

Seeds for Good Soil

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Volume Three

Table of Contents

- 1. The NAME**
- 2. One of Christ's Commands**
- 3. When Love Waits**
- 4. Head Scratcher**
- 5. Babel**
- 6. What's It Going To Be?**
- 7. I Will Work With That**
- 8. It's Getting Nuts 'Out There'**
- 9. Then We'll Be Perfectly Perfect**
- 10. Humbling Three Revisited**
- 11. Your True Identity**
- 12. Heavenly Things**
- 13. Can't See!**
- 14. Being Small**
- 15. Perfection**
- 16. Darkness**
- 17. Basic Training – One**
- 18. Basic Training – Two**
- 19. Basic Training – Three**
- 20. The First Day**
- 21. Second Day, First Heaven**
- 22. Third Day, Doubly Good**
- 23. Fourth Day, Let's Clear the Air**
- 24. In the End - Part 1**
- 25. In the End - Part 2**
- 26. The Gap**
- 27. In the Light**
- 28. Don't Drift**
- 29. Warning From Prison**
- 30. Broken**

Chapter 1

The NAME

Contemporary Christian teaching and preaching doesn't put much focus on this topic and indeed it is something that contemporary societies don't emphasize either at least not the way people did in earliest times. Names.

Now if you think about it, it's really no mystery why – that's because if you truly know and understand the NAME, you're in for a blessing beyond description. You see, there have been only two sinless men to walk the earth, Adam and Jesus Christ and both of them were very involved in names.

Before Adam sinned, while his mind and soul were still pure and uncorrupted, God had him name all the land animals and birds. Jesus, during His life and ministry, was all about the Name. For instance:

*“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call **His name Immanuel**,” which is translated, “God with us.”*

(Mat 1:23)

*“In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be **Your name**...”*

(Mat 6:9)

*“For where two or three are gathered together in **My name**, I am there in
the midst of them.”*

(Mat 18:20)

*And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the
Child, **His name was called JESUS**, the **name** given by the angel
before He was conceived in the womb.*

(Lu 2:21)

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who **believe in His name**:*

(John 1:12)

*“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed **in the name** of the only begotten Son of God.”*

(John 3:18)

Jesus even gave new names to some of His disciples:

*Simon, to whom He gave the **name** Peter;*

(Mark 3:16)

*James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the **name** Boanerges, that is, “Sons of Thunder”;*

(Mark 3:17)

Why even in heaven, some will receive new names:

*“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him **My new name.**”*

(Rev 3:12)

In biblical thought, a name does not merely identify; it expresses the essential **nature** of its bearer. In all probability, Adam named the beasts by observing their nature, as he had nothing else on which to base his judgments. From this arises a principle about how the Bible uses the term "name." To know God's name is to know God as He has revealed Himself, that is, to understand His nature.

When *name* is used in this way, it does not mean "the word by which a person is called," but rather "the whole **nature or character** of the person" as far as we know it or understand it. This is why the proverb says, *"A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches"*

So then, to "*believe in the name* of Jesus Christ" means to believe in the **nature and the character** of Jesus Christ. It means to believe that He is the Son of God and that He stands in relation to the Father in a way that no other person in the universe ever has or

ever will. It means that He can perfectly reveal the Father to us. It means that we believe He is the Savior, the High Priest, the Mediator and Intercessor, and our soon-coming King. It means that we believe that through Him we have entrance into God's presence—not just entrance to Him, but actually, fellowship with Him. (thanks, John W. Ritenbaugh)

In fact, when you “*praise the name of the Lord*”, it implies that you should know that name and the character of it. For instance:

*I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will **glorify Your name** forevermore.*

(Psa 86:12)

Praise the LORD!

*Praise, O servants of the LORD,
Praise the **name of the LORD!***

(Psa 113:1)

*I am the **LORD (Jehovah)**, that is My **name**;*

(Isa 42:8)

So, we know the name of the Lord, at least this one; He has several. What does it mean? -- **the one bringing into being, life-giver, giver of existence, creator, the absolute and unchangeable one, the existing, ever living, I am.**

We also know Him as Jesus which means "Jehovah is salvation". So, you see, all the way back in Eden, in tasking Adam to name all the creatures God was training Adam to know Him. Then sin entered our world, and it changed Adam's ability to name, that is to **perceive and know someone's character**. Consequently, he hid from God and mankind has hidden from God ever since.

Enter, Jesus Christ. What Adam never understood, and what Jesus perfectly manifested – the character of God:

*Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you **have not known Me, Philip?** He who **has seen Me has seen the Father;**”*

(John 14:9a)

Quite simply, God wants us to **know** Him. In fact, He wants the whole cosmos to truly **know** Him. The NAME says it all.

Chapter 2

One of Christ's Commands

Among the important words in Christianity – love, faith, peace, joy, kindness, etc. there is one that is rarely mentioned but vitally important. It was one of Jesus' commands, a fervent command and yet we tend to yawn at it. Even the disciples were rebuked because they could not do it for even one hour. (See Mat 26:40)

We need to understand it from a spiritual perspective, not so much physical. If we believe Jesus, we'll do it; if we don't or don't care about His commands or we don't really love Him, we won't do it and sad to say, we may even mock those who do.

Some say doing it is just too intense for them. Some think that to do it is fruitless or boring. Some say they are too involved in 'more meaningful' activities 'for the Lord'. They just don't get it.

Most, if not all these excuses show a lack of understanding of the nature of this command:

*"And what I say to you, I say to all: **Watch!**"*

(Mark 13:37)

*"**Watch** therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."*

(Luk 21:36)

Jesus is talking about His return, and He commanded us to:

*"**Watch** therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming."*

(Mat 24:42)

Now, quite simply to watch means to stay awake and alert. So, clearly the Lord wasn't saying stay physically awake and alert but rather He's speaking to a condition of the

inner man. In Revelation, He addressed the church in Sardis as having “a name that you are alive, but you are dead” – serious indeed. And He also says:

*“Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore, if you will not **watch**, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.”*

(Rev 3:3)

In this verse, we can see that to not watch is the counterpoint or opposite to **remember how you received and heard** the gospel and **hold it fast**.

With Sardis, it is apparent that He is referring to His instantaneous appearing at the rapture, but He also speaks to the remnant of Jewish believers during the Tribulation when He says,

“...you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat and will come and serve them.”

(Luk 12:36,37)

So, watching is synonymous with having a real relationship with your Savior – not lip service or just going through motions. Even in the times of greatest trial, when you know Him and know His love, you will always **remember His words and hold them in your heart**. You’ll **watch**.

Chapter 3

When Love Waits

*Then the angel, whom I saw standing on the sea and on the earth, lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT, that there will be **delay no longer**, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the **mystery** of God is finished, as He proclaimed **good news** to His servants, the **prophets**.*

(Rev 10:5-7)

Sometimes, God waits, and we've all gotten used to accepting the old adage that He does things 'in His time'. As we can see above, there will come a time when His **mystery** is finished, and He will proclaim via His angel that there will be **no more delay**. What's this mystery? Wait for it...

But generally, we do not do well with His delays, in fact, we can get pretty freaked out. Even the best of us can react this way. The prophet Daniel cried out to God:

*"O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! **Do not delay** for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name."*

(Dan 9:19)

King David cried desperately:

*But I am poor and needy;
Make haste to me, O God!
You are my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, **do not delay**.*

(Psa 70:5)

But then when his heart was stronger, he also exhorted us to look to the Lord in times of delay:

*Behold, the eye of Yahweh is on those who fear Him, on those who **wait** for His lovingkindness,*

(Psa 33:18)

*Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why are you disturbed within me?
Wait for God, for I shall still praise Him,
For the salvation of His presence.*

(Psa 42:5)

And the prophet Micah echoed the same thing:
*But as for me, I will watch expectantly for Yahweh,
I will **wait** for the God of my **salvation**.
My God will hear me.*

(Mic 7:7)

Now the Jewish people need this encouragement in particular because the Lord has made them wait for two thousand years as He has extended His grace to the gentile world. By the way, according to 2 Pet 3:8, that's two days:

“But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.”

So that brings me to the reason for this lesson and helps me better understand the story of Jesus with Lazarus when it says:

Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. And it was the Mary who anointed the Lord with perfume, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.

So, the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."

But when Jesus heard this, He said, "This sickness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days in the place where He was.

(John 11:1-6)

Yes, Jesus made them wait **two days** and when He arrived, Lazarus had been in the tomb for **four days**. That would correspond to four thousand years, prophetically. And take special note that the scripture says He waited those two days because **He loved them**. Huh? And note, also that the call of Abram was just about **four thousand** years ago. Hmm.

You see, I'm convinced that Lazarus is indeed a type or prophetic symbol of the Jews. Christ's coming to Him was delayed for two days because of love and as he was in the grave for four days, in like manner, the Jews have been spiritually dead (i.e. separated from God) for two thousand years because of their rejection of Christ, and even for four thousand years – why? Because although they have walked in humble acknowledgement of and loyalty to and even service to God it has not been in union with God because that union can only come from trusting in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So why did they reject their Savior? How could they go two thousand years in disbelief - 'in the grave' so to speak? Blindness.

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

(Rom 11:25)

You see, as Paul wrote, they were blinded so that the Gospel could be taken around the world.

*"Behold! My Servant whom I uphold,
My Elect One in whom My soul delights!
I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles."*

(Isa 42:1)

Just as the book of Revelation declares above, this “good news” was proclaimed to/by the prophets, and as for their blindness – this was spoken of by prophets like Isaiah and Moses (See Deut 29:4 and Isa 29:10 as examples). Why even the life of Jesus (that’s His testimony) portrayed this with Lazarus. John recorded:

*And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the **testimony of Jesus** is the **spirit of prophecy**.”*

(Rev 19:10)

All this is to say that Jesus waited for two days because He loved Lazarus and his sisters. And, He’s waited two prophetic days for the same reason – He loves His people.

Chapter 4

Head Scratcher

*"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the **door**, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.*

*"But he who enters by the door is the **shepherd** of the sheep.*

*"To him the **doorkeeper opens**, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*

*"And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they **know his voice**.*

(John 10:1-4)

Whenever Jesus gave the Pharisees an allegory to consider, you can imagine them just scratching their heads (or turbans) and here He goes again. In context, He's not directing this only at His followers but at His detractors. Starting off, He says there's a sheepfold (lit. sheep palace) with a doorway. He then says there is only **one way** into this sheep palace – the door.

Every other religion in the world is somehow based upon works – climbing up to heaven. The one and only true religion is about trust and relationship with God. The sheep trust the Shepherd because they **know** the Shepherd. He says that all other religions are thieves and robbers because as agents of the wicked one, they want to steal your soul away from the Father.

A few verses later, He tells us that **He is the door**. And this agrees with the declaration:

*"I am the way the truth and the life. **No one** comes to the Father except through Me."*

(John 14:6)

Then He states that there is **the** shepherd, not shepherds. Just one, who enters by the door. Now, as I mentioned, Jesus will soon say that He is the door, and He will also say that He is the Shepherd of the sheep. So, is he telling them the door enters by the door? Yes, but like I said, for a Pharisee, it was a head-scratcher.

You see, Jesus is the Door and of course you use a door to enter someplace; additionally, to do that you must trust that the door leads into someplace you want to enter. You must trust the door so to speak. So Jesus is saying, if you want to get into the sheepfold, heaven, you have to trust Me and enter Me. It's about trusting One Who is higher than you. For us, it's Jesus; for Jesus, it's the Father.

"If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I."

(John 14:28b)

So, Jesus is the **Door** and Jesus is the **Shepard**. *"He who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep."* Jesus entered (re-entered) heaven by trusting/obeying in the Father and thereby led the way before His sheep as a shepherd.

We know that Jesus is the only way to the Father for us. How about for Jesus? How did He come before the Father? By the obedience of the cross. That was the only way. In the garden, Jesus prayed, saying, *"My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done."* Jesus chose to obey and trust the Father. That was His door. And in entering it, He became our "Chief Sheperd"

"To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out."

(John 10:3)

Now, Who is this Doorkeeper? I believe this is the Holy Spirit – He is the One Who opens hearts, our hearts, and that's when we hear our Shepherd's Voice. And the Shepherd leads His flock in and out of the sheepfold. You see, the sheepfold is for protection, but the sheep also need to eat. So, the Shepherd also leads us out to green pastures – places of ministry.

Remember, Jesus told His disciples:

"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work."

(John 4:34)

And the Psalmist adds:

A Psalm of David. *Yahweh is my shepherd, I shall not want.*
He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.
He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.

(Psa 23:1-3)

So, the Shepherd leads us out and **He Himself** is our protection – to do ministry and in the process to be refreshed and restored. You see, this parable is about **life** :

“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

(John 10:10)

And, it's about **how** we get that life :

*“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd **gives His life** for the sheep.”*

(John 10:11)

That is, Jesus gave His life for us. And:

“I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me,”

(John 10:14)

We get to have a **relationship** with the Shepherd, to **know** Him. And that relationship leads to wonderful rewards:

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

(1 Pet 5:4)

So, for His sheep, this isn't a ‘head-scratcher’. It's a glorious promise of life, relationship and rewards – just listen to Him, trust and follow.

Chapter 5

Babel

A long time ago, just after the flood of Noah, as mankind began to repopulate the earth, the evil-hearted who did not trust God decided to build for themselves a city with a tower. It was called Babel. Now God wanted men to spread out but these people were against that and intended to band together.

God knew that this unity would be problematic and would recreate the same conditions on the planet that moved Him to send the flood.

And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

(Gen 11:6)

To a prideful human heart, it might appear that God simply wanted to hold them back, that He didn't want them to advance. But this is again the same thinking that the serpent in Eden used on Eve.

The reality is that if they could do all “that they have **imagined** to do”, there would be a big problem for preceding the flood:

*“... GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every **imagination** of the thoughts of his heart was **only evil continually.**”*

(Gen 6:5)

So, once again, God decided to protect them from themselves. However, soon after this, along came the one the Bible calls “the mighty hunter against the Lord”, Nimrod. He used this place to build his own city that he named Babylon. Years later, the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, brought his army to Jerusalem and leveled it. He took the holy

articles from the treasury and the temple and brought them back to Babylon along with many select boys, one of whom was Daniel.

It was this king, Nebby, that forced Daniel the prophet to interpret his dream in Daniel chapter two. See my devotional, “Dreamworld” for more on that. Succinctly, the dream prophetically displayed all the kingdoms that would rule over the Jews and Jerusalem.

So, its not surprising that the name Babylon comes up again at the end of our age:

*And he (one of God's angels) cried mightily with a strong voice, saying,
Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of
devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean
and hateful bird.*

(Rev 18:2)

Babylon started off as a tower, became a city and then a regional empire and in the final end-times represents the entire planet. The heavenly angel declares that Planet Babylon has become the home of all the evil in the cosmos – yep, that’s Earth under Satan’s rule. The name Babylon means “confusion” and that’s appropriate because all the deceit and evil in every corner, in every heart, will bring with it great confusion.

But don’t let that circumstance cause you any fear or concern. When the angel declares this, the church is in heaven having been taken there at the rapture/resurrection. In the meantime, the stage is being set and indeed the days are globally going from bad to worse. More war and violence is ‘on the menu’, more delusion and deception, more hatred – the world is indeed a war zone spiritually.

Chapter 6

What's It Going To Be?

As believers, it's important for us to put 'first things' first and 'major on the majors'. Sadly, the preponderance of us are like the men in John chapter six who wanted more banquet miracles (loaves and fishes). They ran after Christ, but Jesus tested their motives and gave them something to ponder when He said,

"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 6:27)

Oh, most of us are not going after Jesus to be fed, but we do get hung up on the **doing**. What do I mean?

Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

(John 6:28)

You see, our minds can more easily understand **doing** something to earn God's favor and we often put that doing first before anything else. And for that reason, our churches are 'running over' with people willing to attend, to give, to work, but coming up short on spiritual depth. Christ gave them an answer that for many is still a conundrum today:

Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.

(John 6:29)

In fact, the whole notion of 'being' is important to God. It's a 'first thing'. For instance:

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.

(Gen 17:1)

‘For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

(Lev 11:45)

Be still, and know that I am God;

(Psa 46:10)

*“Look to Me, and be saved,
All you ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other.*

(Isa 45:22)

Yes, to be blameless, to be holy, to be still and know, to be saved, these are ‘first things’ with God. And they follow the first of the first things – **believing** on Him whom He has sent – Jesus.

That’s because **being** these things is directly linked to KNOWING God.

‘Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.

(Jer 24:7)

And, of course, many of you realize that the verb ‘to be’ is an existential verb. “To be” is a verb, like, I am, you are, he/she/it/one is, we are, they are, etc. Notice each of these ‘first thing’ being statements also includes God saying, “I am”. In fact, He introduced Himself to Moses that way:

And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ”

(Ex 3:14)

In the Hebrew, this “I AM” is YHWH. Scholars say that YHWH is ... derived from the Hebrew verb hayah, which means “to be.”

Latin-speaking Christian scholars replaced the Y (which does not exist in Latin) with an I or a J (the latter of which exists in Latin as a variant form of I). Thus, the tetragrammaton became the artificial Latinized name Jehovah (JeHoWaH).

“Scripture says Christ embodies every attribute that is true of Jehovah, Colossians 2:9: “For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” And Hebrews 1:3 says Christ “is the radiance of [Jehovah's] glory and the exact representation of His nature. **Jesus is Jehovah** God.” -- C.H. Spurgeon

All that is to say that Jesus is I AM. He said so Himself –

Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”

(John 8:58)

So, here's the summary – getting the ‘first of the first things’ (believing in Jesus) leads to the rest of the ‘first things’ as you are fully submitted to Jesus. And they lead to Knowing God. So what's it going to **be**?

Chapter 7

I Will Work With That

So often, the scripture shows us that the very thing(s) that we think disqualify us, or that give us doubts about ourselves or even God, are the things that God shows, ‘I will work with that.’

And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

(John 1: 46)

Now, Jesus, when He saw Nate approaching said, “Behold, an Israelite with no deceit!” (I paraphrase) We don’t know a lot about his background or character, but we can certainly trust Jesus. Nate was a straight shooter. So, when he doubted that anything good could come out of Jesus’ hometown, it was an honest doubt. It was sincere.

What was the nature or source of his doubt? Perhaps he had some personal history that prejudiced him or maybe he’d heard so many bad reports from other people that he was entirely convinced. It could have been a social/religious or even political deal for history shows us that Nazareth did not have the greatest of reputations politically. Following the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC, the Roman armory in Sepphoris (four miles from Nazareth) was robbed, and the Romans retaliated by crucifying 2,000 Jews as a disincentive to such revolts. Whatever the case, Nate was dead set against the notion that the Messiah could come from such a place.

Now, his doubt wasn’t born out of apathy. He doubted precisely because he cared about the coming of the Savior intensely. You see, he was evidently one who looked for the Messiah. His friend, Philip, was like-minded. Here’s the story:

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom

Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Philip said to him, "Come and see."

Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

*Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were **under the fig tree**, I saw you."*

(John 1:45-48)

“**Under the fig tree**” was a phrase Rabbis used to describe meditation on the Scriptures. And, because of this, there’s a lot of speculation about whether Jesus actually saw him or was referring to a spiritual observation. In either event, what mattered was that Christ’s statement was like a trigger that ignited a bomb of sorts blowing up Nate’s doubt.

Something about Nazareth had clouded Nate’s mind but Jesus brought in the light, swept away the clouds and Nazareth was no longer an issue. This is the doubt that many people hold to who want the truth but can’t get past the prejudice of their ‘logic’ or the frustration of ‘rabbit-holes’ that turn up empty.

Then, there was Thomas, the disciple also known as the “Twin” who was so adamantly a doubter that even today we can refer to someone who’s doubtful as a “doubting Thomas”. Tom’s character was a fervent and expressive one. When Jesus told his group of followers that He was headed to a little settlement close to Jerusalem (in order to raise Lazarus from the grave), at a time when the powerful Jews were wanting to kill Him, the scriptures say:

*Then **Thomas**, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”*

(John 11:16)

Tom was loyal and true to what he could see. Some speculate that he was called the Twin because he looked so much like Jesus.

But after the Lord’s torture and crucifixion he split from the rest of the disciples. We don’t know why, but when the risen Christ appeared to the others in their hide-out, he was missing – the only one. And when he returned, this is what happened:

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the

Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

So, Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

*And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.**"*

"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord."

So, he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

(John 20:19-25)

You can't help but sense Tom's offense. He may have thought, 'Why did He appear when I'm gone – the only one missing?' Clearly, he was angry and perhaps feeling left out. His doubt wasn't simply because he couldn't see the Lord; I firmly believe the issue of the scars was an excuse – he was offended, feeling shunned and left alone. But God had a purpose in mind.

This is the doubt that is emotional and based in hurt or disappointment. I have two children who have been through such a circumstance. When life is merciless and we experience bitter pain and as a result we are often 'missing' when Christ shows up. It can seem like everyone else 'gets it', everyone else is included. I mean Thomas missed the giving of the Holy Spirit (though he got it later).

But Jesus didn't exclude Thomas, indeed, He had him in mind. Here's the story:

And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving but believing."

(John 20:26)

To both of these ‘doubters’, Jesus showed compassion and mercy and grace. As a consequence, each of these men uttered the greatest confessions of the New Testament:

Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

(John 1:49)

And...

And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

(John 20:28)

Both men followed Christ faithfully for the rest of their lives even unto death. And perhaps, Jesus had **John** in mind too because it was this incident that he says stirred him to write the Gospel of John:

*Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have **believed**. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have **believed**." (like us) And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; **but these are written that you may believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that **believing you may have life** in His name.*

(John 20:29-31)

Both these men were honest about their doubts. You can be too. God can handle them; in fact, He will work with them and ‘blow them away’.

Chapter 8

It's Getting Nuts 'Out There'

*Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every intent** of the thoughts of his heart was **only evil continually**. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.*

(Gen 6:5,6)

In like manner, our current societies are becoming filled with anger and violence. To back up this statement, if it isn't obvious, I've clipped a few segments of semi-recent research on this topic which follow:

When people think of violence, they think of war. But about 83 percent of violent deaths now occur outside conflict zones. From 2007 to 2014, more civilians died violently in Mexico than in Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2015, Brazil had more violent deaths than Syria.

And what about the media we are addicted to? Is it a contributor?

Among the same study participants, now at age 30, early exposure to TV violence did correlate with self reports of adult aggression among men (Huesmann & Miller, 1994), including the “severity” of criminal behavior (Wilson, 2008);

A 15-year study of 500 individuals, released in 2003, followed children from the 1st or 3rd grades into their early to mid-20s (Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, & Eron, 2003). This study, which did control for parental aggression as well as early IQ, social class, and other variables, found that heavy exposure to TV violence in childhood predicted increased physically aggressive behavior in adulthood for both boys and girls (based on self-reports) (Bushman & Huesmann, 2012). Among the findings were that “heavy viewers of violent TV shows in 1st and 3rd grade were three times more likely to be convicted of criminal behavior by the time they were in their 20s” (Bushman & Huesmann, 2012). Specifically, males who had watched large amounts of violent television during childhood were “nearly twice as likely to have

assaulted their spouses 15 years later, 18% more likely to have threatened or used a knife or gun on someone in the last year, and significantly more likely to have been arrested for a crime" (Bushman & Huesmann, 2012)

"The most recent meta-analysis of research about video game violence (Anderson, Shibuya, Ihori, Swing, Bushman, Sakamoto, Rothstein, & Saleem, 2010) included 12 longitudinal studies that met the "best practices" criteria and that explored the effect on physical aggression. These studies, some of which were conducted internationally, included a total sample of 4,526 participants. They found a positive relationship between amount of time spent playing violent video games and later violent behavior."

"Children exposed to violent programming at a young age have a higher tendency for violent and aggressive behavior later in life than children who are not so exposed."

American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, American Psychological Association, American Medical Association, American Academy of Family Physicians, & American Psychiatric Association
Media and Violence: An Analysis of Current Research
A Common Sense Media Research Brief 2013

"Meta-analysis suggests that effect of media violence is positive on aggression based anxiety. The anxiety that stems from the viewing violence in media. Theoretical frameworks like social learning theory also supports the assumptions that exposure to media showing aggression increases the anxiety of people who are exposed."

MEDIA VIOLENCE AND ANXIETY: A META-ANALYSIS ON THE OUTCOMES OF AGGRESSION BASED ANXIETY 2024

"Research suggests that young people in the United States spend more time interacting with various digital media than in any other activity except sleeping, with a typical 8- to 18-year-old using some form of media for an average of 50 hours per week or more. On average, U.S. teens spend more than seven hours per day consuming a variety of entertainment screen media (e.g., smartphone, social media, gaming, music) and 8- to 12-year-olds spend more than four hours per day."

"In 2000, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released a report noting that media violence is a risk factor in shootings in school. A 2003 review identified media violence as a significant causal factor in aggression and violence. The Federal

Communications Commission (FCC) issued a 2007 report on violent programming on television and noted that there is “strong evidence” that exposure to violence through media can increase aggressive behavior in children.”

“These reports and others are based on a body of literature that includes more than 2,000 scientific papers, studies, and reviews demonstrating the various effects that exposure to media violence can have on children and adolescents. These include increases in aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, bullying, fear, depression, nightmares, and sleep disturbances. Some studies found the strength of association between consumption of violent media and these behaviors to be nearly as strong as the association between cigarette smoking and lung cancer, ...”

“Nearly all American teens—97% of males and 83% of females—play video games. Many video games contain violent content, and studies have shown a significant association between violent video game exposure and increased aggression, increased desensitization to violence, and decreased empathy.”

Violence in the Media and Entertainment, AAFP 2020

“...thoughts that cause distress and are often unprompted are known as intrusive thoughts. Intrusive thoughts are not uncommon, and in fact, studies have shown that more than 94 percent of people have experienced intrusive thoughts at least once in the last three months.” – WebMD

Of course, I could continue to cite from literally thousands of references that all lead us to the same conclusion – it’s getting very violent ‘out there’. Add to that violence in the Middle East, violence in Ukraine and the threat of violence all around the world.

Now, the reason I bring all this up is because as I opened with, violence was the key characteristic of the world before the flood, that is the flood of Noah’s day. Jesus Himself said that:

“But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”

(Mat 24:37 and Lu 17:26)

So, keep spiritually alert. Watch! This sad state is just another sign that the Lord’s return is near.

Chapter 9

Then We'll Be Perfectly Perfect

I've written about our identities as born again believers – we are human beings made perfect or complete spiritually by Christ as **His Spirit lives in us** and one day soon we'll be **perfectly perfect** when He **transforms** our earthly bodies to be like His own heavenly body – fitted for eternity if you would. That will happen, we are told, at the rapture/resurrection:

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (to change, to exchange one thing for another, to transform).

For this corruptible must put on (clothe one's self in) incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

(1 Cor 15:51-54)

In the meantime, we are told to consider our flesh as dead.

*Even so consider yourselves to be **dead** to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

(Rom 6:11)

*Therefore, consider the members of your earthly body as **dead** to sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.*

(Col 3:5)

So, as you can see, our sinful flesh is still, in this life, part of the ‘equation’. Now, God sees us as complete, perfect because of the indwelling presence of His Son, Jesus. But He also knows that presently we are saddled with a ‘dusty’ body, a tent so to speak.

For He Himself knows our form; He remembers that we are but dust.

(Psa 103:14)

He knows that our dead, dusty body is like a sin-megaphone, constantly trying to make us think it’s still alive. He knows that we will occasionally listen and stumble.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

(1 John 1:8,10)

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

(1 John 1:9)

So, we are not to ignore our sin or dismiss it. Understand that it’s not us, not our spirits – Christ redeemed us. It’s the ‘not us’ – the dead flesh that continues to encourage sin. This is what Paul recognized in Romans 7:15-25. We are to ‘lay it aside’ (i.e. stop it in its tracks).

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, **laying aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles us**, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

(Heb 12:1)

Therefore, as 1 John 1:9 says, we are to confess it – to the Lord. When we do, He forgives us and cleanses us completely; there’s no trace of its stink. This process teaches us truthfulness, humility and trust – all while we are indeed perfect spiritually, but our souls are still being transformed into the complete image of Jesus Christ.

*But we all, with unveiled face, **beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord**, are **being transformed** (changed into another form,*

transformed, transfigured) into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

(2 Corinthians 3:18)

For now we see through (look into) a glass (mirror), darkly (lit. obscurely); but then face to face: now I know (perceive) in part (partially); but then shall I know even as also I am known.

(1 Cor:13:12)

You see, if you are truly born again, you're learning to trust Him all the time. You're learning to be honest about yourself and to recognize Him in you and actually AS YOU. Of course, if you're like the rest of us, you probably are thinking, I only see Him in me occasionally.

Trust me, He said that if you came to Him, He'd never leave you:

*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "**I will never leave you nor forsake you.**"*

(Heb 13:5)

But to see Him, you must take the veil off (unveiled face). That is, be honest and open (no 'fig leaves like Adam and Eve). If you are, you are going to transform, by God's Spirit with increasing glorious trust in Him, and the evidence/fruit of His Spirit will become more obvious. I say trust because for now, your dead flesh 'clouds' the view so to speak.

When you look into that mirror of your soul, who do you see reflected? The greater you learn to trust and submit your 'all' to Him, the clearer the view of Him will be. Oh, He's **always there** in your spirit in utter perfection. But as you abide in Him and allow Him to express Himself to and through you, you'll realize His glory. And one day the view will be "face to face".

Chapter 10

Humbling Three Revisited

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore, be serious and watchful in your prayers.

(1 Pet 4:7)

So, it's been about two thousand years since Peter wrote this but it is no less true and no less important for us. As I observe what is transpiring with Iran, Russia and Israel, I sense that it would be good for us to review part of Daniel chapter seven:

"Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; and the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows."

"I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom."

(Dan 7:19-22)

In Chapter Seven, Daniel describes a vision of four beasts; he goes into detail on each one – I've dealt more with that in my lesson entitled “Daniel 7 – the Quartet?”. Herein, our focus is upon the fourth beast. This forth beast is traditionally said to be Rome (the iron legs of Daniel 2) but is also said to foreshadow the Antichrist government (the iron and clay feet and toes of Daniel 2) which arises out of the old Roman empire (principally Europe and the Arab dominated Middle East and North Africa). I think this creature does indeed picture

the Antichrist government which I'll suggest will arise out of Europe (which, by the way is particularly supportive of the Arab world).

This war against the saints is the antichrist's attacks against the Jewish believers during the up-coming tribulation time. Therein the AC will indeed seem to prevail over them until the Ancient of Days – Jesus Christ – comes and deals a crushing blow. Daniel's narrative continues with the angel's explanation:

"Thus, he said:

*'The fourth beast shall be
A fourth kingdom on earth,
Which shall be different from all other kingdoms,
And shall devour the whole earth,
Trample it and break it in pieces.'*

(Dan 7:23)

Historical accounts clearly describe Rome's behavior as a trampling and breaking in pieces during its conquests.

*"The ten horns are ten kings
Who shall arise from this kingdom.
And another shall rise after them;
He shall be different from the first ones,
And **shall subdue three kings.**"*

(Dan 7:24)

So, who are these ten kings? There are several good theories. One points out that there are ten European founding members of NATO. NATO's original members in 1949 were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States. That's 12 but of course, the UK and the US are not in the EU.

Another theory points out the 10 NATO Countries With the Largest Militaries. However, the US and Turkey are not in the EU. For this reason, I think the first theory is more likely.

Now, who are the three that need to be "humbled"? "The EU three, also known as EU big three, EU triumvirate, EU trio or simply E3, refers to France, Germany and Italy, a group that consists of the three large founding members of the European Union."

And the prophecy adds that another ‘horn’ or power, the anti-christ, will arise after the ten horns:

*“He shall speak pompous words against the Most High,
Shall persecute the saints of the Most High,
And shall intend to change times and law.
Then the saints shall be given into his hand
For a time and times and half a time.”*

(Dan 7:25)

So, it will look grim for the saints – the Jewish tribulation believers, especially during the last half of the seven year long tribulation.

*“But the court shall be seated,
And they shall take away his dominion,
To consume and destroy it forever.*

(Dan 7:26)

You see, the AC is going DOWN. When Christ comes again with His hosts, that evil one is toast.

*Then the kingdom and dominion,
And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven,
Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.”*

(Dan 7:27)

Now, earlier in verses nine and ten we see portrayed the judgments of the Ancient of Days – definitely an end time event. Then, in verse eleven, the beast (the AC government) is slain and its body is given to the “burning flame”. This may not be the same event, but it is probably tied to the one described in Revelation 19 and 20 where the AC and his false prophet are cast into the lake of fire.

So, you can see that this ‘other’ or ‘little horn’ the anti-christ, is bad news for the world and especially for the Jewish nation. We read more about him in the book of Revelation (see my commentary “Fire Eyes”). In that book, we find something called the “image of the beast” which seems to be an artificial intelligence (AI) and a decree for the

whole world to take a ‘mark’ that qualifies eligibility to buy and sell in the AC economy (the buy and sell club). As an information scientist/engineer, it’s clear to me that managing such a large scale campaign will require enormous computing capability, biotechnology and highly advanced computing and digital technology.

So, with the recent rapid advancements in AI and supercomputing, I’m anticipating that Peter’s exhortation is extremely relevant right now. Be alert!

Chapter 11

Your True Identity

*Not that I have already obtained it or have **already become perfect**, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.*

(Phi 3:12 LSB)

Jesus told us that the path of discipleship would be difficult (see Mat 7:14). Some of that difficulty is from the outside, it's external to us and some of it is internal. Paul expressed some of this latter part when he wrote:

"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

(Rom 7:24)

What he came to understand was the 'dichotomy':

"So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."

(Rom 7:25)

I believe this is what he meant when he wrote that he had not yet become perfect (complete). But for the born-again believer there is a sense in which we are indeed perfect. Let me explain:

*"But he who is joined to the Lord is **one spirit with Him.**"* (1 Cor 6:17)

This "joining" is what Jesus prayed for:

*“that they all may be one, as **You, Father, are in Me, and I in You;** that they also may be **one in Us**, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be **one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me;** that they may be **made perfect in one**, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.”*

(John 17:21-23 NKJV)

More specifically, this union, which by the way is two-way, in Christ's 'absence' is accomplished by His Spirit:

*“A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that **I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.**”*

(John 14:19,20 NKJV)

*“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 NKJV)

What this means is that, once you are joined with Christ, by His Spirit, you are spiritually perfect but not perfectly perfect. What do I mean?

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

(2 Cor 3:18 LSB)

There is a transformation going on. And Christ is patient with it:

*“It is a trustworthy saying and deserving full acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom **I am foremost.** Yet for this reason I was shown mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Christ Jesus might **demonstrate all His patience** as an example for those who are going to believe upon Him for eternal life.”*

(1 Tim 1:15,16 LSB)

You see, Paul came to understand the ‘dichotomy’, but God is not finished. The ‘perfectly perfect’ we all can look forward to is the perfection of our **identity**. Our reborn spirit is alive in Christ and our sinful flesh is dead. Thus, we are not yet completely perfect for our identity is “human being” – body, soul and spirit.

God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;”

(Gen 1:26)

*Then Yahweh God formed man of **dust from the ground (body)** and breathed into his nostrils the **breath of life (spirit)**; and so, the man became a **living being (lit. soul)**.*

(Gen 2:7 LSB)

Jesus showed us the ‘finished product’ so to speak when He showed Himself to the disciples after His resurrection:

“Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.”

(Lu 24:39)

Christ led the way for us:

*“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who **will transform our lowly body** that it may be **conformed to His glorious body**, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”*

(Phi 3:20,21)

*“And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, **we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.**”*

(1 Cor 15:49)

*“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be **changed**-- in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised **incorruptible**, and **we shall be changed**. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on **immortality**.”*

(1 Cor 15:51-53)

Why isn't God finished? Why is the 'dichotomy' not the end?

*"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined **to be conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the firstborn among **many brethren.**"*

(Rom 8:29)

So how you perceive yourself is very important to your overall health. Do you think Christianity is a self-improvement program? Do you continue to **try** to overcome sin? I hope not because Jesus settled that once and for all. Do you just continue in your sin? I hope not because if so, you haven't realized who you are – your identity in Christ. If you're identifying yet with your 'flesh', you've missed the point of salvation, the indwelling of Christ in you. You are a **human being**, if saved, you're redeemed by the blood of Jesus and one day soon you will be a **glorified human being** transformed by the power of Jesus.

Yes, you are complete, you are perfect. Trust God for that – from heaven's perspective, it's done. For now, you must **learn to trust** the Lord that He is IN you and you are IN Him. Thus, your sins are paid for in full. You can truly enter, even now, into His rest – like God with the Sabbath, cease from your own works, your own efforts to 'be like Him', to overcome sin **on your own**. The 'dichotomy' is not your end; being 'perfectly perfect' is.

And like Paul, our calling is clear:

*"Him we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man **complete in Christ.**"*

(Col 1:28 LSB)

Chapter 12

Heavenly Things

Nicodemus seems to have been pretty unconventional among the religious elite of his day. (See John 3) He actually listened to Jesus and wanted to understand. The rest or most of the rest were closed-minded. Jesus called them white-washed tombs – pretty much ‘dead men walking’ spiritually.

And Nick was no slouch intellectually. He was a well-known teacher. But Jesus befuddled him with His “born again” assertion.

"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"

You have to appreciate his honesty. After all, Christ challenged him to open his mind to some things that shook the core of his beliefs and then went even further...

Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness."

Now the capitalization we see in English was not in the Aramaic that Jesus spoke or the Koine Greek that John wrote in, but the translators clearly acknowledged what Jesus was implying when He said repeatedly “We”. That is, “My Father and I” or “All three of Us in the Godhead”. Of course, this again challenged Nick, but then He ‘hit it out of the park’ with...

*"If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one **has ascended to heaven** but He who **came down from heaven**, the Son of Man..."*

The first “heavenly thing” Jesus shared showed that God in heaven does not live in time. In fact, Jesus asserted that He **ascended** and **came down**, to and from heaven in the past – our past – because **we are in time**.

Now, we can read this “heavenly thing” and even if we don’t quite understand it, we can accept it and trust the Lord. But Nick is a Pharisee, a “teacher of Israel”. His cohorts condemned Jesus to death. For him to ‘hang in there’ with Christ was more challenging than it was for the disciples. So when he accompanied Joseph of Arimathea to bury the body of Jesus in the garden tomb when all the disciples were hiding in fear, you can’t help but sense that the change he went through was stunningly profound.

And the teaching continues for the teacher of Israel...

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

Eternal life does not mean that this life goes on forever. Instead, eternal life also has the idea of a certain quality of life, of God’s kind of life. It is the kind of life enjoyed in eternity. (Guzik)

More than any other man, the Pharisee’s admired Moses. But the serpent on the pole (see Num 21:8,9) was a symbol of evil AND a symbol of salvation. That would have been another mind-boggler for Nick. What was symbolized and what even the disciples did not comprehend was the destiny of Jesus taking on all of our sins – becoming sin for our sakes (see 2 Cor 5:21). Serpents are often used as pictures of evil in the Bible (Genesis 3:1-5 and Revelation 12:9). However, Moses’ serpent in Numbers 21 was made of bronze, and bronze is a metal associated with judgment in the Bible, because bronze is made with fire, a picture of judgment. So the bronze serpent was a picture of evil/sin **judged** which will lead Jesus into His next heavenly thing - maybe the ‘clincher’...

*"For God did not send the Son into the world to **judge** the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is **not judged**; he who does not believe **has been judged already**, because*

he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”
(LSB)

Note, God ordained for mankind the freedom of choice from all the way back in Eden. However, Jesus here seems to be explaining to Nick that from heaven's perspective, those who do not believe have already made that choice and have been judged already. Again, there is no time as we know it in heaven.

Now we do live in time and we do NOT have that perspective; thus, as believers we are to obey the Great Commission to preach the Gospel to everyone.

And that Gospel is summed up in the verse I skipped over so we could end with it:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Everlasting Life: This describes the *duration* of God's love. The love we receive among people may fade or turn, but God's love will never change. He will never stop loving His people, even unto the furthest distance of eternity.

We may say there are Seven Wonders in John 3:16.

<i>God</i>	The Almighty Authority
<i>So loved the world</i>	The Mightiest Motive
<i>That He gave His only begotten Son</i>	The Greatest Gift
<i>That whoever</i>	The Widest Welcome
<i>Believes in Him</i>	The Easiest Escape
<i>Should not perish</i>	The Divine Deliverance
<i>But have everlasting life</i>	The Priceless Possession

“If there is one sentence more than another which sums up the message of the Fourth Gospel, it is this. The love of God is limitless; it embraces all mankind. No sacrifice was too great to bring its unmeasured intensity home to men and women: the best that God had to give, he gave — his only Son, his well-beloved.”
(Guzik/Bruce)

This is the greatest of the “heavenly things” Christ shared.

Chapter 13

Can't See!

Understanding how 'it' all began is a fundamental help in growing or maturing as a believer. For that reason, I love to ponder our beginnings. Why do we act and think the way we do? Let's consider Genesis chapter three. The Holy Spirit tells us that a creature referred to simply as a serpent in most translations appeared in the garden that God had made for communing with mankind. It says that he was the most cunning or crafty land animal that God had made. Interesting that this serpent could speak, and he engaged Eve, Adam's mate with a question that baited her into a trap of sorts.

"Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

(Gen 3:1)

The immediate implication was that God was being arbitrarily restrictive. So, Eve tried to explain to this creature that was clearly Satan or possessed by Satan.

"We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' "

(Gen 3:2)

At this point, the serpent could tell that Eve was in over her head because God said nothing about touching the tree. Where did she get that part from? Perhaps Adam in wanting to protect her added that part on his own. We don't know.

But that's when the serpent struck:

*"You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be **opened**, and you will **be like God**, knowing good and **evil**."*

(Gen 3:4,5)

So, there were multiple lies in this attack. First, death indeed came into our existence. Second, he asserted that God was withholding something desirable, something god-like – to know evil. You see, the truth was that she and Adam already knew or literally perceived with the eye “good” because as the scripture tells us, at the conclusion of His creative work:

Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.

(Gen 1:31)

But Eve took the bait. To “be like God” enticed her to disregard the warning. Who was it that first wanted to “be like God”?

*How you are fallen from heaven, O **Lucifer** (soon to be Satan), son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!*

For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'

(Isa 14:12-14)

At that point, Eve was trapped and taken captive so to speak. She believed the serpent’s lies and decided not to believe God. She doubted, and it immediately changed how she perceived the threat.

*So, when the woman **saw** that the tree was good for food, that it was **pleasant to the eyes**, and a tree **desirable to make one wise**, she took of its fruit and ate.*

(Gen 3:6a)

Before she ever ate the evil fruit, she was drastically affected by the lies. Everything she saw or perceived was off. Believing the lies turned her against God’s warning.

She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

(Gen 3:6b)

Now the scripture tells us that Adam was **not** deceived. He made the decision to eat himself without the serpent's lies. I submit that it's possible that he knew they would die but was so 'connected' to Eve that he did not want to live without her. Be that as it may, what God warned them about took place in multiple ways. First, they both died spiritually. That means that one part of their triune being, their spirit, detached, separated from God's Spirit. You see, most literally, that's what death is – separation from God.

Next, something in this vile fruit effected the perceptors in their brains, perhaps the cerebrum or visual cortex. At any rate, as is evident, they could no longer perceive correctly:

*Then the eyes of both of them were **opened**, and they **knew** that they were naked...*

(Gen 3:7a)

Now they could see or rather perceive something new, evil, but more than that, as we noted, they could **not** perceive accurately. What was previously good was now perceived as evil and this became the fundamental flaw in humanity. It was imprinted into our DNA so that we are no longer independently capable of communing with or heeding our Creator. Even the Apostle Paul said:

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

(Rom 7:18,19)

In addition, sin immediately brought **shame** which of course is based on **pride** which is the first and most pervasive sin of mankind:

And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

(Gen 3:7b)

(Wow. That had to itch!) Also, it brought **fear** – specifically, fear of God – remember, their 'perceptors' had become corrupted:

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the

*presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was **afraid** because I was naked; and I hid myself."*

(Gen 3:8-10)

So, this is how it all started. The single decision to stop trusting God and instead, listen to Satan enslaved all of us since that time. It was the original sin. It brought spiritual blindness (we're not even aware of the evil one's influence), shame, pride, fear and later, hatred, envy and more as mankind tumbled downward and downward.

One man, and his mate, brought us from the paradise of Eden into the hell of planet 'Babylon'. He was created perfect – no sin. But just like Lucifer, he had free will and his choice was calamitous. The good news is that one Man, the Son of Man, also perfect used His free will to choose to **trust** and obey God and He redeemed all of creation. It cost Him His life but with it He covered or atoned for our sins. This too is pictured in the beginning:

Also, for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

(Gen 3:21)

Those tunics, those coverings cost an animal its life – the Lamb of God. Of course, we individually, because we all have free will, have to choose whether or not to believe and accept that. You see, Calvary was never an issue of 'crisis management' for God. It was in the Plan from before the beginning.

*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us **in Christ Jesus before time began**, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,...*

(2 Tim 1:8-10)

Jesus restored our sight. Now... Who do you trust? The serpent, yourself or the Son of God?

Chapter 14

Being Small

You really can't 'do' small. But this morning, I was impressed that 'being' small in your own estimation is something God can and will work with. So, what does 'being small' mean?

Well, first of all, it's not really so much a physical characteristic. It's not being tall or short or numerous or few. Rather it's a character attribute that walks hand in hand with humility and lovingkindness.

It also goes with submission and obedience to the one you esteem greater than yourself. King Saul stood head and shoulders taller than all the rest of his countrymen, but when he 'did his own thing without God' Samuel the prophet said to him:

"When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel?"

(1 Sam 15:17)

You see, the problem was Saul did not want to be small in anyone's eyes. Look around you. Everyone, yes, virtually everyone has this same mindset naturally. I say virtually because once in a while someone with a unique character fashioned by hardship or trial develops the godly 'being small or little' attitude. The Psalmist had it. He wrote in Psalm 119:

"I am small and despised, Yet I do not forget Your precepts."

(Psa 119:141)

And then, of course, is the example of Christ:

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and"

coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

(Phi 2:5-8)

And though God is big, really big; His hand's span stretches across the universe, He also expresses Himself to us surprisingly 'small' - for instance, in dealing with a dejected, depressed Elijah:

"and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice."

(1 Kings 19:12)

You see, with God, there are no size hang ups. He's perfectly at peace, perfectly God either way, big or small. But when he reaches out to us, it is often with the little things. Even in providing the heavenly manna in the desert wilderness with Israel:

And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, as fine as frost on the ground.

(Ex 16:14)

Of course, this foreshadows Jesus for He told his followers:

"This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

(John 6:50,51)

Thus, it's clear that 'being small' is a quality God uses. But it's not just 'being small' but it's the being period, being what God desires and that's the difference between religion and a genuine relationship with Him.

Being is not the same as doing because being is God's work, not ours. It goes all the way back to the beginning. God's first command was a 'be command':

*And God said, Let there **be** light: and there was light. (Gen 1:3) Then He followed with seven more - And God said, Let there **be** a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven **be** gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God said, Let there **be** lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them **be** for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them **be** for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God blessed them, saying, **Be** fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, **Be** fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.*

(Gen 1:6, 9, 14-15, 22, 28)

So, when the Lord tells us:

*“...**Be** ye holy; for I am holy.”*

(1Pe 1:16 KJV)

He is NOT telling us to **do** anything but rather to **allow Him** to do His work in us, to submit to the work of His Spirit. I think ‘being small’ in my own estimation is in fact part of that submission.

Jesus said:

“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

(Mat 18:3)

So ‘being small’ is a big deal; it’s a key to entering God’s kingdom.

Chapter 15

Perfection

Then Jesus said, “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.*”

(Lu 23:34a)

Blood dripping from His punctured wrists and feet, with exhaustion so heavy He could not carry the cross, His back ripped open by whips, thorns pressed into His scalp, almost unrecognizable from the beatings, mocked and spit upon, jeered and taunted – the only perfect man to ever walk among us.

These, His first words from the cross, a prayer, were not for help or comfort or vengeance – nothing for Himself at all. It was why He came. He died just as He lived – utterly selfless, loving and forgiving. Not in all eternity past nor eternity future does any act compare – no heroism, no martyrdom, no words or deeds, nothing compares.

No human being could do this – it took God incarnate Who revealed Himself to us and at the same time exposed the lies of the evil one.

Now, unfortunately many if not most of us have heard and read and seen these words so often that in our minds we tend to trivialize them but these words, coming from this person – the Word, the one who created all things (see John 1) ignited the PERFECTION.

In one moment, He Who is perfect unleashed the truly cosmic destruction of darkness and establishment of the perfection of God’s light and life into the tainted creation. Far more, far greater, far, far, far greater than our pitifully small minds can comprehend. The angelic host cheered in astonishment, the demons shrieked in fear, the cosmos was redeemed from evil as the Perfect heart of our Creator was revealed.

*“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*

(Isa 64:4)

God originated that prayer and God heard that prayer and God answered that prayer and God demonstrated His approval by completing the most Holy sacrifice and raising Christ from the grave and seating Him at His right hand. Indeed, all of creation led up to this moment. The spiritual realm became tainted by Satan and his demons, Lucifer became Satan and tainted the physical creation as well – sin, evil, death and all darkness had to be dealt with and we were created not only to be objects of His affection but instruments through which the cosmos could observe the Perfect ‘heart’ of the Perfect One.

“Father, forgive them...” Who are “them”? The soldiers? The people watching? The Hebrew nation? The Romans? The world? The cosmos?

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

*Then comes **the end**, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.*

For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.

The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.

*Now when **all things** are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, **that God may be all in all.***

(1 Cor 15:22-28)

Now, we live in time. God does not. You may say, “but I don’t see it”. Nevertheless, in eternity, it’s done, and trust Him, in the end you will realize it. No wonder all God’s holy ones in heaven exclaim, “Holy, Holy, Holy” to He who is indeed Perfect. Thank you, Father!

Chapter 16

Darkness

Towards the end of the Tribulation, when the planet Babylon's systems are crumbling and all hell literally has broken loose, the forces of Antichrist will come against Christ. Rev 18 records:

*"And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of **every foul spirit**, and a cage of **every unclean and hateful bird**."*

(Rev 18:1,2)

Yes, Satan will gather every evil, foul, unclean and hateful spirit together to our rebellious planet.

Now, it seems like a large portion of the 'moving and shaking' today is done either openly or behind the scenes by those we refer to as 'elites' or 1%'ers. In the media, they are referred to as "influencers". And it's the media that basically tells us what to believe. Which, as most of you can see, is very powerful because an enormous number of people are utterly dependent and even addicted to this media.

At the same time, what we have witnessed over the last generation is an overwhelming 'darkness' that has taken over this media worldwide. I suggest that this is at least part of what Isaiah meant when he prophesied:

*For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,
And deep darkness the people;
But the LORD will arise over you,
And His glory will be seen upon you.*

(Isa 60:2)

Fortunately, God is not ‘influenced’ by darkness, and He is not impressed by these elitists, these movers and shakers. In fact, those who have influence so to speak in His kingdom are quite the opposite of what you would expect. In fact, His Word says:

*But God hath chosen the **foolish things** of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the **weak things** of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And **base things** of the world, and things which are **despised**, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are **not**, to bring to nought things that are:*

(1Co 1:27-28)

Check it out – the foolish, weak, base, despised and the NOT - these are God’s elite, His chosen.

Now, Christ told his disciples to:

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

Mk 16:15)

... so for two millennia His ‘call’ has gone out to many, many people.

“For many are called but few are chosen.”

(Matt 22:14)

Thus, for those of you who know Him, you ‘heard’ that call and by the gracious work of His Holy Spirit you responded and discovered that you were ‘chosen’ – that is, you opened your heart and submitted to God’s love, life and forgiveness. And from that point onward, you’ve been prepared.

Prepared?? Yep. God’s been preparing you, training you, to TRUST Him in all circumstances.

That’s because, in a way, this life with Him is a ‘bootcamp’ of sorts for the day will come (and it is fast approaching) when the ten major ‘elitists’ of the world, the leaders and the powerful, those that the book of Revelation refers to as ‘horns’, will support the antichrist world leader and fight against Christ. In fact, the scripture says:

*These shall make war with the Lamb (Christ), and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are **called, and chosen, and faithful.***

(Rev 17:14)

Yes, today is a dark day; but Jesus told us:

*“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)

and:

*But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake
you as a thief.*

*You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of
darkness.*

(1 Thes 5:4,5)

Chapter 17

Basic Training - One

Matthew 5

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

The most famous, perhaps the most important sermon of all time. He saw multitudes and went up higher. We don't know how many, if any, of the multitudes followed but we do know that His disciples drew near.

*And he opened his mouth, and taught **them**, saying...*

Of course, this is still and always has been the case – multitudes may gather and it's the multitudes that get the publicity, but it's the disciples who will "come unto Him". And they are the ones who get the teaching. Their drawing near shows their desire to be close and to learn. Now, the disciples were probably a group larger than the twelve but the word means "learner" not simply the curious.

The "disciples" were those dedicated to "following the teaching". And this whole teaching was not focused on salvation but upon godly conduct, attributes and the promises of God.

Blessed [are] the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Each of the Beatitudes begins with "Blessed". It is the word for happy. The [are] insertions are not in the original language. Blessed is an adjective with no tense – you could say it represents an eternal condition of its object.

Who are the "poor in spirit"? They are revealed by a confession that they are sinful and rebellious and utterly without moral virtues adequate to be commended to God.

“The poor in spirit recognize that they have no spiritual “assets.” They know they are spiritually bankrupt. We might say that the ancient Greek had a word for the “working poor” and a word for the “truly poor.” Jesus used the word for the truly poor here. It indicates someone who must beg for whatever they have or get.” (Guzik)

So, the poor in spirit have nothing of value to present to God, they are spiritual beggars if you would and what does God promise to them? The kingdom of heaven!

Why does God reward the spiritually poor? Simply put, it is they who know where they stand with God, that is, they know they need His mercy; they know they need a Savior. They are like the man in Christ’s parable:

Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

‘I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’

“And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise [his] eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’

“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified [rather] than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14)

The next beatitude is for those who sorrow.

Blessed [are] they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Now, this mourning is not that you’re bummed or having a trial, a bad day. This word is a grieving, a wailing sorrow like from the death of a child or other loved one.

“Comforted” is similar the name Christ used for His Holy Spirit – Comforter. It means to “call to one’s side”. There is no ‘quick fix’ for mourning, but God will call you to His side and walk with you. By His Spirit, He will soothe your pain moment by moment and give you hope. Both of you will share a fellowship of suffering (see Phil 3:10).

Blessed [are] the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

People today just don't understand meekness or humility. To many of us it's scary because contemporary, let's say worldly, thought casts it in an extremely negative way. You see, humility is not just an act or a posture, it's a mindset, a whole way of thinking about God and about yourself. Living humbly, you consider others better than yourself. You are at peace with God and heaven is delightful. That's because humility is based in selflessness.

Likewise, pride is not just an act or posture but an opposite mindset. And all of humanity walks in this manner naturally. Thus, when you seek a definition of the word "humble" you'll find: "having a feeling of insignificance, inferiority, subservience, etc." or "low in rank, importance, status, quality, etc." And, so, as we think of humility via the filter of sin, we don't see it as God does. We see it only as a 'downer' literally.

But the Bible tells us that God lifts up the humble (Psa 147:6) to dwell with Him in the "high and holy place" (Isa 57:15). There He beautifies them with salvation and revives their spirit (Psa 149:4, Isa 57:15b). So in heaven, the truly humble are highly exalted and actually live in the Almighty's presence.

And here on earth, contrary to what the dictionary says, it's not really positional – Moses, who led millions and spoke face to face with God was "*very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.*"(Num 12:3)

As you can see, these first three beatitudes turn us on our heads; their blessings run contrary to our 'flesh' expectation but that's to be expected (no pun intended) for godly thinking is pure whereas our own thinking is polluted with sin.

Chapter 18

Basic Training - Two

Matthew 5

A large portion of the church today especially in the West is like those in Laodicea – they think that they are in need of nothing. They are blasé about the message – they've heard it all and their honest attraction to their 'faith' is lukewarm, mediocre at best. They are religious 'couch potatoes' so to speak. They come to be entertained because that's all they know.

But the truly godly are different. Jesus spoke of them:

Blessed [are] they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

And these terms, "hunger and thirst", aren't saying, "I could use a snack or I'm a little dry." They literally mean famished and craving ardently. We're looking at the sense of extreme need. These people have a sort of spiritual vacuum – they deeply desire and aren't content with the dribs and drabs of religiosity.

And I have to say that I think a better word for righteousness is rightness. Righteousness is a great word, but it carries with it unfortunately a lot of churchy baggage. The Hebrew word attributed to Abram means to be or to make right, to be just. In the Greek, it is integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking feeling, and acting.

These blessed believers deeply, deeply desire rightness, for all things to be made right. They know that no man, no agency in this world can provide that or even come close. Everything and everyone in this world is drowning in sin. Only God the Son, Jesus Christ can fill our lives, our hearts with rightness. And for those who "hunger and thirst" for it, He will.

Blessed [are] the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

This is a ‘reap what you sow’ promise, isn’t it. It is the same with forgiveness, giving, and other godly qualities so why did Jesus include mercy in His ‘Basic Training’ sermon? There are many descriptors for mercy but the simple definition for it is “to help the afflicted, to bring help to the wretched”. Mercy is an action verb.

It is not just something philosophical or something you get from a Sunday sermon. Everyone needs God to show them mercy but the inherent and abhorrent tendency in all of us is to consider ourselves as ‘good enough’ because of what we did or did not do. Mercy however is a quality or attribute of God – the God Who lives in us by His Spirit. God, living in the Apostle Paul showed him the dichotomy of the flesh and Spirit and the futility of trying to be good in the flesh.

Yes, mercy is an action verb but it is God’s action. As with all God’s attributes, we simply must trust Him to demonstrate His mercy to us and through us. Understanding that we need mercy is paramount to putting our trust in Jesus for salvation. You see, all this Basic Training is not about your own self-improvement but the “godly conduct, attributes and the promises” of Christ in you.

Blessed [are] the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

In both Hebrew and Greek, all the various forms of pure, i.e. purity, purify, purifies, etc. are saying “clean” or “cleanse”. Frequently, if not most of the time, this cleansing is associated with the purging process of smelting as with silver or gold. So, clearly those who are pure or clean in heart will have the glorious vista of God. This is something every sincere believer in Christ wants so what causes this ‘smelting’ so to speak?

The Apostle John, by the Spirit, gave us the answer:

And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

(1 John 3:3)

Understand, this is not an ‘if-then’ statement. You do not purify yourself because of your hope in Him. You don’t purify yourself period. Only the blood of Christ cleanses. What this verse says is that it is the hope in Him that purifies (cleanses) just as Christ placed all His hope the Father.

As the Psalmist said, “*For in You, O LORD, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God.*” (Psa 38:15) and:

“For You are my hope, O Lord GOD; You are my trust from my youth.”

(Psa 71:5)

While the prophet Jeremiah said:

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD.”

(Jer 17:7)

So, then hope is the purifying agent and it is associated with trust. Where does this hope come from? Paul told us:

*Therefore, having been justified by **faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have **access by faith into this grace** in which we stand, and **rejoice in hope** of the glory of God.*

*And not only [that], but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, **hope**.*

*Now **hope** does not disappoint, because the **love of God** has been poured out **in our hearts** by the **Holy Spirit** who was given to us.*

(Rom 5:1-5)

So, we are purified by hope which comes by way of tribulation (testing) and it doesn't disappoint because God's love has been poured out in our hearts by His Holy Spirit. Ultimately, this leads to the conclusion that the blessing of this beatitude is the work of **God by His Spirit**.

*Blessed be the **God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, who according to **His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

(1 Pet 1:3)

Chapter 19

Basic Training – Three

Matthew 5

Blessed [are] the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Now the opposite of peace is war or conflict. The blessed here are not just those who enjoy peace but rather make peace. So where is this conflict, this war? Is it between the Arabs and Israel? Is it between the ‘right’ and the ‘left’? Is it between nations?

The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.

(Ex 15:3)

Moses sang this after God took His people through the Red Sea and destroyed Pharaoh’s army. This was not the war we are looking for but it is symbolic for Egypt has always been a type of the world spiritually.

*And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and **unto the end of the war** desolations are determined.*

(Dan 9:26)

This is part of Daniel’s famous 70 weeks prophecy concerning the Jews and Jerusalem. It speaks of a war and desolations (tribulations). We’ve discussed in other lessons how this war is the one between Israel and God.

*Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that **her warfare** is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.*

(Isa 40:2)

Both of these verses speak of the war between Israel and the Lord. This war came as a result of Israel **rejecting** her **Messiah**, God's Son. Concerning his death they cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children." (Mat 27:25) This is part of the war we're looking for, but there's an even greater war.

It is the universal war of mankind:

*Because the carnal mind is **enmity against God**; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*

(Rom 8:7)

This enmity results in a struggle, a conflict which started all the way back in Eden:

For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you do not do the things that you want.

(Gal 5:17)

This is the big war. This is the war in each individual with God. And the only way for there to be peace is with our surrender, surrender to God's grace through Jesus Christ. Each of us individually can make peace with God this way. It is, in fact, the only way to make peace with Him.

And when you do that, you become a child of the Most High:

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become **children of God**, even to those who believe in His name,*

(John 1:12)

*Beloved, now we are **children of God**, and it has not been manifested as yet what we will be. We know that when He is manifested, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.*

(1 John 3:2)

The last two Beatitudes go hand in hand and are linked with the final encouragement. If you're going to follow Christ's teachings, you're going to follow Him. He said:

“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”

(John 15:20)

Blessed [are] they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Now, when you follow Him, you will receive persecution but when you do and you endure it humbly, don't then get high-minded about it because if you'll notice, your reward is the same as those who are poor in spirit. Remember Jesus' example.

Blessed are ye, when [men] shall revile you, and persecute [you], and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Christ fully submitted to the Lord's will all the way to and through the cross. It was in itself, such a powerful testimony that :

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, “Certainly this was a righteous man.”

(Lu 23:46,47)

The two main things to note are “falsely” and “for My sake”. Don't give the enemy ammunition to speak evil of you truthfully and remember that the blessing comes from being persecuted for His sake, not your own.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great [is] your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

A heavenly reward is an eternal reward. The Apostle Paul, wrote:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

(Rom 8:18)

Why were the prophets persecuted? They spoke the truth via the Spirit of God. So, if you do the same, you're in good company. Great is your reward in heaven!

Chapter 20

The First Day

I'm a literalist. I believe God created all of our existence in six days just as it is given to us in Genesis, but I also believe there is 'more to the story'. Jesus, Who by the way, according to the Gospel of John, is the One God used to create our existence, told His disciples,

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." (John 16:12)

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm NOT claiming to speak for Christ! But I do want to give you some things to consider which I hope you'll hear and be motivated to do your own studying.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

(Gen 1:1)

First, God does **not** create chaos:

*For thus says the LORD,
Who created the heavens,
Who is God,
Who formed the earth and made it,
Who has established it,
Who **did not create it in vain**, (Heb 'tohoo' – formless, place of chaos)
Who formed it to be inhabited:
"I am the LORD, and there is no other.*

(Isa 45:18)

In fact, what God creates is "**good**". That's His own declaration. As we see in Eden, it is perfect, beautiful. Thus, I am convinced that "*In the beginning God created the*

heavens and the earth" in that condition. It was fully formed, complete and beautiful. This is the character of our God.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus speaking, we read:

And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."

(Lu 10:18)

Now, many commentators assert that this was because the 70 had just returned to Jesus joyful because the demons were subject to their authority. I'd say that that's a big maybe. The question remains, how did the demons end up on earth in the first place? If Satan fell "like lightning" (suddenly, with violence) at this time or as a result of this event, we have a problem because there he is in Eden and throughout man's history.

No, I suggest Jesus saw this fall long before for even the Prophet Isaiah wrote about it.

*"How you are fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How you are cut down to the ground,
You who weakened the nations!"*

(Isa 14:12)

And from Job, the oldest book in the Bible, we read:

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

(Job 1:6,7)

So, I'll suggest that Jesus was possibly referring to Genesis 1:2:

The earth was (became) without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering (or brooding) over the face of the waters.

That's because that word translated "was" means equally "became" and because Isaiah said God DIDN'T create the earth 'tohoo' (and 'bohoo' - an undistinguishable ruin). To create the earth in that condition might agree with the evolutionists but it is **NOT** the character of our God.

I suggest that Satan's fall caused the devastation on our planet that once was beautiful and probably full of life. He caused the ruin – the earth 'became formless and void, and darkness covered everything.

And there we see the Spirit of God hovering (literally "brooding") over it all. This verbiage implies that the Godhead was about to engage in bringing a 'new birth' and thus we have recorded the first creative act:

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

(Gen 1:3)

This is wonderfully analogous to what God does by Jesus Christ to the ruined soul of man, to the soul made 'tohoo' and 'bohoo' by sin and its loathsome darkness. John recorded:

*In Him was life; and the life was the **light** of men.*

(John 1:4)

And Jesus told His disciples:

*"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)

And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.

(Gen 1:4)

This is fascinating for it was the **light** that was **good** – not the darkness, not the light and darkness – just the light. Nevertheless, He didn't destroy or cast out the darkness, He separated it. He divided the light from it. In the physical sense, it could be that this is when the planet began to rotate again on its axis.

Spiritually, this is analogous to born again Christians with the light of the Spirit of Christ living in their souls having to exist in dark, sinful flesh bodies until freed by death.

God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So, the evening and the morning were the first day.

(Gen 1:5)

So, the Spirit brooded and the Godhead began a restorative creation with Light. And God calls it “Day”. I suppose He could have just called light, light and darkness, darkness but He gives them identities – Day and Night. And He uses them as both physical and spiritual points of reference:

*I, even I, am the LORD, And besides Me there is no savior.
I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, And there was no foreign
god among you; Therefore you are My witnesses," Says the LORD, "that
I am God.
Indeed **before** the **day** was, I am He; And there is no one who can deliver
out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?"*

(Isa 43:11-13)

*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye
take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until
the **day** dawn, and the **day** star arise in your hearts:*

(2 Pet 1:19)

*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it
is day: the **night** comes, when no man can work.*

(John 9:4)

*But if a man walk in the **night**, he stumbles, because there is no light in
him.*

(John 11:10)

*And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be
no **night** there.*

(Rev 21:25)

*There shall be no **night** there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.*

(Rev 22:5)

So, in conclusion, the first day is/was a wonderful creative act and a foreshadowing of God's plan.

Chapter 21

Second Day, First Heaven

The first day was all about bringing light to planet earth and then separating it from darkness. The second day events are recorded as:

Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters."

Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.

And God called the firmament Heaven. So, the evening and the morning were the second day.

(Gen 1:6-8)

One day here and one creative act; God created the expanse – a large space between two layers of water, upper and lower. Then He called this expanse Heaven which along with Light is a key part of God's divine plan.

The word “heaven” in both Hebrew and Greek is interesting in that the word is always plural. So, the word for “heaven” and for “heavens” is the same. Of course, the sky or heavens have always fascinated us and there's good reason for that.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

(Gen 1:1)

In the very beginning, the heavens are the first of God's physical creation.

"Indeed, heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it."

(Deut 10:14)

Notice that God's ownership or sovereignty over the heavens is primary while the same is declared as a secondary over the earth and "all that is in it". That's because man was intended to rule over the earth but his sinful disobedience in Eden placed his works on it into a form of debt and consequently, temporarily under Satan's rule (until Christ paid the debt on Calvary).

*All the host of heaven shall be dissolved,
And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll;
All their host shall fall down
As the leaf falls from the vine,
And as fruit falling from a fig tree.*

(Isa 34:4)

*Lift up your eyes to the **heavens**,
And look on the earth beneath.
For the **heavens** will vanish away like smoke,
The earth will grow old like a garment,
And those who dwell in it will die in like manner;
But My salvation will be forever,
And My righteousness will not be abolished.*

(Isa 51:6)

From these and other scriptures, we know that one day God will start over to cleanse the entire cosmos from sin while those who are saved will remain in God's care.

*For thus says the LORD,
Who created the **heavens**,
Who is God,
Who formed the earth and made it,
Who has established it,
Who did not create it in vain,
Who formed it to be inhabited:
"I am the LORD, and there is no other.*

(Isa 45:18)

Yes, God made the earth to be inhabited and guess what. He made Heaven to be that way too. Jesus told us:

"In My Father's house (in heaven) are many mansions (lit. dwellings); if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

(John 14:2,3)

You see, there are three heavens. The first heaven is what we call the sky, that is, our atmosphere. The second heaven is what we call the cosmos or universe. The third heaven is what we call Heaven, the home of our Lord and our place of forever home. It is a spiritual place, entirely real, more real than our physical existence but truly indescribable. The apostle Paul being stoned and left for dead wrote about himself:

*I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the **third heaven**.*

*And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows--how he was caught up into **Paradise** and heard **inexpressible** words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

(2 Cor 12:2-4)

Chapter 22

Third Day, Doubly Good

If we are ‘paying attention’, we notice something ominous about the second day. It was the only day out of the six days of creation that did not mention that “God saw that it was good.” Recall that on that day, He separated the waters above and below by an expanse He called Heaven. Now, I’ll suggest for your consideration that this **may** have been for at least two reasons.

First, at the end of the second day, the heavenly environment was as yet incomplete, God wasn’t finished with it for we read in Genesis chapter seven, that in Noah’s day He poured down a massive flood of rain from the upper waters, thus depleting them and fundamentally changing the environment of the planet.

And second, as stated, the upper waters were used for a massive judgement upon a completely depraved and wicked mankind. God being omniscient and knowing beforehand that this would become necessary did not declare His tool of judgement to be good. I’ll mention a possible third reason later.

Now, on to the third day.

Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so.

And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

(Gen 1:9,10)

The appearance of land God said was good. It is one of the seven times “good” is used in this chapter. Clearly, God elevated the planet’s crust in some areas and lowered it in others to achieve this. I submit that we should also note that this was the re-appearance of the land for we see that in the beginning God made the planet complete and beautiful. Then during the ruinous chaos, it is evident that waters (the deep) covered all of it just as with the flood of Noah’s day.

In Genesis 1:2, it is the Spirit of God that initiated the act of redemption as he brooded over the waters of the wasted planet. Then the Logos, the Word, began to work as God uttered “Let there be light.” So here we see the Trinity in unison. John wrote:

“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.”

(John 1:1-3)

Father God called the land Earth which is sometimes the name (in prophetic picture) in Hebrew for Israel while the seas are a picture in prophecy of the gentile nations. That’s fitting for while the earth remained covered by water on the second day, there was no mention that it was good, but when the Earth appeared, God said it was good. Israel is His land and His people among the Gentiles. Through the prophet Joel He said:

“I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.”

(Joel 3:2)

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so.

And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

(Gen 1:11,12)

God’s desire for His creation and His people is **fruitfulness**. To the living creatures He made on the fifth day He spoke:

*And God blessed them, saying, **Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.***

(Gen 1:22)

To Adam and Eve He spoke:

*And God blessed them, and God said unto them, **Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.***

(Gen 1:28)

God the Son (Jesus Christ) Who is the Logos, the Word and the agent of God's creation here, thousands of years later said to His disciples:

*“By this My Father is glorified, that you **bear much fruit;** so, you will be My disciples.”*

(John 15:8)

*“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who **abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit;** for without Me you can do nothing.”*

(John 15:5)

So, both the appearance of the earth (typical of His people) and the fruitfulness of the earth (typical of His people abiding in Him) He saw as good, doubly good.

So, the evening and the morning were the third day.

(Gen 1:13)

Chapter 23

Fourth Day, Let's Clear the Air

I worked for several years in setting up and managing translating centers and though I'm not an expert in any language, I do know about the fundamental challenges that translators face and how they deal with them or fail in them.

Having said that, what we're 'looking at' during the fourth day is (no pun intended) visibility. Let's step through it and I'll explain.

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years;

"and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so.

Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.

God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

So, the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

(Gen 1:14-19)

Most commentators assert that this is when God created the sun and moon and stars, but I vigorously disagree. First, Genesis 1:1 says very clearly that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. This was before Genesis 1:2, before the chaos and ruin on our planet, before the 'tohoo va bohoo'. And it follows with, "darkness was on the face of the deep".

Now, you might ask about the coming of the light and Day in verses three through five. And, of course, that's astute; yet we all know that we don't get daylight without the sun. So, I submit that in Gen 1:1, God created and placed the sun, the moon, the earth,

and the stars exactly where they needed to be but in Gen 1:2 the chaos and ruin brought a shroud of darkness over the planet.

In Gen 1:3, God's restoration begins. He started to clear that darkness and perhaps restarted the earth's rotation on its axis. However, there was more to do to sustain His new creation. God cleared the air so to speak.

He wanted His lights in the sky to be clearly visible. You see, in verse 16 we read "Then God made two great lights:" and the Hebrew for action is indeed "made" not "created" – it uses the word pronounced "aw-saw" which means to make from existing materials versus "bara" which means to create out of nothing. Thus, the translators could have justifiably written, "Then God made visible two great lights..." because they were already there but somewhat shrouded just as they will be again during the Tribulation:

For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

(Isa 13:10)

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

(Joel 2:31)

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,

(Mark 13:24)

You see, for His own good purposes, God sometimes brings healing or if you would, light, in stages. Jesus showed us this in Mark 8:

Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him and begged Him to touch him.

So, He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything.

And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking."

Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly.

Mark 8:22-25

Now, my translation concern is that in verse 17 which was translated “God **set** them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth...” The word “set” should have been translated “gave” which is what it is about 10 times more in the scriptures than “set”. I think the verse should read, “God **gave** them in the firmament of the heavens to **give** light on the earth...”

“Set” implies that He placed them at that time, but I submit He did not. He simply made them visible so that they would shine and dominate the Day and Night skies. They also needed to be seen clearly to serve as, “*signs and seasons, and for days and years.*”

Of course, God didn’t need it but His creation did – thus on the fourth day, I think He ‘cleared the air’ “and God saw that it was good.”

Chapter 24

In the End - Part 1

Daniel was the first book of the Bible that I studied after giving my heart to the Lord about 53 years ago and I've continued studying it and teaching ever since; but I'm sensing it's time to once again revisit chapter nine. World events are such that I think we should renew our vision of God's omnipotence and omniscience.

Daniel was probably a teen or very young man when the king of Babylon's army conquered Jerusalem and tore it down. He along with many others were taken captive to the foreign land and served the king eventually becoming one of his advisors. Several amazing stories are recorded for us in the first chapters of this book and by the time chapter nine occurs the Medes had conquered Babylon but God wasn't done with Daniel.

As with the kings of Babylon, Daniel continued serving the kings of the Medes and Persians. Chapter nine transpires or rather is recorded during the reign of Darius of the Medes. Daniel writes:

“...in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

(Dan 9:2)

By this time, Daniel is probably in his eighties. The books he mentions are the Hebrew scriptures and he points specifically to Jeremiah.

Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

(Dan 9:3)

During this time of deeply earnest prayer, an angelic messenger, Gabriel, came to him and Daniel records:

“And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore, consider the matter, and understand the vision:”

“Seventy weeks (sevens) are determined

*For your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression,
To make an end of sins,
To make reconciliation for iniquity,
To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy.”*

“Know therefore and understand,

*That from the going forth of the command
To restore and build Jerusalem
Until Messiah the Prince,
There shall be **seven weeks** and **sixty-two weeks**;
The street shall be built again, and the wall,
Even in troublesome times.”*

“And after the sixty-two weeks

*Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself;
And the people of the prince who is to come
Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.
The end of it shall be with a flood,
And till the end of the war desolations are determined.”*

“Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;

*But in the middle of the week
He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.*

And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate,

*Even until the consummation, which is determined,
Is poured out on the desolate.”*

(Dan 9:23-27)

In this passage, the word translated as ‘weeks’ is literally ‘sevens’ so the prophecy starts with a declaration that 70 sevens have been determined or pre-established in which

several awesome things will be accomplished. Note also that these ‘**sevens**’ are set specifically for the Jewish people and Jerusalem.

So, what are these awesome things? First, he says, “To finish the transgression” or literally, the rebellion or break away. You see, mankind broke away from God back in the Garden of Eden and the Lord said that within this period, the rift would be healed – mankind (including the Jewish people) would be reconciled with our loving creator—the revolt ended, the rift healed. But for this to happen, the next promised occurrence had to take place – “To make an end of sins” or literally offences and their penalties.

All of man’s offenses before a just and holy God had to be paid for – all past, present and future offences. And furthermore, the slate had to be wiped clean so the true reconciliation of man with God could take place. That is, not only would all offences and their penalties be satisfied but it would be as if they never occurred in the first place – “to make reconciliation for iniquity.”

Then he added the kicker – not only would the rift be bridged, offences and penalties ended, and reconciliation produced, but then, a perfect future is guaranteed, for he said that “everlasting righteousness” would be brought in – eternal rightness in everyone and everything! Wow!

Finally, he said that vision and prophecy would be sealed or closed up and that the Most Holy would be anointed.

So, what was revealed in this passage is clearly the grand and glorious plan of God, and the timepiece so to speak for it is also made obvious – the Jews and Jerusalem – like two hands on a clock. And they’re ticking off 70 sevens or 490, but 490 what? We’ll see that it refers to 490 years. Verse 25 gives more detail.

Specifically, the passage says that from the going forth or issuance of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, and notably the wall of the city, until the coming of Messiah the Prince (i.e. Messiah hailed as royalty, in the line of David) would be total of seven plus 62 or 69 ‘sevens’ or 483 years. Then verse 26 adds that after this period, the Messiah would be cut off or killed but not for Himself.

This prophecy is so explicit in its schedule – only God could pull it off. You see, just as Daniel predicted, the command which allowed the Jews to restore Jerusalem and specifically to rebuild the wall was given March 5, 444 BC by Artaxerxes Longimanus to Nehemiah. (Other similar decrees were given but this one included the rebuilding of the wall, i.e., restoring the city’s defenses as mentioned in the prophecy.) We arrive at this date by looking at Neh 1:1 and 2:1. Then, by knowing that Artaxerxes succeeded his father Xerxes immediately after his death around Dec 17, 465 BC and had a year of accession before his own reign began, we come to Nisan 1, 444 BC (March 5).

Now, we're going to do a little arithmetic. Although the total period outlined in the passage was 70 sevens or 490 years, the declaring of the Messiah as King was pinpointed as being after the 62 sevens which are listed after the first 7 sevens. Therefore, this put it after $7 + 62$ or 69 sevens. That equals 483 years.

Also, we must use the 360-day calendar for each year. This was the calendar of the day, the calendar originally used as shown in the Genesis account of Noah's flood – it's the prophetic year, if you would. So, if each year holds 360 days and we want to measure out a span of 483 years, that is the same as 173,880 days.

Now, beginning with March 5, 444 BC, if we proceed forward 173,880 days, accounting for the 116 leap years, only one year between 1 BC and 1 AD, and a couple other slight imperfections in our own calendar -- we come to Monday, March 30, 33 AD exactly. There indeed we find Jesus, riding on the donkey, entering Jerusalem, hailed as the Son of David, that is, Messiah the Prince.

And just as Daniel's messenger foretold, Messiah was cut off, but not for Himself. Jesus laid down His life freely on the crucifix of Calvary the following Friday, April 3, 33 AD – but not for Himself. You see, He was sinless, the spotless Lamb of God. He was 'cut off' for us!

Now, you may be thinking, 'We've explained 69 sevens, but we started with 70. What about the last seven?' Very astute. The last seven is the seven-year tribulation period described in Jeremiah (same book as what Daniel was reading) as:

*"Alas! For that day (period of time) is great,
So that none is like it;
And it is the time of **Jacob's trouble**,
But he shall be saved out of it."*

(Jer 30:7)

Chapter 25

In the End - Part 2

In our previous lesson (In the End – Part 1) we explained the exactness of Christ's fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy in Dan 9:24 – 26a. He rode into Jerusalem on the back of the donkey 483 years to the day, hailed as the Son of David. Only God could do that.

Following this section of the prophecy, we have Dan 9:26b – 27:

*And the people of the prince who is to come
Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.
The end of it shall be with a flood,
And till the end of the war desolations are determined.*

(Dan 9:26b,c)

26b was fulfilled in 70AD.

“Titus succeeded his father Vespasian upon his death, becoming the first Roman emperor to succeed his biological father.

“Before becoming emperor, Titus gained renown as a military commander, serving under his father in Judea during the First Jewish–Roman War. The campaign came to a brief halt with the death of emperor Nero in 68, launching Vespasian's bid for the imperial.”

“When Vespasian was declared Emperor on 1 July 69, Titus, his son, (and ‘prince’) was left in charge of ending the Jewish rebellion. In 70, he besieged and captured Jerusalem, and destroyed the city and the Second Temple. For this achievement Titus was awarded a triumph; the Arch of Titus commemorates his victory to this day and age.”

“Titus surrounded the city with three legions (Vth, XIIth and XVth) on the western side and one (Xth) on the Mount of Olives to the east. He put pressure on the food and water supplies of the inhabitants by allowing pilgrims to enter the city to

celebrate Passover and then refusing them egress. Jewish raids continuously harassed the Roman Army, one of which nearly resulted in Titus being captured.” “After attempts by Josephus to negotiate a surrender had failed, the Romans resumed hostilities and quickly breached the first and second walls of the city. To intimidate the resistance, Titus ordered deserters from the Jewish side to be crucified around the city wall. By that time the Jews had been exhausted by famine, and when the weak third wall was breached, bitter street fighting ensued.” “The Romans finally captured the Antonia Fortress and began a frontal assault on the gates of the Second Temple. As they breached the gate, the Romans set the upper and lower city aflame, culminating with the destruction of the Temple. When the fires subsided, Titus gave the order to destroy the remainder of the city, allegedly intending that no one would remember the name Jerusalem. The Temple was demolished, Titus's soldiers proclaimed him imperator in honor of the victory.” “Jerusalem was sacked and much of the population killed or dispersed. Josephus claims that 1,100,000 people were killed during the siege, most of whom were Jewish.”

And so, the next part of the prophecy is mysterious because we are not clear on what “it” is in 9:26c-1 or the “flood”. I’ll suggest that just as Israel ended with a war in 70 AD, it picked up where it left off in 1948.

The Jewish people were scattered in 70 AD and without a nation until May 14, 1948. “The Israeli Declaration of Independence, formally the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel was proclaimed on 14 May 1948 (5 Iyar 5708) by David Ben-Gurion, the Executive Head of the World Zionist Organization, Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, and soon to be first Prime Minister of Israel.”

Since its inception, Israel has been involved in a number of wars and large-scale military operations, including:

- **1948 Arab–Israeli War** (November 1947 – July 1949)
- **Palestinian Fedayeen insurgency** (1950s–1960s)
- **Suez Crisis** (October 1956)
- **Six-Day War** (June 1967)
- **War of Attrition** (1967–1970)
- **Yom Kippur War** (October 1973)
- **Palestinian insurgency in South Lebanon** (1971–1982)
- **1982 Lebanon War** (1982)
- **South Lebanon conflict** (1985–2000)
- **First Intifada** (1987–1993)

- **Second Intifada** (2000–2005)
- **2006 Lebanon War** (summer 2006)
- **Gaza War or Operation Cast Lead** (December 2008 – January 2009)
- **2012 Israeli operation in the Gaza Strip or Operation Pillar of Defense** (November 2012)
- **2014 Gaza War or Operation Protective Edge** (July–August 2014)
- **Syrian Civil War** and the Iran–Israel conflict during the Syrian civil war.
- **2021 Israel–Palestine crisis or Operation Guardian of the Walls** (May 2021)
- **Israel–Hamas war** (October 2023-). **Operation Swords of Iron**

However, it's possible that just as Israel thinks it has finally settled their existential dilemma by defeating Hamas, Hezbollah and achieving peace with its neighbors via the Abraham Accords or another peace agreement:

“The end of it shall be with a flood,” (Dan 9:26c)

What flood you may ask. The flood of Gog. Let's look at Eze 38:

“After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you.”

(Eze 38:8,9)

You see, “flood” in Dan 9:26, according to Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon is used of an **overflowing army** as in Dan 11:22 and “storm” in Eze 38 is “from an unused root meaning to **rush over**; a **tempest**; by implication, devastation:—desolate(-ion), destroy, destruction, storm, wasteness.

And so, I suggest that the Gog-Magog invasion of Israel, with all its hoards will indeed be the “flood” and will end “it”, that is Israel's warfare with its neighbors.

But, alas, the **real war** for Israel will continue. That's the war with God. That's the war they initiated when they rejected their Messiah and cried out:

“His blood be on us, and on our children.”

(Mat 27:25)

So, Daniel finished his prophetic verse 9:26 with “*And till the end of the war desolations are determined.*” That literally means that the desolations are decreed. They are foretold; they are the 70th seven in Daniel’s 70 sevens. It’s called the Tribulation, the time of Jacob’s Trouble (Jer 30:7)

And Daniel continues:

*Then **he** shall confirm a covenant with **many** for one week (i.e. seven years);*

But in the middle of the week

He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.

And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate,

Even until the consummation, which is determined,

Is poured out on the desolate.”

(Dan 9:27)

Recent events have given me the goose-bumps. To register their significance, we need to consider the covenant – what covenant? Glad you asked!

Now, if you do a careful study upon this sentence in the original language, you will appreciate this translation (the KJV and Young’s also.) This may be the Abraham Accords.

“Confirm” in the Hebrew is the word pronounced “ga-bar” and it means a continuation of something with an increase or strengthening of it sufficient to prevail or overcome. It’s first mention is in Genesis 7:18 and it is used 25 times in the Bible all with the same basic meaning.

So, what we’re reading in Dan 9:27 is that he, the Antichrist, will take an **existing** covenant or treaty and “**confirm**” it with “**many**”. That is, this verse is not saying that he will create the treaty as some people have been expecting but rather that he will confirm or strengthen it. But why “many” and who are they?

That’s a great question!

I’ll suggest for your consideration that this may be referring to the UN General Assembly – all 190 or so nations – the whole world if you would. It is the UN that voted to give Israel a homeland back in May of 1948 and coincidentally, its Security Council has wanted to divide up the land to create the Palestinian state.

This is potentially very significant because Daniel 11:39 says, speaking of the Antichrist, (note: the same guy who will confirm/strengthen the covenant with the “many”) that he will also “**divide** the land for gain (or literally, for “a price”).

Could it be that this refers to the Land of Israel being divided or apportioned to the Jews and the Palestinians for the price of peace and perhaps the right to re-establish a temple? Could it be that in getting this covenant confirmed by the "many" of the whole UN General Assembly, Israel will think that, at last, they have a peace, a temple and a messiah (all of which will be false)?

Be that as it may, the false messiah, the AC will betray Israel:

But in the middle of the week

He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.

(Dan 9:27a)

I suggest that this betrayal will coincide with the beginning of God's wrath being poured out as in Rev 16:1:

And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

That's because, as we saw in Dan 9:27b:

And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate (the AC),

*Even until the consummation, which is determined,
Is **poured** out on the desolate."*

So, there you have it, Daniel's prophecy ties in both Ezekiel's and the Revelation. And it is about to happen before our very eyes.

Chapter 26

The Gap

It is estimated, but the consensus is strong, that the time from Abraham until Jesus was about 2000 years. According to Peter's declaration in 2 Pet 3, this represents two days prophetically:

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

(2 Pet 3:8)

This is important for us to keep in mind as we examine the prophecy in Daniel chapter nine. We also need to remember the following:

A just weight and balance are the LORD'S: all the weights of the bag are his work.

(Pro 16:11)

That is, the prophetic time piece so to speak given in Dan 9 temporarily stops after the first 69 sevens of the 70 sevens exactly as spoken when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey and was hailed as the Son of David (Monday, March 30, 33 AD exactly) and was crucified just a few days later on Calvary, paying the price for all our sins.

Now, as a people group, the Jews rejected the message and their Messiah. The apostle Paul put this way:

Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles."

(Acts 13:46)

Thus, for the next 2000 years or so, the focus of God's attention has been to the mostly Gentile church. This was prophesied by Hosea:

*After **two days** He will revive us (the Jewish people);
On the third day He will raise us up,
That we may live in His sight.*

(Hos 6:2)

And it was displayed in prophetic type (picture) by Jesus:

*So, when the Samaritans (non-Jews) had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there **two days**.*

(John 4:40)

And of course, there are other Old Testament scriptures that discuss this:

*Praise the LORD, all you **Gentiles**!
Laud Him, all you peoples!*

(Psa 117:1)

*“And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;
For the **Gentiles** shall seek Him,
And His resting place shall be glorious.”*

(Isa 11:10)

*“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold,
My Elect One in whom My soul delights!
I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the **Gentiles**.*

(Isa 42:1)

*“I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness,
And will hold Your hand;
I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the **Gentiles**,*

(Isa 42:6)

Indeed, He says,

*‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also give You as a light to the **Gentiles**,
That You should be My salvation **to the ends of the earth.**’ ”*

(Isa 49:6)

*For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down,
My name shall be great among the **Gentiles**;
In every place incense shall be offered to My name,
And a pure offering;
For My name shall be great **among the nations,**”
Says the LORD of hosts.*

(Mal 1:11)

And so, we can see that God, with His “just weight and balance” gave His loving attention to His people, the Jews for two prophetic days and then turned His attention to His people among the Gentiles for the same time.

Now, that time is nearly concluded and we will soon witness the fulfillment of the last week, the last seven of Daniel’s prophecy. This will be the seven year long period which Jeremiah 30 refers to as the time of “Jacob’s trouble”. The church will be gone, ensconced to heaven during the rapture, the Jewish Remnant of believers and evangelists will be carrying the baton of Christian witness, and the Satan-ruled world will experience all the judgements described in the book of Revelation.

Chapter 27

In the Light

You know, there are several “messages” in the scriptures. For instance, the message of the cross:

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing,
but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

(1 Cor 1:18)

And the message of love:

*For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should
love one another,*

(1 Jn 3:11)

Of course, most of us, if not all, are familiar with these because Jesus did and spoke of them. But there is one message which the disciples heard but which was not passed to us in any of the Gospels; in fact, it’s nowhere else explicitly in the Bible except possibly Rev 21:23. Now this specific message is implied strongly throughout the Word but in only one verse do we receive explicitly this glorious nugget of eternal truth:

*This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you,
that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.*

(1 Jn 1:5)

So why, I wonder, and maybe so do you, did no other disciple present this to us and why did it take John most of his life to get around to it? Possibly because it presents a radical truth that even the post-Calvary church back then and today struggles with and stumbles over – the ‘stink’ of sin.

Oh, theologically we can easily get on board with this message, but hold on, the message continues:

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses (is continually cleansing) us from all sin.

(1Jn 1:6,7)

And here is where we as the church can get on a tangent - because of the blood of Christ, God sees us as sinless, after all, we are IN Christ and He in us. But we also have a flesh body that is dead in sin and is constantly trying to influence us.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

(1 Jn 1:8)

John introduced the ideas of walking in the light and being cleansed from sin. But he did not for a moment believe that a Christian (while in the flesh) can become sinlessly perfect. Check out the Apostle Paul's admission:

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. (emphasis mine - note the present tense)

(1 Tim 1:15)

Yes, our dead flesh has sin in it all the time. It's not free from sin and then sinful and then free from sin and then sinful – back and forth endlessly. It's full of sin all the time; but it is DEAD. **YOU** however, are alive IN Christ. **YOU** have been **freed** from that body of sin by **faith** and one day soon you will have a completely NEW body that is also sinless – a gift from God.

“Our sins are not forgiven because we confess. If this were the case — if forgiveness for a sin could only come where there was confession — then we would all be damned because it would be impossible for us to confess every sin we ever commit. We are forgiven because our punishment was put upon Jesus, we are cleansed by His blood.”

“However, confession is still vital to maintain ***relationship*** with God, and this is the context John speaks from. As God convicts us of sin that is hindering our fellowship with Him, we must confess it and receive forgiveness and cleansing for our relationship with God to continue without hindrance.” (Guzik)

Yes, the body of flesh is effectively already dead because of sin, but we can allow it’s putrification, so to speak, to get its ‘stink’ on us and hinder our fellowship with God. (That’s when we let the flesh lead us). Oh, we are saved still because our debt is forever paid – we have right ‘standing’ with God, but with confession comes a fresh trust of His forgiveness and a cleansing from all that ‘stink’.

You can think of it this way – the Blood of Christ cleansed and cleanses (past, present and future) us from sin. It’s a done deal, forever. And as needed, confession when we fall short (including repentance) cleanses us from the ‘stink’ so that we can enjoy our ***relationship*** with God even now that Christ’s blood provided.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (i.e. ‘stink’)

(1Jn 1:9)

Don’t let that dead stinking flesh guide you. Be freed from sin, be cleansed as needed and learn to a greater and greater degree, to walk in the LIGHT.

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

(1John 1:5)

Chapter 28

Don't Drift

*"You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.
They will perish, but You remain;
And they will all grow old like a garment;
Like a cloak You will fold them up,
And they will be changed.
But You are the same,
And Your years will not fail."*

(Heb 1:10-12)

The writer of Hebrews basically begins the epistle with a tribute to the greatness and immutability of God, specifically, God the Son or as John the Apostle wrote, the Word Who made all things. And then follows with a dire warning to all of us who have heard Him:

*"Therefore, we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have
heard, lest we drift away."*

(Heb 2:1)

Isaiah the prophet tells us why this warning is important:

*For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,
And deep darkness the people;*

(Isa 60:2a)

In my lifetime I have seen increasingly rapid darkening and demonizing of our world's societies and God is not preventing it – as a matter of fact, He foretold it. However, if you're a sincere believer in Jesus Christ, you (and I) are told to stand fast and hold on to

our trust in God, to continue to speak and live out the truth in love. To look for His return. To remember His promises to His children:

*But the LORD will arise over you,
And His glory will be seen upon you.*

(Isa 60:2b)

I'm presenting this message because the days are coming, in fact they are upon us, wherein many or even most people will not listen to the truth because all they know are lies, hatred, violence and thus they cling to darkness. At this point, they don't even recognize darkness because it's just part of their DNA and instead they want to destroy light.

*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;
Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;
Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*

(Isa 5:20)

So, of course, we cannot afford to "drift". That word can mean to let something drift away from us or allow ourselves to drift away from something. In either event, we cannot afford the separation.

Christ's message to the Church in Philadelphia is:

"Behold, I am coming quickly(suddenly)! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown."

(Rev 3:11)

In these last days, with darkness spreading and increasing, with lies and deception spreading and increasing, with wars, perversity and butchering of innocents spreading and increasing, hold fast to your trust and faith in Christ's promises and Father God's plan. His end game is wonderful and cannot be stopped. Don't drift. Hold fast.

Chapter 29

Warning From Prison

As Paul was in prison, he looked to the future and sent to his young protégé, Timothy, the following admonition:

But know this, that in the last days perilous (used in describing wild animals, raging sea, and the Gadarene demoniacs) times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholly, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

(2 Tim 3:1-5)

Doesn't sound very uplifting, does it? It's a list of spiritual failures and there is a stern warning at the end. This is what I think is important for us to understand. You see, many commentators have treated this prophecy/prediction as speaking of the degenerating of the entire human race but I don't think that is the point.

Now, I can heartily agree that the societies of man are in a downward spiral, and they do exhibit these negative traits more and more but the last three statements make it clear that he's not referring to people in general but rather specific people within the Church.

“lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,” clearly indicates people with a choice – that “rather” is very telling. Those outside the Church are not instructed to love God.

“having a form of godliness but denying its power” cannot be referring to the world so to speak as they have no “form of godliness” but those in the Church indeed practice every Sunday (indeed every day) having a “form of godliness” and we have often seen it. I suggest that the power of godliness is godly love which is sometimes in short supply.

“And from such people turn away!” cannot be talking about the people of the world otherwise we would have to terminate the Great Commission.

Jesus said:

“But go and learn what [this] means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

(Mat 9:13)

and,

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call [the] righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

(Mark 2:17)

Paul spoke to this in another letter:

I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.

Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner--not even to eat with such a person.

For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?

But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."

(1 Cor 5:9-13)

With that being said, I’m convinced that this “last days” passage is warning us about certain segments of the Church. And when you consider what Jesus said to the last days Laodicean Church in the Revelation, it makes sense:

“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

"So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked..."

(Rev 3:14-17)

With this all in mind, let's consider the list of failures in the last days church above.

“lovers of themselves” – many churches today engage in many different ways in trying to satisfy the insatiable self-centered appetite. In fact, you can consider this as the underlying characteristic of the whole list as it is the driving motivation behind the flesh or the ‘fruit of the flesh’.

Of course, it is the complete opposite of the fruit of the Spirit which we find in Galatians:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is **love**, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

(Gal 5:22,23)

Notice, Spiritual love heads this list just as self-love heads the failure list. Thus, it is clear that the last days church is basically going through the Christian motions in the flesh – they have left Christ outside.

So, if the warning is to turn away from those within the Church having the characteristics of spiritual failure, where do we turn in these last days? In closing, I'll quote Jesus as He finished speaking to the ‘Church Age’:

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

(Rev 3:20-22)

TURN TO JESUS, TRUST IN JESUS

Chapter 30

Broken

and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”

(1 Co 11:24)

There are a lot of people in our societies who are truly broken and then there are many who, absorbed within their own self obsession are always playing ‘the victim card’ for everyone to pity them. Of course, broken people often are the victims of a terrible event or circumstance.

And there are so many kinds of brokenness partly because our societies, our faith, our relationships are themselves so broken. Often, it tends to isolate us emotionally. Jesus knew that in His own brokenness He was truly alone among men; He was forsaken for us. The Psalmist spoke prophetically of Him:

*Reproach has broken my heart,
And I am full of heaviness;
I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none;
And for comforters, but I found none.*

(Psa 69:20)

But Christ also said:

“... He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.”

(Jn 8:29)

So, while men rejected Him, Jesus took comfort in the Father’s presence which was continuous until the cross where He carried all our sins and as a result was alienated from the Father, temporarily. There, He cried out:

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

(Mat 27:46)

That's meaningful for us because we know that His ultimate brokenness- being forsaken by the Father was swallowed up in victorious resurrection from the grave. He busted the chains of death and depression and defeat for us all.

And as a result, we have such wonderful promises as:

The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart and saves such as have a contrite spirit.

(Psa 34:18)

*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,
A broken and a contrite heart—
These, O God, You will not despise.*

(Psa 51:17)

He knows the pain of brokenness and He knows you. If you will believe in Him, what He did for all of us on Calvary and that He rose again, He will live within you and sustain you. In fact, it is in your brokenness that He will shine through.

As a matter of fact, there's a story in the OT in Judges chapters six and seven that pictures this beautifully; it's all about Gideon and I'll paraphrase. While hiding in a winepress, the Angel of the Lord approached him and commissioned him to lead the army of Israel to defeat the hoards of Midianites and Amalekites who were invading. Gideon swallowed hard so to speak but obeyed. He amazingly gathered together 32,000 soldiers but God told him they were too many. Gideon 'swallowed hard' again (and again) until finally after sending most of the troops home, he was left with just 300 men.

All the masses of enemy troops were in the valley, like the sand by the sea, virtually innumerable. Well during the night, Gideon gave clay pots to all of his men which each held lit torches inside, he divided them into three groups of 100 and instructed them to surround the valley on the hills and upon his signal, break those pots and hold them high, sound their trumpets and shout 'The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!'

Well, this crazy battle tactic worked as when they did this the hoards of the enemy in terrifying fear turned on each other and then fled wildly with the whole army of Israel in

pursuit. The battle was won. The punch line here is that when the pots were broken, the light shined forth.

And that's what can happen with us as well in our own brokenness – Jesus in us can shine forth if we let Him.

But that's not the whole story. Brokenness can be a blessing, but brokenness is not the end. In the Gospel of John we read:

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he said unto him, “Wilt thou be made whole?”

The impotent man answered him, “Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steps down before me.”

Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your bed, and walk.”

And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

(John 5:2-9)

You see, we are all broken. We are born broken – we are born in sin and born to die. Of course, we also experience things in life that can break us physically, mentally, emotionally and even spiritually. But God's plan of redemption is to make us whole – not just better, not just repaired, not just refreshed, but whole, new, wonderfully new. And the kicker is that this redemption is not just for us, for mankind. It's for the entirety of creation, seen and unseen, heaven and earth. The Bible says:

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

(Rev 21:3-5)

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.

(Isa 65:17)

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

(2Pe 3:13)

For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

(Rom 8:19-22)

You see, the whole story is the story of everything being made whole – in Christ. After turning away from the Promised Land in cowardice, the Hebrew nation wandered in the wilderness for 38 years and it was then Joshua (same name as Jesus) who led them in. Not coincidentally, that's the same time that the lame man above had been sitting by the pool of Bethesda helplessly. In like manner, we are helpless to make ourselves whole, but brokenness is not our end, wholeness is, forever.

So be hopeful for you can trust Jesus and Father God and His Holy Spirit to do what they have promised to do – to make everything new and whole – all of creation, heaven and earth and all of us who live with Him (and IN Him!) It won't be long. As Paul said:

"For I consider that the sufferings (brokenness) of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

(Ro 8:18)