family in the ark were in a place of safety during the storm. During the Tribulation, following Satan’s expulsion from heaven to earth, the remnant (144,000 Jews) will be *nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent (Revelation 12:14d)*. God will provide a safe haven for them during the Great Tribulation.

Then, deliverance in this fifth sign occurred when the disciples were alone in the boat during the sea storm and *they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat.* This foretells of the time at the end of the Tribulation, after Israel has cried out to the Lord for deliverance, when Christ will appear the second time to save the people and restore them to their land.

The disciples seeing Jesus “*were afraid.*” When Christ returns to earth at the end of the Tribulation, every eye will see Him and every soul will “be afraid.” His majestic power and glory will light up the entire dark world. He will come as the “*Lion of the tribe of Judah.*”

But to the disciples, to His elect, He says, “*It is I; do not be afraid.*” Those who know Him, through His Word, will recognize Him on that Day; and like the disciples, will willingly receive Him. God will guard and reward His elect.

*After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.” (Genesis 15:1)*

This fifth sign foretells the events that will occur during the seven year Tribulation, exactly as it happened in this sign. This sign presents one of many aspects of the same thing surrounding the end times. Exactly the same word-picture is presented throughout both Testaments in order to give us a complete picture of God’s plans and purposes. God has revealed over and over throughout His Word using different authors, times, places and means, His plans and purposes so that we, in turn, can realize what will shortly take place. And all that is seen occurring in the sign after the disciples had received Jesus will be with a view to Israel realizing their calling — the land, the inheritance, the Millennial kingdom.

*...and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going. (John 6:21)*

In that Day, the nation of Israel as a whole, will realize their calling as God’s witnesses to the Gentile nations, to the ends of the earth (**Isaiah 43:9**). And, as God had originally covenanted to Abraham -- “*And in you*

*all the families of the earth shall be blessed*” (**Genesis 12:3**) – Israel, in that Day, will rule over and bless the Gentile nations with Christ in their midst. The days will no longer be dark, but bright and joyful.

The sixth sign in John’s gospel is **A Blind Man Healed**.

*Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”*

*Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”*

*When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (Siloam is translated “Sent”). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.*

*Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, “Is not this he who sat and begged?” Some said, “This is he.” Others said, “He is like him.” He said, “I am he.” Therefore they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?”*

*He answered and said, “A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed, and I received sight.” Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. (John 9:1-11, 14)*

The sixth sign begins with the disciples asking Jesus “*who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*” It was commonly supposed that sickness was a result of sin. It would follow that sins committed by a baby still in the womb or sins committed by parents could result in a baby being born with a disease. Jesus rejected both suggestions. Jesus told them that neither had sinned, *but that the works of God should be revealed*

*in him.* God allowed the man to be born blind so that Christ could heal him and thus reveal the works of God. But Jesus was referring to the nation of Israel and chose this man as an example to exhibit Israel's condition. Just as the man was born blind, so it was with Israel. Israel has been blind since birth, since they were created by God in Jacob. Since their birth, Israel has never produced fruit for the Lord, in respect to their calling — to be God's witnesses to the Gentiles (**Isaiah 43:10**). And Israel will remain in this blind condition and in a state of unbelief, remaining in the place of death until Christ returns, who will then give them life and sight. Then and only then will Israel realize their calling and go forth in fulfillment of **Isaiah 43:10**, as God's witnesses:

*“You are My witnesses,” says the Lord, “And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me.”*

Jesus' next statement centers around the present condition of Israel, saying:

*“I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”* (**John 9:4, 5**)

God sent Jesus to the earth to minister to the Jews up until His departure to the heavens. After Israel's rejection of Jesus, God had temporarily suspended His national dealings with Israel and is now dealing with the new creation in Christ — for two thousand years. Following two thousand years, Christ will give life and sight to the nation of Israel.

Jesus then gives sight to the blind man. After Jesus had placed the clay on the blind man's eyes, He told him *to go wash with water* in the pool of Siloam, which means “Sent.” After he washed his eyes with water in this pool, he was then able to receive sight for the first time, relative to his calling — meaning “*Sent*” to others as God's witness. As a result, the man would go forth believing in Christ and witnessing to others concerning Jesus the Christ (**John 9:11, 27, 30-33, 38**).

“Water” is often used in Scripture to refer to the Word of God, as seen in **Ephesians 5:26**:

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word...*

And this is the way “water” appears to be used in this fifth sign as well. The eyes of the person born blind were opened by the *living* Word, Who is the written Word. And the healing of the man born blind occurred on the Sabbath day, that which points to the Seventh Day, the Millennial Kingdom. Many of the signs that Jesus performed were done on the Sabbath for this very reason. But many of the arrogant and wicked Jewish religious leaders brought accusations against Christ for supposedly “violating the Sabbath.” But these religious leaders were strictly going by the *letter* of Scripture, not knowing the *Spirit* of Scripture, thereby not understanding Scripture altogether, especially with regards to what the Sabbath actually meant and what it pointed to. Had they known the Scriptures, they would have recognized their Messiah and would have understood the signs and why they were being performed on the Sabbath. Instead of accusing Christ of violating the Sabbath, they would have seen and understood that the healing of a sick or blind man on the Sabbath pointed to the healing of Israel on the Sabbath, the Seventh 1000-year period. But because their hearts were hardened, they went against everything that Christ and His disciples taught. Matters had become so bad that these Jews, the religious leaders, *had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue (John 9:22)*. This is again seen in **John 12:42, 43**:

*Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

When Christ returns, these religious leaders will see Him once again and will mourn. It will be a *fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31)*.

The seventh sign in John’s gospel is **The Raising of Lazarus**.

*Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary*



*and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."*

*When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judaea again."*

*So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.*

*Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.*

*Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept.*

*Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?" Then Jesus again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone."*

*Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me."*

*Now when He said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"*

*And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth, Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go." (John 11:1-7, 17, 23-26, 32-39, 41-44)*

This seventh sign has to do with Israel's sick [blind] condition, a condition that has gone unchanged for the past 4,000 years. The death of Lazarus symbolizes the nation of Israel as having been in the place of death for four days, pointing to the condition of the Jewish people throughout their 4,000-year history, a condition of their unfruitful state concerning the message which they were to carry and proclaim to the Gentiles.

When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, *He stayed two more days in the place where He was (John 11:6)*. During the first two days, Jesus heard about Lazarus sickness ("*Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick*" **John 11:3**), pointing to the first 2,000 years from Israel's birth. Israel has been sick [blind] during the two days from Abraham/Jacob to Jesus. Following this, Jesus waited *two more days*, another 2,000 year-period, which would fall within this present 2,000-year dispensation (*The present dispensation covers the time from Pentecost until the removal of the Church*). During the present dispensation, God has temporarily set aside His dealings with the nation of Israel. This present dispensation has to do with God's dealings with the Church, in which He has sent the Holy Spirit into the world to procure a bride for His Son. At the end of this dispensation, when the Bride has been acquired, she will be removed to the heavens and then God will complete His dealings with Israel. When Israel repents, God will raise them up from the dead and then they will believe in Christ and realize their calling. This is when the Messianic Era will be ushered in and Israel will be God's witnesses on earth to the Gentiles. This is the meaning of the seventh sign concerning Lazarus' death and resurrection.

When Christ said, "*Let us go to Judaea again,*" matters moved from the present to a future time, to a time when Christ will return back to the earth at the end of the Great Tribulation.

When Jesus arrived in Judaea, the remarks from the Jewish people to Jesus, including Martha and Mary (sisters of Lazarus), indicate that they were still in a state of blindness and unbelief. This depicts Israel's blindness and unbelief when Christ returns, as seen in **Luke 18:8**, when He says, "*Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find [the] faith on the earth?*" This question in the Greek text denotes a negative answer, the answer being "No, He will not find the faith on the earth when He returns."

When Jesus arrived in Judaea, Martha went out to meet Him, but Mary remained *sitting in the house*. And the first thing addressed to Christ by both of them, which represented a lack of faith, was "*Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died*" (**1 John 11:21, 32b**). In **John 11:23**, Jesus assured her that her brother would rise. And, rather than Martha showing her faith in Christ as the One with the power of resurrection, she says, "*I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*" So again Jesus corrected her by saying, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live*" (**John 11:25, 26**).

At the end of two days [2,000 years], Christ will return to raise Israel from the dead. The complete scope of resurrection will be comprised of the nation as a whole being gathered from the four corners of the earth and being raised from the dead to be restored to their land. And just as Lazarus was raised in "a natural body" of flesh, blood, and bones, so will the whole house of Israel be raised in the same manner. We see this in **Ezekiel 37**:

*Again He said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord."* (**Ezekiel 37:4-6**)

*Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!'" Therefore prophesy and say to them, "Thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, O My people, I will open*

*your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord... (Ezekiel 37:11-13)*

After Christ saw Mary weeping and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, “Where have you laid him?” Even after Christ had spoken to them concerning “I am the resurrection and the life,” their continual weeping showed their unfaithfulness to Him. This caused Jesus to groan in the spirit and be troubled. The Greek definition for the word *groan* [Strong’s # G1690] is “to snort with anger; to have indignation; to sigh with chagrin;” and the word *troubled* [Strong’s # G5015] is “to stir or agitate.” And this will be the exact same condition that Christ will find His people when He returns at the end of this dispensation — blind and unfaithful to His Word.

As another test of their faith, Christ asked them where they had laid Lazarus. Of course, Christ knew where Lazarus had been laid — and He didn’t need to be present to raise him either. They should have responded in the same manner as the centurion soldier who asked Christ to heal his sick servant:

*“Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.”*

*When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!” And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 8:8-12)*

The centurion soldier believed in Christ and therefore knew that He did not need to be present to heal his servant, but by His Word alone the servant would be healed. This was yet another of Christ’s many signs and miracles that He performed during His ministry to Israel.

But rather than acting by faith, the Jews in this seventh sign told Jesus, “Lord, come and see.” Their unbelief in Him caused Him to weep for

them, possibly because He pictured them weeping and gnashing their teeth in shame at their future judgment. But many of the Jews that were there did not understand His sorrow, saying, “*See how He loved him!*” *And some of them said, “Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?”* In hearing this, Jesus again groaned in Himself because of their unbelief.

When Jesus came up to the tomb, He commanded the Jews to “*Take away the stone.*” This pointed to Israel’s deliverance, when Christ, at the end of the Tribulation, will restore the nation of Israel and *will take away their hearts of stone (Ezekiel 36:24)*. Yet again, Martha the sister of Lazarus responded in unbelief and said to Christ, “*Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.*” So Jesus said to her, probably in an agitated voice, “*Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?*”

Following this, Christ lifted up His eyes and prayed to the Father:

*“Father, I thank you that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.” (John 11:41, 42)*

The seventh sign, like all the other signs, were performed because of Israel’s unbelief, so that they may believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God and that the Father sent Him.

Christ had performed *numerous* signs for Israel up until this point; this sign being the last one He would perform *before His death*, but not the last one. The last sign, the eighth sign, was Christ’s resurrection *after His death*.

Once Israel is resurrected and restored to their land on that future Day, they will finally place their belief in Christ and will “*come forth*” to live in His sight.

*I will return again to My place Till they acknowledge their offense.  
Then they will seek My face; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.”*

*Come, and let us return to the Lord, For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up; On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight.*

*Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord, His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter and former rain to the earth. (Hosea 5:15-6:3)*

Christ, who is “the Resurrection and the Life,” will be present at the time when Israel and the Church are raised, just as He was present at the time when Lazarus was raised. With Israel and the Church, Christ will “go forth” to save His people and His people will “come forth” at His command. And just as Lazarus (a type of Israel) came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth, so it will be with Israel. This pointed to Israel’s physical and spiritual appearance in the place of death, literally bound hand and foot, but also their spiritual state of bondage and their face covered because of their blindness. But once they are raised, like Lazarus, Christ will command, “*Loose him, and let him go.*” Israel will be free from their place of death, from their spiritual bondage and from their blindness — Israel (as a whole) will finally see, believe and live in His sight. And Israel, in that coming Day, will carry God’s message to the Gentiles, and they will be a blessing to them and God will bless them forever.

The last sign, the eighth sign, in John’s gospel is **The Resurrection of Christ.**

*Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”*

*Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there, yet he did not go in.*

*Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. Then, the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. (John 20:1-10)*

In **John 2:18-21**, Jesus had made mention of his resurrection being a *sign* during the Passover in Jerusalem:

*So the Jews answered and said to Him, “What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?” Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy the temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Then the Jews said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?”*

*But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when he had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them, and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.*

Then, in **Matthew 12:38-40**, Jesus uses a different approach as to his resurrection being a *sign* when confronted by the Jewish religious leaders:

*“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.” But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”*

Just as Jonah was cast into the sea (*sea* referring to “Gentiles” and “the place of death”), died in the sea, and was raised from the dead on the third day, so would the Son of Man be delivered by the Jews into the hands of the Gentiles, suffer death, and be raised from the dead on the third day. The occurrence of Jonah, a *type* of Christ, forms a *sign* for the Jewish

people. Therefore, based upon this, it is evident that the resurrection of Christ forms a *sign* for the Jewish people as well.

And this eighth sign was Christ's last sign in John's gospel to effect belief among the Jewish people during the years of the reoffer of the heavenly kingdom (from 33 A.D. to about 63 A.D.).

Following Christ's resurrection, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early while it was still dark; found the stone rolled away from the tomb and Christ's body no longer present inside the tomb. In light of the time of Mary's arrival to the tomb, Christ must have risen sometime prior to the first day of the week, and it seems more likely that it would have been at the end of the Sabbath day. This also seems more likely when a comparison is drawn from the other signs that were performed by Christ during His ministry — they also were performed on the Sabbath day. Furthermore, we have numerous examples and comparisons in Scripture relating the Sabbath day as the Seventh day of Rest, the Day of the Lord — pointing to the Millennial Kingdom. And the sign of Christ's resurrection also pointed to the Seventh day of Rest, the Millennial Kingdom. This is what the *sign* was all about.

*Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. (Genesis 2:1-3)*

God blessed the seventh day as a day of rest from all of His work. And, just as the works of all the creation had been finished in six days, their duration in their present condition was fixed to six thousand years. By the same analogy, this long period of restoration would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years, in which Christ along with His saints would reign upon the earth. And it is therefore of great importance to see why God sanctified the seventh day, as the *day of Rest* --- a history of the past --- and a prophecy of the future.

And this is the very same pattern that God used in setting required times and feasts to be celebrated and remembered by the Jewish people, not as a



legalistic fleshly practice without purpose, but as a *sign*, a sign pointing to the Seventh Day, to keep it ever in their minds:

*Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings. (Leviticus 23:3)*

God's promise to Israel for the inheritance of Canaan, the promised land, was a promise of *rest* to all those who were faithfully obedient to Him:

*So the Lord gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. The Lord gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass. (Joshua 21:43-45)*

The Promised Land, the land of Canaan, is a *type* of the future kingdom on earth for the nation of Israel and is also a *type* of the future kingdom of heaven for the bride (overcoming Christians), given as an example for all Christians to realize. Entering and conquering the land enabled Israel to experience God's rest, which He had covenanted to the Israelites through Jacob. The author of **Hebrews** equates this Old Testament concept of *rest* with entering into Christ's rest, that is, His future Millennial kingdom.

*Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them (Israel); but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest... For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works'...*

*Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day... (Hebrews 4:1-10)*

The Sabbath Day, the *Day of Rest*, points to the Seventh Day, the seventh one thousand year period of the Messianic Era. And just as God had finished His works of creation on the seventh day, the Sabbath day, so also Christ finished His works at Calvary, when He said in **John 19:30**, “*It is finished!*” following with His resurrection on the seventh day, the Sabbath day.

We find further commentary in **Matthew 28:2** concerning the stone that had been rolled away from Jesus’ tomb. An angel of the Lord had descended from heaven and rolled back the stone, but not to let Christ out of the tomb, as in the case with Lazarus in the previous sign. Rather, the angel had rolled the stone back to let others in to see that Christ was already out. This angel was sent as a ministering spirit to let Mary know what had happened, that *He is risen, as He said* and then commanded her to *Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples.*

Peter and John ran fast to the tomb as soon as Mary told them that Christ was no longer there. Peter went into the tomb to carefully examine the place where Jesus’ body had laid. *And he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself (John 20:6, 7).* The Greek term for the word “saw” implies an intense stare, in contrast to the more casual look described in verse **five**.

Peter stared intensely at the empty grave clothes as they laid in an undisturbed manner, in other words, they had not been handled or unwrapped — the cloth was intact. Christ, at the time and following His resurrection, possessed a body capable of movement from one point to another at will, a body animated by the Spirit. He could appear in the midst of His disciples and then disappear at will (**Luke 24:15, 31, 36; John 20:26**). So, at the instant Christ rose from the dead, He did not remove his grave clothes or walk out of the tomb. Rather, He simply vanished from one point and reappeared in another, from the tomb to another location outside the tomb. A reference to this type of removal can be seen in **1 Corinthians 15:52** with the resurrection and rapture of the Church. It will be “*in the twinkling of an eye.*” Therefore, with Jesus’ body no longer inside the grave clothes, the linen wrappings remained lying there maintaining the shape of the body, and the napkin which had

been over His face fell in folds where His head had been laid. This account was what Peter and John stared at intensely and what resulted in John's *immediate* belief. And because he witnessed this sign and spent forty days afterwards with the resurrected Christ, Peter spent five years in the proclamation of the message of Christ's resurrection to the Church (**Acts 2:14-39**).

Ten days after Christ's ascension, on the day of Pentecost, there were about one hundred and twenty disciples, including the apostles, that gathered together to proclaim "*the wonderful works of God*" to those present in Jerusalem, including those who came from afar that spoke in different languages. And after the disciples had been filled with the Spirit, through the supernatural resources of the Spirit, they proclaimed the message of Christ speaking foreign dialects to the people who had gathered from other nations. Peter stood up and spoke in a bold manner, centering his speech on Christ's resurrection and all which the resurrection now made possible.

This type belief was not seen during the time the disciples spent three and one-half years with Christ prior to His death. Rather, at the end of this period, "*all the disciples forsook Christ, and fled*" (**Matthew 26:56**). But this time, after spending forty days with the resurrected Christ, the matter was entirely different. The matter that made such a big difference in their faith now was the fact that their message centered on something not applicable before — *the fact that Christ had risen from the dead*.

And though this eighth sign in John's gospel was to effect *belief* among the nation of Israel during the reoffer of the kingdom, this did not happen. However, Israel *will* believe in that future Day when Christ, the pierced One in all His glory, returns to the nation. Then, Israel will go forth with a message concerning the resurrected Christ, a message that will be given to the Gentiles to the ends of the earth.

### **Born Again in the Spirit**

*Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*  
**(John 3:3)**

The Gospel of John introduces the act of being “born again” meaning “brought forth from above” or “brought forth from God.” Nicodemus, a teacher among the Pharisees in Israel, came to Jesus acknowledging that no one could perform the *signs* being revealed apart from God’s power. Jesus response to Nicodemus, in light of the *signs* being performed and the message being proclaimed, centered on the necessity of Divine healing for Israel which could only come “from above,” from “God’s power.” In other words, not only were *the signs* “brought forth from above” (reflecting upon Israel’s sick condition) but the *healing* for Israel must also be “brought forth from above,” or “brought forth from God.” Thus, the matter in John’s gospel pertaining to being “born again” or “brought forth from above” had to do with the *Jewish people*, along with the *signs* and the *future heavenly kingdom*.

And contrary to what most Churches teach concerning this subject, eternal salvation is not applicable here. The subject at hand deals with the same matter as it has always been dealt with in the past — with Israel (a people who could only be viewed as *already saved*) and an inheritance in the heavenly kingdom [millennial salvation]. This message of being “born again” was not something new, but was a requirement for Israel previously seen in the Old Testament.

*Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”*  
**(John 3:5)**

In **John 3:5**, Jesus referred back to the *type*, having to do with events beyond the Passover in **Exodus 12**, with a continued bringing forth from above, and a goal in view — an inheritance to the kingdom. Born out of water then can only pertain to the Red Sea passage following the Passover. The Israelites (who had experienced the death of the firstborn through the application of the blood on the doorposts in Egypt) were then taken down into the Sea, symbolizing burial after death and raised up out of the Sea, symbolizing resurrection and placed on the eastern banks of the Sea (**Exodus 12-15**). They did this through God’s power, “brought forth from God,” and with a view to an inheritance in another land.

The Israelites, following the *death* of the firstborn which showed their belief in the Lord, possessed Spiritual life. Thus, they had to be raised

from the place of death in order to walk in “newness of life” — having to do with walking in the Spirit and no longer in the flesh. This is pictured during the present dispensation through *the act of baptism*.

The Christian having experienced the death of the firstborn vicariously (through belief in Christ, the blood of the Paschal Lamb Who died in his stead), is placed down in the waters. This symbolizes the Christian in the place of death (death of the flesh), buried beneath the waters. Then the Christian can be removed from the waters and find himself in the position of having been raised with Christ, now being in a position to walk in “newness of life,” with a view to an inheritance in another land, the heavenly land. And because this act is a “work,” a Christian’s proclamation of faithful obedience to walk in the Spirit with the goal of reaching the heavenly kingdom, it cannot pertain to spirit-salvation [eternal life] but to soul-salvation [millennial life].

In **John 3:5**, Jesus not only referred to being born of water, but also of being born of the Spirit. In the Old Testament, this is pictured for us through the Israelites, after being raised out of the Sea were being led by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, as they journeyed toward an inheritance in another land. Likewise, a Christian, who is raised from the water to walk “in newness of life,” has the indwelling Holy Spirit to lead him into all truth, as he journeys toward an inheritance in the heavenly land.

And the entire matter rests on its beginning foundation in **Genesis 1:2b-25**, in which the ruined creation was raised up out of the waters and completely restored over six days’ time by means of a work of the Spirit. This is why both water and Spirit are parallel with one another and why much importance is given to the matter, for only through this dual means can a Christian enter into the kingdom of God.

This process of putting to death the flesh and walking according to the Spirit is a daily requirement of faithful obedience — and, if followed, represent individuals who are “born of God,” and is the central message of **1 John’s** Epistle. The structure of **1 John’s** Epistle runs parallel with parts of John’s Gospel. An individual who is not for Christ is viewed to be against Christ and there is no middle ground. And, an individual either walks in the Spirit and experiences fellowship with the Father and His Son

or he walks in darkness and does not experience this fellowship.

*Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. (1 John 3:7, 8)*

The reference “little children” can only be directed to individuals who are experiencing child-training as *sons of God*. And this training will allow individuals to be among those in that future Day to be adopted as *firstborn sons of God*, allowing them to occupy kingship positions in the kingdom (for only “sons” can rule).

John uses the expression “brought forth out of God,” or “born of God” *ten* times in his first Epistle. This expression is stressed to make one point quite clear — that one who is “born of God” must put on the practical attributes of God — He must practice walking in the light in order to be seen in connection or belonging to God. And though these individuals are *Eternally saved*, if they do not walk in the light as “God is light,” then they will have no part with Him in the coming Millennial kingdom. And the test of knowing and having fellowship with Him is to know Him *through His Word*:

*But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. (1 John 2:5)*

John’s first use of the expression “brought forth out of God’ or “born of God,” is seen in **1 John 2:29**:

*If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.*

This *righteousness* being practiced by those who are child-training as “sons” can come only from above [brought forth from above, out of God]. Righteousness emanates from God. And if we practice righteousness, we are being trained by God and therefore we are “born of God.”

The second reference “born of God” is seen in **1 John 3:9**, where it is used twice.

*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. (1 John 3:7-9)*

Then again, John uses the expression “born of God” in **1 John 5:18**, where it is used twice exactly in the same manner.

*We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keep himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.*

The expression “born of God” used in both instances pertain to the same subject — *an inability to sin*. These two verses, **1 John 3:9** and **1 John 5:18** have to do with that which emanates from God, and pertains to an individual who is walking in connection with the light. But in **1 John 1:6**, where sin is seen in the lives of the believers and they would be lying if they say they have fellowship with Him, they could not be seen as “born of God,” because they are walking in darkness.

A proper understanding then of the expression “born of God” is simply this: one who continually abides in the Word of God so that he is putting away sin (putting away the flesh) and walking in the light (walking in the Spirit); one in whom the power of God is working through him, because God is Light and He cannot sin nor does He bring forth sin.

The next expression “born of God” is used in **1 John 4:7, 8** in connection with *love*.

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

When one loves others, he is “born of God” because God *is* love. The individual in this case is allowing the power of God to work through him when he loves others. Love emanates from God and therefore hate *cannot* exist. And the opposite holds true for individuals who hate others — they cannot be “born of God” because this characteristic is not of God. They, as Christians, are more aligned with Satan than with God. Again, being

“born of God” or “brought forth from God” has to do with walking in the Spirit and not in the flesh. An individual who knows this knows God, because he is walking in the light and allowing God to work through him.

The next reference “born of God” is used four times in **1 John 5:1, 4** in connection with believing that *Jesus is the Christ* which is inextricably connected to *loving, keeping His commandments and overcoming by faith*. Again, being “born of God” relates to walking in the Spirit by first believing that Jesus is the Christ which includes being faithful to His Word. If one believes that Jesus is the Christ, he will be faithful in all that emanates from God. If he does not believe that Jesus is the Christ, He will not act by faith in Christ nor is he being “brought forth out of God.” If one is *not* loving, keeping His commandments and overcoming by faith, he is *not* being “brought forth out of God.” This is how we know that we are of God.

## The Epistle of Jude

The central theme in the Book of **Jude** surrounding the salvation of the soul has to do with *apostasy*. There is a great deal of similarity between the writings in **Jude** and the writings in **second Peter**. The two Books deal with the same subjects: apostasy, false teachers and judgment. The purpose of **Jude’s Epistle** is to exhort kingdom believers to continue in “the faith” and to warn them of these false teachers and of falling away. Within the warnings, Jude addresses the severe judgment that false teachers and apostates will face at the judgment seat of Christ.

The English word “*apostasy*” is translated from the Greek word *apostasia* (Strong’s #G646), a compound word formed from *apo* and *stasis*. *Apo* (Strong’s #G575) means “away from” and *stasis* (Strong’s #G 4714) means “a standing.” When used together the meaning is “a standing away from; a defection from truth; a falling away.”

“Apostates” are saved individuals who at one time received the Word of the kingdom, and then fell away to go back to the world, to deceiving doctrines. These apostates are the false teachers that Jude warned about. They taught false messages relative to the Word of the kingdom, denied the Lord God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and fell away to the error of the



wicked.

*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. (1Timothy 4:1)*

“Doctrines of demons” simply refers to doctrines contrary to what Scripture teaches; that which came through the tares placed by Satan. And the way in which this was done was by taking the truth of the Word and twisting, perverting the Truth. Jude, through inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote his Epistle addressing these false teachers and their apostasy. False teachings and apostasy was prophesied before the Church began, even during the days of Moses. The work of Satan continued at Christ’s first advent, with the tares being the Jewish religious leaders; and, during the inception of the Church, he placed tares within the Church to do their destructive work. The tares, who are the false teachers, were eternally saved and did have a good understanding of the Word of the kingdom. But they fell back and corrupted the Church, which grew in a distorted way, such as represented in the parable of the mustard tree in **Matthew 13:31**. And then we find in the parable of the leaven in **Matthew 13:33** that throughout the history of the Church the work of the tares completely leavened the Word of the kingdom. “Leaven” in this context meaning to completely breakdown. The leaven was placed by the “woman” in three measures of meal, which is the Word of the kingdom. The “woman” depicts Israel, primarily the Pharisees and Sadducees, who placed their own destructive heresies into the Word of the kingdom until it was completely corrupted.

*Then Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.” (Matthew 16:6)*

The end result of this destructive work can be seen within the Church today — a complete annihilation of the Word of the kingdom. And, in light of this destructive work, Jude educates his readers to beware of such distortion and wickedness.

*For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and*

*our Lord Jesus Christ. (Jude 4)*

Scripture identifies these apostates and apostate teachers in two ways:

1. They turn the grace of our God into lewdness; and
2. They deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The word *grace* in the Greek (Strong's #G5485) translation means "favor, gift, joy." Scripture reveals the numerous graces of God, some of which are His gift of peace, the Holy Spirit, His love, His Word, His Son and His salvation. And the word *lewdness* in the Hebrew (Strong's #H2154) translation means "an evil plan, a wicked device, mischief, a wicked mind." Therefore, we can translate the Scripture to mean this: *They convert the favor of God into a wicked device.* For example, they change the Word to benefit their own opinion in order to bring others to succumb to their doctrine and to their evil deeds. And many do this for profit and praise.

Second, their deceitfulness can be seen when they deny the Lord in several ways:

1. They deny that the Lord God and the Lord Jesus Christ are One.
2. They deny that the Lord Jesus Christ came in the flesh and is coming again in the flesh.
3. They deny that the Lord Jesus Christ will set up His literal kingdom in the age to come.
4. They deny the Word of truth, the Word of the kingdom, therefore they deny the Lord.

Jude gave examples of the iniquity of these apostates for our admonition, so that we can understand what to watch out for. Then, Jude provided warning by revealing what the consequence was for them and what it can be for us if we also apostatize. Jude presented the example of Israel in the wilderness under Moses. The people of Israel were granted God's gift of Eternal salvation, were taken out of bondage from the land of Egypt (a type of the world) to give them an inheritance in another land (the kingdom). Regardless, Israel had no faith in God, who rejected His authority, constantly complained and spoke evil of Moses and Aaron whom God had appointed over them. And because of their continual

disobedience to Him, He destroyed them all.

*And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in the wilderness! Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better to return to Egypt?”*

*So they said to one another, “Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.” Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. (Numbers 14:2-5)*

*But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. (Jude 5)*

Because Israel despised and rejected the authority of Moses and Aaron, an authority placed by God, they rejected God Himself. Likewise, a peril outcome will result for those today who reject God’s will. All of Israel with the exception of Joshua and Caleb perished in the wilderness. It will be no different for Christians if they choose to disobey God’s Word.

In **Jude 6**, we have the example of the fallen angels, “*who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode. He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day...*” During the days of Noah, these fallen angels fell away from the Lord, leaving the place that God had set for them. These fallen angels [those who had cohabitated with the daughters of men] were taken to “*tartaros*” which means “the deepest abyss of hades” until the day of their judgment.

A companion Scripture to this is seen in **2 Peter 2:4**:

*For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell [tartaros, Strong’s #G5020 meaning “the deepest abyss”] and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment...*

The people of Sodom and Gomorrah are yet another example to whom God gives warning. These people conducted their lives in the flesh, in wickedness, apostasy and sexual immorality, resulting in condemnation as well.

*...as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh [fallen angels], are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*

**(Jude 7)**

A companion Scripture is seen in **2 Peter 2:6**:

*...and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly...*

These examples were written for our admonition. These apostates are further described in **Jude 8** as those who *defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries* and in **2 Peter 2:10**: *those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries.*

Likewise, Christians are under the authority of God as well as those individuals whom He has appointed under Him:

*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. (Romans 13:1, 2)*

We are subject to every governing authority as they have been appointed by God, whether on earth or in the heavens. We are not to “*speak evil of dignitaries*” even if they are evil. Speaking evil of them is automatically speaking against the One who appointed them.

This includes speaking evil of Satan and his angels. Rather, we are to

resist them just as Christ did when He was tempted by Satan in the beginning of His ministry on earth. On the day of their judgment, God will judge Satan and his angels and repay them for their deeds. A similar example is seen in **Jude 9**:

*Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"*

And then we see the example in **2 Peter 2:11**:

*...whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.*

Therefore, we should understand that a Christian's evil speaking of government, political leaders, judges and even Satan is going against the will of God. Instead we should follow the clear command of Scripture:

*Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men... (1 Peter 2:13-15)*

Scripture reveals that going against God's appointed authority is to be seen as *apostasy*. In **Jude 11**, we are given three distinct examples of apostasy from time past that is just as prevalent today — "*gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah (Jude 11)*". These three apostates — Cain, Balaam, and Korah — are recorded in the Old Testament and present a complete picture of the characteristics of apostasy.

"*The way of Cain*" is the way of the man of flesh. This phrase reflects upon the account of Adam's sons, Cain and Abel, to show that one was disobedient and the other faithful to God. Even though Cain was the firstborn with first rights of the inheritance, he was not faithful to God, therefore he lost his inheritance. Cain worshiped God through his own will and efforts rather than according to the will of God. Therefore, we

realize that the “way of Cain” represents the way of the flesh, and not according to faith. It represents man’s view instead of the truth of the Word, and this is what leads to apostasy. We must consistently engage in God’s word and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth, so that we do not fall into man’s corrupted view, following *the way of Cain*, which is apostasy. We will remember that it is Cain, the man of the flesh, who kills Abel, the man of the spirit. We also have a choice to walk according to the flesh or walk according to the Spirit.

Abel was faithfully obedient to God’s will and gave an offering acceptable to God.

*By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. (Hebrews 11:4)*

The next characteristic of apostasy is “*the error of Balaam.*” Balaam was paid by Balak, the king of the Moabites, to curse Israel in order to drive them out of the land of Moab (**Numbers 22:2**). However, Balaam failed at doing this evil work, for God controlled his tongue so that when he opened his mouth he spoke only blessing.

*Then Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me?” I took you to curse my enemies, and look, you have blessed them bountifully!” (Numbers 23:11)*

But Balaam “loved the wages of unrighteousness” and was not prepared to give up his profit. Therefore, he devised a plan to separate Israel from the blessings of God by bringing them to commit harlotry with the women of Moab, who in turn invited them to turn to their god, Baal.

*Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people [Israel] began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel. (Numbers 25:1-3)*

Balaam was successful in leading Israel astray through his “doctrine” and as a result of his teaching, the women of Moab were able to lead them to commit harlotry, to bow down to other gods. His “doctrine” was simply this: He told Israel that they had a covenant with God which could not be broken; therefore, they were able to form other relationships with other people and their gods. This led to God’s anger and judgment upon Israel, including Balaam, who was rebuked by the Lord.

*They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man’s voice restrained the madness of the prophet. (2 Peter 2:15, 16)*

We can conclude in this example that Balaam taught that which was common and acceptable to most of the people, those who walked according to the desires of the flesh. He told them what they wanted to hear, because they had “itching ears.” And his whole motivation for doing this was greed — for money, for gain. We can see with regards to apostate teachers today that they act exactly according to Balaam, who bring in their own “doctrine” to corrupt the Church who has “itching ears.” The motivation for many of these pastor-teachers is the same — for profit, for praise. Their focus lies in building the Church for pure profit and they do this by enticing individuals with “great swelling words.” Their deceiving “doctrine” is this: that all Christians will receive future rewards and blessings irrespective of how they live their lives now, and they base it entirely upon Christ’s finished work at Calvary. And because the Church believes this lie, they remain in their carnal state, living a life of sin and ignorance. In **Revelation 2:14**, it is prophesied that this will be the condition of the Church in these end times, right before the coming of the Lord.

*“But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.*

The third and final characteristic of apostasy is “the rebellion of Korah.” Korah was assigned the position of Levite priest by the Lord with respect

to the operation of the Tabernacle. Korah, however, wanted to raise himself up above this position to be head of the people of Israel. This led to his rebellion against Moses and Aaron's leadership. By finding fault and criticizing their leadership, Korah built himself up as a much better leader in the eyes of the people.

*Now Korah the son of Izhar rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown.*

*They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?" So when Moses heard it, he fell on his face... (Numbers 16:1-4)*

Korah justified his actions by convincing the people that *all the congregation is holy and the Lord is among them*, therefore any one of them had as much right to lead the people as Moses and Aaron. What they refused to see was that God had appointed Moses and Aaron alone for the task. Therefore they were not challenging Moses' authority or Aaron's but God's authority. And this is why Moses *fell on his face*, because he recognized whose authority was actually being challenged. Unacceptable incense was then offered upon the altar of the tabernacle by 250 men and leaders who sided with Korah. This rebellion against God's authority led to God's wrath and judgment upon Korah and his entire group.

*Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly...and a fire came out from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense. (Numbers 16:31-35)*

You would think that after seeing this destruction, the people of Israel who survived would learn not to go against God's authority. But what did they



do? The following day after witnessing the ground swallowing Korah and the fire consuming 250 men, we find that *all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the Lord."* (**Numbers 16:41**)

The rebellion was not against Moses and Aaron but against the Lord. And because of this, the Lord sent a plague amongst the people who challenged His authority and 14,700 of them died that day. We can realize, as a warning to us, that God does not tolerate His children challenging His authority or those He appoints. In **Titus 3:1**, we have been given a clear reminder:

*Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.*

This command includes the elders of the Church, for they also are appointed by God. If we criticize them or go against their authority, then we are going against the authority of God. We are to speak evil or condemn no one, for Christ will soon be Judge and everyone will be repaid by Him for their evil deeds.

The three characteristics that lead to apostasy:

1. *"The way of Cain"*— acting upon our own will instead of the will of God; walking according to the flesh instead of walking according to the Spirit; walking by sight, instead of by faith.
2. *"The error of Balaam"*— being led astray by the "doctrines of men" and by the wisdom of men, rather than the wisdom and doctrine of Christ. The source of this apostasy is greed: the wages of unrighteousness.
3. *"The rebellion of Korah"*— challenging God's authority by criticizing and despising His appointed leaders. When we go against God's appointed leaders, we go against Him. This includes His leaders on earth and in the heavens. The source of this apostasy is pride.

The act of apostasy and false teaching will find itself characterized in one or more of these three types and will bring on itself the severity of God's

judgment at the Judgment seat of Christ. We must be careful not to form ourselves in any one of these characteristics, but rather be set apart, living according to the will of God. In **Jude 12**, metaphors are used giving a clear picture of what these apostates and apostate teachers look like and the severity of their judgment.

*These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. (Jude 12, 13)*

“*These are spots in your love feasts*” speaks of apostate teachers who deceive believers into thinking they are serving them by feeding them the Word of truth, but actually they are speaking lies only to serve themselves, i.e., for profit or gain. The second sentence uses four metaphors to describe these apostate teachers, in which the last metaphor reveals their future condition:

“*They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds*” is a metaphor to describe these apostate teachers, presenting them as clouds that appear to promise rain until the winds blow them away and they never deliver one drop. These false teachers use the Word to give “great swelling words” of promise but cannot deliver because their “doctrine” is deceitful and ever changing to suit those with itching ears.

Then they are further described as “*late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots.*” In late autumn the trees are expected to produce much fruit, but these particular fruit trees, the false teachers, have produced none with respect to the Word of the Kingdom. They may appear to produce this fruit but when late autumn appears, or at the time of the harvest which is the end of the age, they bear no fruit at all. Therefore, these apostate teachers have been judged and found unworthy to enter Millennial life with Christ. They are considered “twice dead,” which is a reference to the second death.

*Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of*

*God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*  
**(Revelation 20:6)**

The first resurrection refers to the out-resurrection from among the Church; those who will be chosen out from among the Church to become the bride of Christ. Those who do not get chosen will be hurt by the second death; they will not have life in the Millennial kingdom. In this case, these apostate teachers were born dead but were made alive by the Spirit, but now will experience the second death as they are not able to enter Millennial life, making them *twice dead*.

*“Pulled up by the roots”* refers to apostates who are not only without fruit, but are rootless, not grounded in truth. They will be found unworthy and then cast out of the kingdom. It is a similar expression to *being cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.* **(John 15:6)**

The third metaphor describes these false teachers as *“raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame.”* The word *raging* is the Greek translation meaning “wild, fierce, untamed.” These apostate teachers are themselves wild and untamed in the Word of God, which will become clear when their works are put to the test at the Judgment seat of Christ. These godless people put on a great show, but lack any substance. They boast in liberty, but place the people of God in bondage to sin. Their shame will become visible as they face their Judge on that Day.

The fourth metaphor and final placement for these false teachers will be as *“wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.* After they have done their evil deeds and made their profits, they, like wandering stars, move on to other places to exploit God’s people again. They resemble wandering stars passing through swiftly, but God has reserved them for the vast blackness of darkness forever. This “blackness of darkness” refers to Gehenna, a place reserved for apostate teachers, the anti-type being “the lake of fire.” A companion Scripture is seen in **2 Peter 2:17,**

*These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.*

Note that immediately following these metaphors concerning apostate teachers, Jude draws attention to the prophecy of Enoch:

*Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, “to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” (Jude 14)*

Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam, is mentioned here for a specific purpose. Enoch is a type of the Church who was removed (raptured) from the earth to heaven before the Flood (judgment) fell upon the earth. Before Enoch was raptured, he gave a prophecy about “these men,” the apostate teachers, and the events that would follow concerning Christ’s return. God gave Enoch this revelation some 5000 years beyond his time.

And just as Enoch was raptured before the Flood began, so also will the Church be removed before the Tribulation begins. But this will not happen until “these men” have done their destructive work of false teaching. Relative to this apostasy, Paul states in **2 Thessalonian 2:3**:

*Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed...*

Paul, again in **1 Timothy 4:1** states,

*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...*

We can realize that by introducing Enoch at this point in **Jude’s Epistle**, God revealed the sequence of events and the timeframe in which all this will happen. Just as Enoch was raptured during the Seventh generation — *seven* in Scripture being a complete period of time — so also will the Church be raptured at the beginning of the Seventh 1000 year period, which begins in heaven. During Enoch’s day, the “apostasy” or “falling

away” had occurred, and it was following these events that Enoch was raptured to heaven. Then, the Flood came. And during the latter days, again the falling away or apostasy will occur first, then the Church will be removed and following this will be the opening of the Tribulation, when the man of sin (Antichrist) will be revealed. **(2 Thessalonians 2:3)**

Knowing this, we are able to discern the times and be ready. We must take heed of this warning and refrain from doing two things:

1. We must not allow ourselves to be deceived with false teachings and fall away from the Word of the kingdom.
2. We must not fall away and teach false messages relative to the Word of the kingdom.

Judgment for apostates and apostate teachers, those who teach that one can be saved by their own works instead of works emanated by the Holy Spirit, will be greater than any other Christian. These apostates were given the understanding of the Word of the Kingdom and then chose to fall back and teach in error. Because of this, they will seek mercy and repentance at the Judgment seat of Christ, but none will be given to them.

Jude provides warning so that we do not fall into the same error of wickedness and lose our inheritance that has been prepared for us since before the world began. Jude concludes his Epistle with an exhortation to all kingdom believers:

*But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh. **(Jude 20-22)***

Jude exhorts Christians to continue building upon “the faith.” The manner in which this is done comes by constantly engaging in the Word of God. The Word of God is our shield of faith. Then, Jude adds the exhortation to pray always in the Holy Spirit. The indwelling Holy Spirit is the only means by which one can be guided into all truth and plays an

integral part in Christians being built up in the faith. Jude commands Christians “to keep yourselves in the love of God,” which is inextricably connected with keeping His commandments. Our faithful obedience to His Word shows that we are in the love of God. In **1 John 2:5**, it states: *But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him.* Last, Jude exhorts the reader to seek and wait for His appearing with godly fear, eagerly hoping to be found worthy to rule with Christ. This concluding exhortation centers around Christian’s awaiting Christ’s return in a prepared manner.

Jude warns Christians to beware of apostates, making a distinction between them and those who are not. The focus here is to bring Christians to the Word of the kingdom or to bring them back from the error of their ways. We are to be compassionate to them, but to apostates, we are to minister to them the truth in godly fear, hating their ungodly acts and works of the flesh. If we reach them, we will have pulled them out of the fire, saved a soul from death and covered a multitude of sins. Therefore, turning Christians either to the truth or back to the truth has to do with the salvation of the soul.

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

This *death* refers to the “second death,” a separation from Christ for 1000 years in the Kingdom Age. Let us therefore continue earnestly in “the faith”— always, until the end.