

The New Testament

God's New Agreement With Mankind Through His Son Jesus the Messiah

A captivating, accurate new translation, with special, authoritative notes, for the last generation.

After 43 years of publishing the Great News about God's magnificent salvation in booklet and tract form, Ray W. Johnson, founder and President of Life Messengers felt strongly led by God to produce the Last Days New Testament. The translation and notes follow many years of extensive study, research, and collaboration with imminent Bible scholars about the end times and many other subjects. Mr. Johnson is presently completing work on the prophets of the Old Testament, which will also, soon be available.

**The New Testament
from
The Last Days Bible**

**Copyright © 1999 by Life Messengers
All rights reserved**

*The book of Matthew © 1994 has been separately published by Life Messengers.
Reprinted by permission.*

It is the intent and desire of the publishers of this vibrant new translation of the Holy Scriptures that everyone feel free to quote or reprint from it without the necessity of obtaining prior written permission. Therefore, permission is hereby granted to one and all to quote or reprint up to three hundred (300) verses from The Last Days Bible, together with footnotes, if desired. Footnotes may also be quoted apart from the Scripture text, if desired. However, the 300 verses and footnotes must comprise less than 25% of an entire book of the Bible, and must amount to less than 25% of the book or other work in which they are quoted. Permission is also granted to quote up to 25% of any one of the appendixes.

A proper line of copyright credit must appear on the title or copyright page of any work quoting from The Last Days Bible, as follows:

*Scriptures quoted from The Last Days Bible, Copyright © 1999 by Life Messengers,
Seattle, Washington 98111-1967. Used by permission.*

In less formal documents such as Sunday School and youth materials, church bulletins, newsletters, reports, posters, transparencies, electronic bulletin boards, magazine articles, and all similar media, the letters LDB at the end of each quote will be sufficient.

Quotations of more than 300 verses, or other permission requests, must be directed to and approved in writing by Life Messengers before use.

Published by:
Life Messengers
P.O. Box 1967
Seattle, WA 98111-1967

Distributed by Spring Arbor, Riverside, and
other Christian book distributors, and avail-
able through your local Christian bookstore or
by calling **Books, Etc., at (1-800) 917-BOOK**

Life Messengers is a bona fide Christian non-profit organization, and all profits from sales, and all moneys received otherwise, are used in propagating the true, thrilling, and urgent message of God to mankind by various ways and means. God's message to mankind (the Bible) is by far the greatest treasure on Earth. It is an inexhaustible mine of knowledge, to be explored for the purpose of making one rich in all that really matters. Life, or death, are just ahead. Choose life!

Printed in U.S.A.

These Are The Facts

(To be read—Very Important!)

Fact one: The end of this age is fast approaching! Jesus said in Mark 13:32 that no one will know the day or the hour when He will return with power and great glory. Both Jesus and the Apostle Paul said that Jesus' second coming will come as unexpectedly as a thief in the night. And truly, the world seems to be altogether in the dark about end-time events. But Paul informs us in the 5th chapter of 1 Thessalonians that true Christians will not be in the dark about such matters.

There are many prophecies thruout the Bible that tell us quite clearly what to expect as the end approaches. You will find informative notes of explanation of these prophecies as you read this remarkable Book. True, as the Lord said, no one will know the day or the hour when He will return, but He did not say we would not know the approximate times of these various end time events, especially as they begin to unfold.

That the end is upon us is also clear from the periods of time God gave Daniel. Daniel was informed that the understanding of those periods would not be given until the time of the end. Daniel 12:4,8-9. And only recently has God revealed to His servants the actual meanings of those periods of time given Daniel! See Appendix 244, page 498, and Appendix 245, page 505.

But Bible prophecy is not our main concern in bringing this translation and the notes to you. Our main concern is that you will read what God has to say to you here on many subjects. For your own education you need to know what the Bible says. Our main concern is that you are ready to meet God—that you and those you love will live forever with Him, for sure.

Fact two: If the end is so near we need to be studying God's message to man as

never before. And the same goes for your whole family, friends, neighbors, and everyone. You hold in your hands a new translation of the New Testament. As fine as other translations are, we have felt the need for a new translation that flows freely, that grabs the attention and makes fascinating reading, that is absolutely correct in its translation, and that talks to us in today's way of speaking. God has a vital message for man, and it must be presented in the most correct, understandable, and interesting way possible. We believe God has given us just such a translation.

Fact three: Besides the notes you will find on prophecy, you will find many other notes. In fact, most of the notes are on subjects other than prophecy. But you will discover that most of these other notes pertain to Scriptures concerning our salvation. The reason for this is as follows:

About a year after beginning this translation, the editor of this project was awakened one morning about 3 o'clock—not sleepy awake, but wide awake. Then he heard a voice. He had never before heard God speak to him audibly, but this was definitely the voice of God. The message was, "Build an evangelistic center."

The man didn't want to wake his wife who was sleeping next to him, so he didn't reply to the Lord audibly, but in his thoughts he asked, "But Lord, are you really asking me, at 74 years of age, to build an evangelistic center?" There was no audible response this time, but in his thoughts came the message, "Build an evangelistic center into the translation you are working on."

So that's the reason you will find these footnotes and appendixes dealing mainly with the salvation of our soul. We believe the Lord has been with us in these writings, and we trust you

will accept them as from the Lord. There are warnings, words of encouragement, and words of explanation. We trust that these notes will help both you and yours to make sure of Heaven.

* * *

Some may feel we have emphasized the necessity of obedience to God too much in these notes. But it was because of our disobedience that Christ needed to suffer and die to save us! And to be saved we must repent (turn from all our sin and disobedience, and obey God) as well as trust in Jesus as our Savior. Otherwise we are not converted, not born again.

But it's the repentance message that's being watered down, explained away, and omitted in much of the preaching today. We are living in the last days, when a soft, comforting message is being demanded by an unregenerate audience. See 2 Timothy 4:3-4, page 371, and the footnotes there.

* * *

One person reviewing the manuscript contended that we have pointed out and repeated the commands and warnings too often. Well, that's because there are so many serious commands and warnings in the Scriptures—which have been almost totally ignored, softened, or explained away by the comforting preaching and teaching demanded by most congregations today. Again, see 2 Timothy 4:2-4, and the notes. But Christ didn't merely state these matters as suggestions. They all have very serious consequences if unheeded! Very Serious! See Hebrews 5:7-9.

There's been a majoring on the promises, while giving very little serious attention to Christ's many unconditional commands and warnings. We must be thoroughly awakened to wholeheartedly heed the commands and warnings, and take the necessary actions, before we can be participators in the glorious promises God has offered us!

Fact four: Some of the verses have been slightly expanded to more clearly bring out the meaning. We have not added to, or changed the meaning, we have simply sought to bring out the meaning more clearly. One of the Greek

scholars working on the translation wrote to another, whose work he was checking, "At some places you have a free-wheeling paraphrase. But you accurately express the Greek text in those places, so I didn't feel I should rein you in." Here's an example, in Romans 12:2—

So don't blindly and obediently run with the pack and allow the world crowd to force you to bow to their low standards. Instead, you must allow God to continually transform you by the renewing of your mind, so you may be able to examine and choose what is good, acceptable, and altogether pleasing to Him.

Another example is Galatians 5:17-18—

Because all selfish desires, and all sensual appetites and desires you are tempted to satisfy in a wrongful way are in violent opposition to the desires of the Holy Spirit for you. And the desires of the Holy Spirit for you are contrary to the wrongful desires that tempt you. There's a constant war going on inside each of us. The Holy Spirit is waging war against our selfishness and against our temptations to satisfy our sensual appetites and desires in a wrongful way, in order to keep us from the wrong we are tempted to do.

So then, if you allow yourselves to be led and controlled by the Holy Spirit, you are free from any need to put yourselves under the restraints and control of the Law of Moses.

A third example is Revelation 20:6—

Those who will be raised back to life in the first raising of the dead will be extravagantly blessed by God and extremely happy, far beyond anything anyone can presently imagine. But only those who have sincerely dedicated themselves to live holy lives for God will be included. The second death will have no power over them. But even more than that, they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Christ a thousand years.

However, most of the translation is as close to a word for word translation as possible—as close as we could get with a free-flowing translation in today's way of speaking.

Fact five: We have changed a few of the words to more modern terms. For instance: *masters* has been changed to *employers*; *slaves*, to *employees*. We believe you can see the wisdom

in this. Also, we have changed *brothers to brothers and sisters*. There are other places where the masculine has been changed to a neuter form, but we have done this only when we felt it was the thing to do. Pronouns referring to God have always been kept in the masculine. As the Apostle Paul said, **I conform myself to everyone in every possible way so that by every means possible I may save some of them.**

1 Corinthians 9:22.

Fact six: The Greek grammar of the original text has been most carefully observed. For instance, in John 19:12 we translated the middle portion, **But the Jews kept shouting:** The reason: The word *shouting* is in the imperfect tense, which indicates repeated shouting. Such fine distinctions have been made thruout the text.

Fact seven: The Greek text from which we have made this translation is the Textus Receptus, commonly called the Received Text. It is called the Received Text because this was the Greek text accepted by scholars hundreds of years ago as the correct Greek text. This was the Greek text from which the King James translation was made.

In recent years claims have been made that older texts have been discovered which are more reliable. We do not agree with the reliability of these supposedly older texts. For a full and complete explanation regarding the reliability of the Received Text, we encourage you to read the book entitled *The Identity of The New Testament Text*, by Wilbur N. Pickering, published by Thomas Nelson Publishers. Another very informative book on the subject is *Unholy Hands On The Bible*, by John W. Burgon.

These supposedly older texts (from Egypt) omit whole verses, parts of verses and even entire sections that are found in the Received Text. There are hundreds upon hundreds of differences in those texts when compared with the Received Text. There are hundreds of deletions, some additions, and many, many changes in the grammar of many words. To check this out yourself we suggest that you go to your Christian bookstore and purchase or inspect a copy of THE

INTERLINEAR NEW TESTAMENT, by George Berry, published by Zondervan Publishing House. In this book you have the Greek, and then the English below each Greek word. But the main thing we encourage you to observe there is the listings at the bottom of each page in that New Testament of the differences there are in the other Greek texts when compared with the Received Text. The INTERLINEAR NEW TESTAMENT by George Berry is the Received Text as to the Greek that's published there.

Many of these differences in the Greek versions are not all that important. On the other hand, there are many that are very important. For instance, in 2 Corinthians 5:17, the word *all* is omitted. This would indicate that we do not become *altogether new* in Christ. Some take this to mean that we do not need to make *a full surrender* of our lives to the Lord. But Paul's teachings in Ephesians 2:10, and 4:21-24 certainly indicate that 2 Corinthians 5:17 in the Received Text is correct. Christ also taught many times that it was all, or nothing. See the note on 2 Corinthians 5:17.

In 1 Timothy 6:5, the last part of the verse, **Withdraw yourself from such people**, has been omitted. In Luke 4:18 the words, **to heal the brokenhearted**, have been omitted. In the Lord's prayer recorded in Luke 11, in v 2 the words **our and who is in heaven and May your will be done on Earth, just as it is in heaven** are all omitted. In v 4, the words **but rescue us from the evil one** have been omitted. These are just a very few of the many, many omissions. And most of the recent translations of the New Testament have been made from these so-called older texts.

Notice also how they have changed Revelation 13:10 and 22:14.

The overwhelming majority of the approximately 5,000 complete and partial ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament agree with the Received Text.

Fact eight: We wouldn't call this fact spiritual, but we feel it should be included. Most of you have read, or tried to read, paragraphs from English printings of several hundred

years ago. It makes us moderns laugh at the way they spelled some of our words in those days. Well, we still have some very strange spellings for a good number of our words. There is no reason why they should not be upgraded. To mention just a few, the word thorough should be changed to *thoro*, although to *altho*, bought to *bot*, would to *wud*, thought to *thot*, etc. These are just a very few of the many words that could be improved, shortened and made easier to read by beginners, as well as by the rest of us.

In other words, we need to eliminate the absolutely unnecessary "ough's" in the written English language. We have decided that in this translation of God's Word we would upgrade just two of these words thruout. Those are the words through to *thru* and throughout to *thruout*.

At first you may cringe at such changes. But why? In all the newer translations of the Bible, the word Saviour has been changed to *Savior*. At first, some objected, but no longer. Now the new spelling seems very sensible to all. The same should be true in regard to other improvements of our written words.

On the economic side, someone has said, "Just think how much paper, ink, and labor in writing, printing, and reading could be saved by shortening and simplifying the spelling of many of our English words."

Fact nine: Twelve Greek scholars have given critical guidance in the forming of this translation, as well as several theologians; and several English purists gave counsel in regard to style and grammar. Most of the Greek scholars, representing various denominations, teach, or did teach, Greek, in a Christian university, seminary, or Bible school.

We are indeed grateful for all the work that all these fine people of God have put into this endeavor.

Fact ten: No effort whatever has been made to please any person or persons, any denomination or denominations. Our only concern has been to please the Lord by presenting a most accurate and invigorating translation, and to present notes that will be both helpful, chal-

lenging, and true. May God be honored in all the results from the publication and dissemination of this translation of His Word.

Fact eleven: It had been our intention to give no credits in the notes. That policy was later changed, but it has been next to impossible to now give proper credit to all. The Lord knows the part each has played, and may He reward each accordingly with eternal rewards, as most from whom we quote are now with Him.

Fact twelve: The producer and publisher of this version of the Bible is **Life Messengers**, the organization founded in 1944, that produced and published in great quantities such outstanding witnessing booklets as *Here's How — Destined for Greatness — Have You Been Brainwashed?* — and many others. Over 66 million copies of *Here's How* alone were printed and distributed in over 50 languages in scores of nations.

22 years in the making, including eight years of prophecy study, with the Old Testament to follow, **Life Messengers** is still committed to the admonition at the end of the booklet *Here's How*: "There is so much that God wants every person to know, both concerning this life and that which is beyond. Most of this important knowledge is obtained thru reading the Bible and thru fellowship with God in prayer."

Fact thirteen: How can you get to Heaven—for sure? You will find the answer as you read thru this translation of the New Testament. But we have presented a summary of the answer for you in Appendix 247, page 520, entitled *The Amazing Story of God*. As you find the very help you need as you read this story, we trust you will share *The Amazing Story* with many!

God's main reasons for inspiring His servants to write The New Testament were to bring honor to His name and to bring us to be with Himself forever. So be it!

The Locations of Some of The Prophetic Scriptures

With Explanatory Notes

	Page
1. A fearful warning. Matthew 7:21-27	24
2. Jesus' prophecy about the last days. Matthew 24:1-51	53
3. Five wise and five foolish girls. Matthew 25:1-13	60
4. Even Christs' followers will be judged. Matthew 25:14-30	61
5. The judgment of the nations. Matthew 25:31-46	62
6. What it will cost you to follow Jesus—and gain Heaven. Mark 8:34-38	85
7. Which people will be rich in Heaven? Luke 16:1-13	141
8. Jesus' prophecy about the last days. Mark 13:1-37	96
9. Jesus will reign as King over Israel and all of Earth. Luke 1:26-33	106
10. The fate of the faithful and unfaithful servants of Christ. Luke 12:35-48	132
11. Jesus again explains the cost of gaining Heaven. Luke 13:22-30	135
12. How you will recognize the kingdom of God when it comes to Earth. Luke 17:20-37	143
13. How to pray effectively, both now and when the end comes. Luke 18:1-8	145
14. Rewards and judgments for Christ's servants. Luke 19:11-27	148
15. There will be no marriages in Heaven. Luke 20:27-40	151
16. Jesus predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming. Luke 21:5-36	151
17. The resurrection and the judgment. John 5:24-29	172
18. Another resurrection prophecy. John 6:37-40	175
19. What you do with Jesus' message will determine your destiny. John 12:47-48	187
20. A promised place in Heaven. John 14:1-3	189
21. Angels prophesied the second coming of Jesus. Acts 1:9-11	203
22. The great outpouring of God's Holy Spirit prophesied. Acts 2:17-21	205
23. The labor of all servants of Christ will be judged. 1 Corinthians 3:1-23	271
24. Those who have been faithful followers of Christ will rule over Earth together with Him when He returns. Daniel 7:18, 27; 1 Corinthians 6:1-3; 2 Timothy 2:12	276
25. A list of those who will not enter into Heaven. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10	276
Revelation 21:8	462
26. After Christ has successfully subdued Earth as King of kings, He will then turn everything over to the Father, and He Himself will be in subjection to the Father. 1 Corinthians 15:22-28	289
27. When those who have faithfully followed and obeyed Christ on Earth are raised from the dead, they will be given glorified bodies like the glorified body of Jesus. 1 Corinthians 15:35-58	289
28. Our present bodies decay, but we are told here about the new bodies God is preparing for us that will be eternal. 2 Corinthians 5:1-11	297
29. You will definitely reap whatever you have sown. Galatians 6:7-9	317
30. The dead will rise up to live again! Who will be included? 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	346
31. When will the dead rise back to life? What will happen? 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11	347
Matthew 24:29-31	57
32. Great promises and warnings. 2 Thessalonians 1:4-12	351
33. The astounding happenings that are predicted to occur just before Christ's return. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12	353
34. The horrendous apostasy of the last days. 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 4:1-5	369 and 371
35. God's judgment is sure to come. 2 Peter 3:1-14	414
36. There are explanatory notes on the prophetic statements thruout the book of The Revelation, beginning with page	433
37. A Brief Overview of Things To Come. Appendix 244	498
38. You will find God's Prophesied Timetable For The End. Appendix 245	505

Table of Contents

Matthew	13
Mark	73
Luke	105
John	163
Acts	203
Romans	243
1 Corinthians	269
2 Corinthians	293
Galatians	309
Ephesians	319
Philippians	329
Colossians	335
1 Thessalonians	343
2 Thessalonians	351
1 Timothy	357
2 Timothy	367
Titus	373
Philemon	376
Hebrews	377
James	395
1 Peter	401
2 Peter	411
1 John	417
2 John	427
3 John	428
Jude	429
Revelation	433
Appendixes	465
A Brief Overview Of Things To Come	498
God's Prophesied Timetable For The End	505
Just Who Is Jesus Christ?	512
The Amazing Story Of God	520

A Beginning Word

Jesus of Nazareth is by far the greatest Man the world has ever known. And it's no wonder He stood out so brilliantly, because He proved so conclusively, in many ways, that He was indeed Earth's rightful King, the majestic Creator God! Although His public ministry lasted only three and one-half years in an obscure corner of the Roman Empire 2,000 years ago, His profound influence world-wide is still without comparison. No life ever lived was more significant, no death and its results more meaningful.

Many hundreds of years after the creation of the world, God inspired dedicated men to write what we now call the Holy Bible. It was written by many authors over a period of some 1,500 years. The Bible is divided into two sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament consists of the God-inspired writings of Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, and many other prophets. After the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension back to Heaven of Jesus Christ—the promised Messiah of the Old Testament—Jesus' close followers were inspired to write the section we call the New Testament.

The New Testament tells the story of Jesus the Messiah, His instructions, promises, and warnings to His followers, the early days of His Church, and what we can expect to see happen on Earth in the last days of this age just prior to His triumphant return.

You hold in your hands a very special new translation of The New Testament for these end time days, with special notes to clearly point out what God has actually done for you, and what He now expects of you if you are to escape His judgment and live forever in total fulfillment with Him.

Very Special **NOTICE**

If this is your first reading of the Bible, you are doing well by reading the New Testament section first. As you no doubt know, the New Testament is the last one-quarter of the Bible, and it begins with the birth of Jesus Christ.

Also, there's a best way to read the New Testament when reading it for the first time. The first four books were written by four men who were on the scene and were well acquainted with what Jesus claimed, said, and did. It's great that we have these four different accounts of His life, but from experience we've discovered that it gets rather heavy, reading all four of these accounts one after the other, as there's a good deal of repetition. We suggest that for your first reading you skip the first two books, and begin with Luke, the third one. The fourth book, John, brings in different material, so you won't have the repetition.

You will indeed want to read Matthew and Mark, the first two books, but do that later. In fact, you should read the New Testament thru at least twice before reading the Old Testament. So you could read Matthew's account when you read the New Testament a second time.

Another reason for reading Luke first, is that Luke gives a fuller account of the birth and early childhood of Jesus than the other writers. But even before you read Luke you may wish to turn to page 520 and read *The Amazing Story of God* as your introduction to your totally fulfilling everlasting life with Him.

You are about to read the most awesome story ever told, concerning the greatest love and wisdom, the most astounding promises, the most dire warnings, and the most profound prophetic utterances, all brought to us by the greatest Man who ever lived, together with pronouncements inspired by Him and brought to us by His followers after He had left Earth.

You have in your hands a copy of the world's all-time best seller and most loved book. May the truths presented here result in great inspiration and salvation for you and yours, and in your attaining the highest plane of happiness and fulfillment possible, both in this life and for all eternity. God Bless!

THE GREAT NEWS

as reported by

MATTHEW

The first 17 verses of Matthew contain the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah. It is suggested that (as wonderful and important as it is that we have the complete genealogy of the Messiah) you not feel obliged to read this long list of names, but begin with the story, beginning with verse 18.

These are the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, who came thru the families of King David and Abraham:

² Abraham was the father of Isaac,
Isaac, the father of Jacob,
Jacob, of Judah and his brothers,

³ Judah, of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar.

Perez was the father of Hezron,
Hezron, the father of Ram,

⁴ Ram, of Amminadab,
Amminadab, of Nahshon; and
Nahshon, of Salmon.

⁵ Salmon was the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab.

Boaz was the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,

Obed the father of Jesse; and

⁶ Jesse was the father of David, who became king.

King David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,

⁷ Solomon, the father of Rehoboam,
Rehoboam, of Abijah,
Abijah, of Asa,

⁸ Asa, of Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat, of Joram; and
Joram, of Uzziah.

⁹ Uzziah was the father of Jotham,
Jotham, the father of Ahaz,
Ahaz, of Hezekiah,

¹⁰ Hezekiah, of Manasseh,
Manasseh, of Amon; and
Amon, of Josiah.

¹¹ Josiah was the father of Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried into Babylon.

¹² After they had been exiled into Babylon, Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel,

Shealtiel, of Zerubbabel,

¹³ Zerubbabel, of Abiud,

Abiud, of Eliakim,

Eliakim, of Azor,

¹⁴ Azor, of Zadok,

Zadok, of Achim,

Achim, of Elihud,

¹⁵ Elihud, of Eleazar,

Eleazar, of Matthan; and

Matthan, of Jacob.

¹⁶ Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called the Messiah.^a

¹⁷ So there were 14 generations from Abraham to David, 14 from David to the captivity in Babylon, and 14 from the captivity in Babylon to the coming of the Messiah.

¹⁸ **T**he birth of Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah,^a took place in a most miraculous way. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before they were married and had lived together, she was told by an angel of the Lord that she would soon have a baby by means of God's Holy Spirit.^b

¹⁹ But Joseph, her fiancé, thought she had sinned.^a He was a man who wanted to do the right thing, but he didn't want to disgrace her publicly,^b so he decided to quietly break off the engagement.

²⁰ But as he was seriously getting ready to do this, an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, descendant of David, don't be reluctant about taking Mary as your wife, because the baby she will have has been conceived in her by the Holy Spirit."^a

²¹ "She will give birth to a Son, and you are to name Him Jesus,^a because He will save His people

1:16, 18a *Messiah* is Hebrew for the *Anointed One*, the One anointed by God from eternity past with great power. *Christ* is the Greek translation.

1:18b Read the story in Luke 1:26-38.

1:19a ... *when he saw her three months later,*

after she returned from her visit to her cousin Elizabeth. Luke 1:26-56.

1:19b ... *by having her stoned to death ...* Leviticus 20:10, *or publicly divorcing her ...*

1:20a No doubt Joseph had confronted Mary

from their sins.”^b

²²Now all this happened so that what the Lord had announced many centuries earlier, thru the prophet Isaiah, would come true, when He said:

²³**Listen! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a Son. And they will call Him Immanuel!^a** which means God is now with us.

²⁴So when Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do, and he and Mary were married.

²⁵But he had no sexual union with her until she gave birth to her firstborn Son. And he named Him Jesus.

Visitors from the East

2 Shortly after Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, while Herod was king, some wise men from the East arrived in Jerusalem.

²“Where is the Child who has been born to be King of the Jews?” they inquired. “We saw His star in our homeland in the East, and have come to pay Him homage.”

³When King Herod heard this, he, like everyone else in Jerusalem, was deeply shaken by the news.

⁴He called a meeting of the entire Jewish Council, and asked them, “Where is the Messiah^a to be born?”

⁵“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “because this is what the prophet Micah wrote:

⁶**But you, Bethlehem, though you are only a small town in the land of Judah, you are by no means less important than the leading cities of Judah, because out of you will come a Ruler who will be the Shepherd of My people Israel.^a”**

⁷Herod then secretly called the wise men to a meeting and questioned them carefully as to when they had first seen the star.

about the baby, and she had told him about the angel coming to her, and his message. Luke 1:26-38. But Joseph didn’t believe her until the angel spoke to him in a dream.

1:21a The name Jesus means *Savior*.

1:21b Many seem to wish somehow to be *His people*, but they do not quite desire to be saved from their sins. They wish to be saved only from the *consequences* of their sins. Any *salvation* that does not save one *from* sinning, as well as from the consequences, is a delusion. One cannot be a part of *His people* while giving his allegiance to the world and the satisfying of wrongful desires.

1:23a Isaiah 7:14.

2:4a A great Deliverer (the Messiah) had been promised Israel by God many centuries before.

2:6a Micah 5:2.

⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, after telling them, “Go and make a most careful search for the young Child, and when you find Him, come back and tell me, so that I may go and worship Him too.”

⁹After their meeting with the king they went on their way. And look! There was the same star they had seen in the East!

¹⁰They were ecstatic upon seeing the star again. And it went on ahead of them until it hovered over the place where the young Child was.

¹¹When they had entered the house,^a there they found the young Child with Mary, His mother. Falling to their knees they paid Him homage; and opening their treasures, they presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The Escape to Egypt

¹²When the wise men returned home they went another way, because God had warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod.

¹³Then think of this! After the wise men had left, Joseph again saw an angel of the Lord in a dream, who said, “Get up! Escape with the young Child and His mother into Egypt! Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod will soon be searching for the Child to kill Him.”

¹⁴So he got right up, and, in the middle of the night, he took the Child and His mother and left for Egypt, where they stayed until Herod died.

¹⁵This took place so that the prophecy the Lord had spoken by the prophet Hosea would come true, when He said,

I have called My Son out of Egypt.^a

The Massacre of the Children

¹⁶When Herod realized he had been outwitted by

2:11a Jesus was born in a cattle shed. Luke 2:7. But evidently when people heard of the baby born in a shed, a family opened their home to them. That’s why the wise men from the East found the baby Jesus in a house when they arrived.

2:15a Hosea 11:1.

2:16a Because of the wording here, some claim that Jesus must have been two years old when the wise men came. But that’s not good reasoning. It is very unlikely that Mary and Joseph would have stayed on in Bethlehem more than a few days after Jesus was born before heading back home.

What evidently happened was that very shortly after Mary and Joseph had taken Jesus to the Temple (Luke 2:22-39), they were visited by the wise men. Then following that, they were immediately directed to take Jesus to Egypt. The reason Herod

the wise men, he was furious. Acting on the information he had earlier received from them, he sent soldiers to put to death all the boys two years of age^a and under in Bethlehem and in the surrounding area.

¹⁷ Herod's bloody massacre brought about the fulfillment of the prophecy by Jeremiah the prophet, who had said:

¹⁸ **There are screams of soul-piercing anguish, and weeping and utterly uncontrolled mourning coming from Ramah. What you are hearing is Rachel,^a hysterically weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are dead!^b**

The Return Home to Nazareth

¹⁹ But after Herod died, an angel of the Lord came to Joseph in a dream in Egypt.

²⁰ "When you get up in the morning," the angel said, "take the young Child and His mother back into Israel, because those who were trying to kill Him are now dead."

²¹ So when he awoke, he immediately got up and brought the Child and His mother back to Israel.

²² But when he heard that Herod's son Archelaus had succeeded his father as king of Judea, he was afraid to go there. After receiving further instructions from God in a dream, he withdrew^a from Judea and went up into the region of Galilee.

²³ He settled his family there in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled the prediction of the prophets who had said,

Messiah will be called a Nazarene.

John the Baptizer Prepares the Way

3 Years later John the Baptizer^a went into the wilderness wasteland of Judea and preached.

ordered all boys two years of age and under be put to death was because he didn't want his soldiers to misjudge Jesus' age and pass Him up. He felt sure to get Him if he put on the two-year limit. If the wise men had come when Jesus was two years of age, Herod no doubt would have put the age limit much higher than two years.

2:18a Rachel was buried near Bethlehem, and she is represented figuratively here as rising from her grave to lament with screams of soul-piercing anguish, the slaughter by Herod. She no doubt represented the many mothers in Israel who had lost their little sons and were now weeping and wailing hysterically.

2:18b Jeremiah 31:15.

2:22a He evidently withdrew to the south, and then turned east, and traveled around the south end

² "Turn away from your sinning, and obey God!" he warned the people again and again. "Because the Kingdom of Heaven has now come very close to us!"

³ John was the man the prophet Isaiah had told about centuries before when he had said:

Listen! Someone is shouting in the wilderness, "Prepare for the coming of the Lord! Straighten out your ways for Him!"^a

⁴ As for John, his clothes were made of coarse, cheap camel's hair. He wore a wide leather belt around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey.

⁵ From Jerusalem, from all over Judea, and from the whole region along the Jordan River, people streamed out to hear him.

⁶ When they openly declared that they were giving up their sinning,^a John baptized them in the Jordan River.

⁷ But when John saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing,^a he challenged them, "You children of snakes! Who told you that you could escape God's fierce anger and the judgment that's coming?"

⁸ "If you expect God to forgive you, live your life now in a way that will prove you have indeed turned from your sinning!"

⁹ "Don't think you are safe just because you can say, 'Abraham is our ancestor,' because I'm telling you that God is able to take even these stones and raise up descendants for Abraham!^a

¹⁰ "The axe of God's judgment is already lifted high, ready to strike at the root of the trees. And every tree that is not producing good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire!^a

¹¹ "Yes, I baptize^a you people in water as a sign that you have now changed your mind and intend

of the Dead Sea. From there he took the family north to Galilee. Or, he could have turned west, and then up the coast along the Mediterranean Sea.

3:1a See Luke 1:5-80 for the account of the miraculous conception and birth of John the Baptizer.

3:3a Isaiah 40:3.

3:6a Sin—anything morally wrong, or disobedience to God, parents, the state, etc.

3:7a They came to look, to see what was going on, but they refused to be affected by his preaching or to be baptized. Luke 7:30.

3:9a The saying is true that *God has no grandchildren*. No one becomes a child of God just because of godly parents or other ancestors. The same is true for Jews.

3:10a John 15:1-6.

to live a new life, a life that is pleasing to God. But the One who will come after me is far more powerful than I am. I'm not fit to even carry His sandals. He will baptize^a you in the Holy Spirit and in fire.

¹² "His threshing fork is already in His hand, and He will separate all the wheat from the chaff. Then He will bring His wheat into His barn,^a but He will burn the chaff with fire that can never be put out."^b

The Baptism of Jesus

¹³ Then Jesus left Galilee and went to the Jordan River where John was. He wanted John to baptize Him.

¹⁴ But John tried to talk Him out of it, saying, "Look, I need to be baptized by You,^a and You come to me?"

¹⁵ "Just do it now," Jesus replied, "because it's the right thing for us to do in order to fully please and obey God." So John agreed.

¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, He walked up out of the water. Then John saw a most remarkable happening: The heavens opened up! And he saw the Spirit of God come down like a dove, and come to rest upon Jesus!^a

¹⁷ Then a voice from Heaven said, "This is My Son, whom I love so dearly. I am so highly pleased with Him."

Jesus Is Tempted

4 Then the Holy Spirit led Jesus^a into the wilderness to allow the devil to test Him.

² After eating nothing for 40 days and 40 nights, He was hungry.

³ The tempter then came to Him and said, "If you are the Son of God, why don't you command these stones to become loaves of bread?"

3:11a The original Greek word for baptize is *bapto*, and means to *dip*, to *immerse*.

3:12a Heaven.

3:12b See Mark 9:44-48 note.

3:14a John didn't yet know that Jesus was the Messiah (see verses 16-17 and John 1:31-34), but they were second cousins (Luke 1:5-56), and John had undoubtedly been deeply impressed for years by Jesus' complete dedication to God.

3:16a John 1:29-34.

4:1a Mark 1:12 indicates this happened *immediately* after Jesus' baptism.

4:4a *Bread* here includes all material food. It can also refer to much more than just food.

4:4b Deuteronomy 8:3. Bread alone does not fill a person's need. We must also feast, meditate on,

⁴ But Jesus responded, "The Scriptures declare, **It is not possible for man to survive on bread^a alone. He must also feast and meditate upon every word that comes from God.^b**"

⁵ Then the devil took Him into Jerusalem, and had Him stand on the highest part of the Temple.

⁶ "Now," the devil said, "if you are the Son of God, jump down from here. According to Scripture:

God will instruct His angels concerning You. They are to keep a firm hold on You with their hands, so that not even Your feet will be injured on the stones below.^a"

⁷ "But the Scriptures also say," Jesus replied,

You must not try to force your God into a situation where He must prove Himself.^a

⁸ Finally, the devil took Him to the top of a very high mountain and pointed out to Him all the nations of the world and their splendor.

⁹ "I will give you all these nations and their glory," he promised Jesus, "if you will just kneel and worship me."

¹⁰ "Satan, get out of here!" Jesus thundered. "The Scriptures command,

You shall worship the Lord, your God, and He is the only One you shall serve!^a"

¹¹ When Jesus said that, Satan left Him. Then angels came and waited on Him.

Jesus Begins His Work

¹² When Jesus heard that John had been thrown into jail, He went back to Galilee.

¹³ But He soon moved from Nazareth to Capernaum, a city on the shores of Lake Galilee, in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali.

¹⁴ This fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy:

Those who live in darkness^a in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali, beside the lake and beyond the

and store away in our minds and hearts, *every word* that God has given us.

4:6a Psalm 91:11-12.

4:7a Deuteronomy 6:16.

4:10a Deuteronomy 6:13.

4:15a ... *in great ignorance of God and of their relationship to Him* ...

4:15, 16a Isaiah 9:1-2.

4:23a *The Kingdom* refers to both the Kingdom of God in Heaven and God's Kingdom on earth. If we expect to be in His Kingdom in Heaven, we must turn from our sinning and rebellion, and serve and obey Him now as our Lord and King on earth.

5:3a To be poor in spirit is to have a *humble* opinion of ourselves; to fully realize what sinners we are, and that there is no way that we can save our-

Jordan River, in the area of Galilee that is occupied by many foreigners, have seen a great light!

¹⁶ Yes, light has dawned in the region that was formerly in the dark shadow of death.^a

¹⁷ That was when Jesus began preaching. And His message was, “Turn from your sinning to obeying God, because the Kingdom of Heaven has now come very close to you!”

An Invitation to Four Fishermen

¹⁸ As Jesus was walking along the shore of Lake Galilee one day, He saw two commercial fishermen throw a large net out into the lake; they were Simon, called Peter, and his brother Andrew.

¹⁹ “Come along with Me,” Jesus invited them, “and I will teach you how to harvest people instead of fish.”

²⁰ They immediately left their nets and went with Him.

²¹ As He walked farther up the beach, He saw two other brothers, James and John, who were in a boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He invited these brothers to come with Him too.

²² Without any hesitation, they too left the boat and their father, and went with Him.

Jesus Teaches, Preaches, and Heals

²³ Then Jesus traveled all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Great News about the Kingdom,^a and healing every sickness and disease among the people.

²⁴ News about Him even spread all over Syria. People brought Him all who were sick—those who suffered from various diseases and pain, the demon-possessed, the epileptics, and those paralyzed—and He healed them all.

²⁵ Huge crowds followed Him, coming from all

over Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and even from the other side of the Jordan River.

The Sermon on the Mount

5 When Jesus saw the great crowds, He went up on a hillside. And when He sat down, all those who were following Him went up to Him,

² and He began to teach them, saying:

Great Happiness Promised

³ “There is extreme happiness, both now and forever, for those who are poor in spirit,^a because the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them!

⁴ There is extreme happiness, both now and forever, for those who mourn,^a because they will be comforted!

⁵ There is extreme happiness ahead for those who are meek,^a because they will inherit the earth!^b

⁶ There is extreme happiness ahead for those who hunger and thirst with desire to do what pleases God,^a because they will be completely fulfilled!

⁷ There is extreme happiness ahead for those who are merciful to others, because they will receive mercy from God!^a

⁸ There is extreme happiness ahead for those whose hearts are pure, because it is they who will see God!

⁹ There is extreme happiness ahead for those who work for peace,^a because it is they who will be called children of God!

¹⁰ There is extreme happiness, both now and forever, for those who are persecuted because they do and say what they know is pleasing to God,^a because the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them!^b

selves. It is to be willing to be saved only by God's rich grace and mercy, and then to be willing to do what God wants us to do, to say what He wants us to say, to be where God wants us to be, to go where He wants us to go. It means to die to all selfish ambitions for ourselves, and to come alive to God's plans and desires for us. It is to such people that Jesus promises Heaven.

5:4a ... *mourning with those who mourn, but especially mourning over our sin, and over all sin, which so dishonors God* ...

5:5a Meekness is not an inferiority complex, a surrender of our rights, nor cowardice. It is strength under control. It is the receiving of injuries with a belief that God will vindicate us. Romans 12:19; 1 Corinthians 6:7; 1 Peter 2:19-22. And *they will inherit the earth* and reign with

Christ over it. 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 2:26-27; 5:10.

5:5b Psalm 37; Revelation 21:7.

5:6a ... *at all times and in every situation, not choosing to neglect or ignore anything that is God's desire or command* ...

5:7a For a graphic picture of the truth of this statement by Christ, read the account of the Judgment in Matthew 25, verses 31-46. The only reason given why those at His right hand receive mercy is because they have shown mercy to Jews and followers of Christ. Also read the note there.

5:9a The greatest peacemakers are those who work for peace between God and mankind—thru Jesus Christ; and those who help keep peace between followers of Christ.

5:10a This would include taking a firm stand for

¹¹There is indeed extreme happiness coming your way when people insult and persecute you and say all kinds of things about you which are not true, because you are faithfully obeying Me, and talking to others about Me.^a

¹²Always rejoice and be extremely glad when such persecution comes, because your reward in Heaven will be extremely great!^a Because that's the way the prophets who lived and witnessed faithfully for God before your time were treated.^b

You are to be Salt and Light

¹³"You are the preserving salt of the earth," Christ continued, "with which the people of this world are to be salted and saved. But if the salt in your life and testimony has lost its sharp penetrating qualities and healing powers and has become lifeless and useless, how will others be convinced, convicted, saved, and preserved in purity, uprightness, and self-control by your influence and help? Such salt is good for nothing! In fact, all that remains then is that it be thrown out and trampled underfoot by people because of its worthless condition.^a

¹⁴"You are also to shine and give light to everyone in the world.^a It's impossible for people not to see a city on a hill.^b

¹⁵"Neither do people light a lamp and then cover it with a large basket. No, they put it on a lampstand, and then it gives light for everyone in the room.

¹⁶"So let your light shine before others so they will see the good life you are living. Your Father in

Heaven will receive honor when you do that.^a

Regarding the Law

¹⁷"Don't think that I have come to do away with the Law of Moses or the pronouncements of the prophets. I have not come to do away with them but to satisfy the Law and fulfill the prophecies of the prophets.

¹⁸"I tell you the absolute truth, that as long as the heavens and the earth last, there's no possibility whatever that the smallest letter or the smallest part of a single letter will be abolished from the Law until its whole purpose has been accomplished.

¹⁹"So if you refuse to obey even one of the least important of these commands, and teach others that they may do so, you will be despised by those in the Kingdom of Heaven.^a But if you obey them, and teach others to obey them, you will be called great by those in the Kingdom of Heaven.

²⁰"Because I tell you, that unless you obey and serve God in a far better way than the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses,^a there's no way whatever that you will gain entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Murder and Anger

²¹"You have heard that it was said to our people of long ago,

You shall not commit murder,
and that whoever does must be brought to trial.

²²"But I tell you that anyone who is even angry with his brother or sister for no good reason will be in danger of being brought to trial. And whoever

what you know is right, no matter who or how many make up the opposition.

5:10b For each of these positive statements of Christ, a counterpart is also true. In this case, those who avoid persecution, by saying or doing what some person or the crowd wants done or said, instead of what God wants, *will be unhappy forever, because they will not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven!* If the positive is true, so is the negative. This applies to the preceding verses as well.

5:11a To *faithfully obey Christ, and talk to others about Him* means to live and serve as He would if He were now in your place. 1 John 2:6.

It means to think, plan, act, live, speak out, teach, warn, encourage, love, pray, and witness to others as He would if He were where you are. Expect persecution when you go all out for Him in all things. Some persecution will be subtle, some not so subtle. Matthew 13:21; 2 Timothy 3:12. If people persecuted Him, they will persecute you. But consider the

great results, as mentioned in the next verse. Always keep that in mind! Always!

5:12a The rewards promised in Heaven for being faithful will so far outweigh the temporary value of any earthly loss or harm, that there is just no way of comparing the two values. That's the reason for the extreme happiness to be experienced in such persecution. The rewards will be extremely great! See 1 Corinthians 2:9. No doubt, the greater the dedication, and the greater the loss of worldly success and acceptance, the greater the reward.

It is recorded in Luke 6:22-23 that Christ told those who were persecuted for their faithfulness to *leap for joy* when they were persecuted for their faithful and outspoken testimony. The great reward that is assured by Christ is the reason for the extreme happiness to be expressed at such a time—and in all future time as we continue faithful.

5:12b Do lukewarm "Christians" and unbelievers speak well of you? If so, read Appendix 200, p 465.

calls his brother or sister ‘worthless,’ ‘stupid,’ or ‘shallow-brained’ shall answer to the court. Any one who says ‘You worthless fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of Hell.^a

²³ “So if you bring your gift to the altar, and while there you remember that someone carries a grudge against you,

²⁴ leave your gift at the altar. Go and get things straightened out with that person. Then come back and offer your gift.

²⁵ “Come to a quick agreement with the one who is suing you, before you come to court,^a so that he doesn’t bring you before the judge, and the judge then turn you over to the bailiff to be thrown into jail.

²⁶ “I assure you that there’s no way you will get out of there until you have paid the last cent you owe.^a

Adultery

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said to our people of long ago,

You shall not commit adultery.^a

²⁸ “But I tell you that whoever gazes at a woman with lustful desire to sin with her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

²⁹ “So even if it’s your best eye that’s causing you to keep on sinning, gouge it out and throw it away. Because it’s better that one part of your body be destroyed, than for your whole body to be thrown into Hell.

³⁰ “And if it’s your right hand that’s causing you to keep on sinning, then cut it off and throw it

away. Because it’s better that one part of your body be destroyed, than for your whole body to be thrown into Hell.

Divorce

³¹ “It has also been said,

Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.^a

³² “But I tell you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason other than marital unfaithfulness^a causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a woman^b divorced for marital unfaithfulness is committing adultery.

Jesus Forbids Oaths

³³ “You have also heard that it was said to our people of long ago,

You shall not break the oath of your promises, but you must do whatever you promised the Lord.

³⁴ “But I tell you, don’t swear by anything when you make a promise; not by Heaven, because Heaven is God’s throne,

³⁵ or by the earth, because the earth is His footstool, or by Jerusalem, because that’s the city of the great King.

³⁶ “Don’t even swear by your own head, because you can’t make even one hair white or black.

³⁷ “Just say ‘Yes’ or ‘No.’ Anything more is from the evil one.

About Revenge and Giving

³⁸ “You have heard that the Law of Moses says,

If someone destroys the eye of another, he must

5:13a Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34-35. And consider Romans 10:9-10 here.

5:14a ... so people may see their true condition, and where they are going, and be guided to the way that leads to everlasting life.

5:14b So be visible in the stand you take for Christ, and the witness you give for Him.

5:14-16a See 2nd note for Revelation 1:20.

5:19a This is not referring to your future position in the Kingdom of Heaven, but as to how those presently in the Kingdom of Heaven view you (especially Christ and the Father). Because according to the next verse, such people won’t even make it into the Kingdom of Heaven.

5:20a Exodus 19:1 to 31:18.

5:22a Exodus 20:13. Jesus elevated the Law from an external act to the internal motives of the heart.

5:25a Or *while you are both still alive*. The passion you have not turned away from, the wrong you have not made right, will meet you as your adver-

sary at the judgment bar of God.

5:25-26a A good way to take this very prudent advice from the Lord is this: You are a sinner; God has a lawsuit against you. There’s only one breath between you and death. **Now** is the time you must come to an agreement with God. You are invited to make amends with God by turning from your rebellion against Him to obeying Him, and trusting in Jesus as your Savior. Accept His invitation at once, and He will save your soul. Don’t delay! Eternity is much nearer than you think. If you die in your sins you will never live where God lives. Read *The Amazing Story of God*, Appendix 247, page 520.

5:27a Exodus 20:14.

5:31a Deuteronomy 24:1.

5:32a Literally *fornication*.

5:32b This all applies to a man as well. See 19:9 for a clearer explanation.

5:38a Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:19-20;

pay by having his own eye destroyed. If one knocks out the tooth of another, his own tooth must be knocked out.^a

³⁹“But I tell you: Don’t resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also.

⁴⁰“If someone wants to take you to court and sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well.

⁴¹“If someone forces you to go a mile, go two miles with him.

⁴²“Give to the one who asks you for something; and if someone asks to borrow something from you, lend it to him.

Love Your Enemies

⁴³“You have heard that it’s been said,

You shall love your friend,^a and hate your enemy.

⁴⁴“But I tell you: Make it your practice to love your enemies. Speak kindly to those who curse you, and do good to those who hate you. Pray for those who treat you with contempt and persecute you.

⁴⁵“If you do this, you will be true children of your Father in Heaven, because He causes His sun to rise on evil people as well as on those who are good. And He sends rain for those who do wrong as well as for those who do what’s right.

⁴⁶“What reward can you expect from God if you love only those who love you? Even people with the lowest of morals^a do that.

⁴⁷“And if you are friendly and considerate only toward your friends and relatives, what are you doing more than others? Even the lowest criminals^a do that.

⁴⁸“So you must always aim at conducting yourselves as fully developed followers of Mine in every situation, striving to act as perfectly and maturely as your Father in Heaven.^a

Give Honorably and Profitably

6“Take warning: Be careful not to do your good deeds publicly, to call attention to what you’ve done.^a If you do, you will get no reward from your Father in Heaven.

²“So when you give to the needy, don’t broadcast the fact with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and out on the streets, in order to win the praise of others. I tell you the truth: They have received all the reward they will ever get.

³“But when you give to the needy, do it in such a way that even your closest friends won’t know about it, so that your giving is done in secret.

⁴“Then your Father, who continually watches you^a in secret, will Himself reward you openly.^b

The Model Prayer

⁵“And when you pray don’t be like the hypocrites, who love to stand in the synagogues and on the street corners so everyone will see them. I tell you the truth: They have already received all the reward they will ever get.

⁶“But when you pray, go to your room and shut the door. Then pray to your Father who is watching in secret, and your Father, who sees you there,^a will reward you openly.

⁷“And as you pray, don’t keep mindlessly repeating the same words over and over again,^a like the heathen do. They think that the more words they say, the more likely they are to have their prayers heard.

⁸“Don’t be like them, because your Father knows all about the things you need before you even ask Him.

⁹“Instead, pray like this:

Our Father who is in Heaven, may Your name be most highly revered!

Deuteronomy 19:21.

5:43a Leviticus 19:18.

5:46-47a Literally *tax collectors*. Israel was a captive nation at this time, paying taxes to Rome. Jews who were willing to collect these taxes and get their cut were thoroughly despised by other Jews. They were also hated “sinners” because they would often charge more tax than directed, and pocket the surplus.

5:48a See 2 Corinthians 7:1, and note.

6:1a It may seem that Christ is contradicting what He said in 5:16, but this is not the case. In 5:16 Christ is challenging His followers to live in such a way that they will bring honor to God. But here in 6:1 the Lord is warning about giving to the needs of others in such a way that you seek honor for your-

self.

We should be careful not to desire to be recognized and praised for the help we give others in any way. Our great desire should be to serve the Lord in such a way that we will have eternal rewards. Those rewards will be of far greater value than any reward we could receive now. So live your life in such a way that you will bring honor to God (5:16), but don’t seek to do anything in such a way that you will bring honor to yourself.

6:4a 2 Chronicles 16:9; Proverbs 5:21, 15:3.

6:4b God gives many rewards in this life. See Proverbs 19:17. But this likely refers to the rewards given at the great Judgment Seat of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:10. These eternal rewards will be much greater, and obviously far more enduring,

¹⁰ **Reign as King in every life! May You be fully obeyed here on earth, just as You are in Heaven.**

¹¹ **Continue to give us the food we need for each day.**

¹² **And forgive us all the wrongs we have done, in the same way that we forgive those who have wronged us.**

¹³ **Keep us from being tempted in any way to do wrong. Instead, liberate us from the temptations of the flesh^a and of the Evil One. Because we belong to Your Kingdom! And all power and glory are Yours forever! May it always be so!**

¹⁴ “Because if you forgive those who have wronged you, your Father in Heaven will also forgive you.

¹⁵ “But if you don’t forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you.”^a

True and Effective Fasting

¹⁶ “Also, when you fast,^a don’t go around with a sad face like the hypocrites do. They actually neglect their hair, face, and clothes, to make sure everyone will know they are fasting. I assure you, they already have all the reward they will ever get.

¹⁷ “But when you fast, wash your face and comb your hair, so that others won’t know you are fasting. Only your Father will know.

¹⁸ And your Father who is watching all that is done, though unseen by anyone, will reward you openly.

Make Eternal Investments in Heaven

¹⁹ “Stop piling up treasured material things for yourselves here on earth, where every imaginable kind of moth and corrosion can destroy them, and where thieves^a can break in and steal them from you.

²⁰ “Instead, pile up investments for yourselves in

Heaven. No disasters of any kind can destroy them there, and no thieves can break in and steal them.

²¹ “Because where your investments are, that’s where your heart will be also.”^a

²² “Your eyes act as windows for your body. If they are clear and in good condition, your whole body will be flooded with light.

²³ “But if your eyes have degenerated and are now useless, your whole body will be full of darkness. In the same way, if the eyes of your understanding, which should be giving you light in your soul, are keeping you in darkness instead, consider how dreadful that darkness is.”^a

²⁴ “You cannot serve two masters, because either you will hate one of them and love the other, or you will serve one with zeal and have little or no time for the other. You cannot be zealously occupied in serving both God and money.”^a

Never Worry

²⁵ “For this reason I most earnestly tell you: Don’t worry about what will be available for you to eat and drink in order to stay alive. And don’t worry about your body, about the clothing you will need. Isn’t life itself a far greater wonder than food? And what a wonder the body is,^a much more so than the clothing you put on it!

²⁶ “Look at the birds in the air. They don’t plant seeds or gather in a harvest and put it into barns; but your Father in Heaven is continually feeding them. Are you not much more highly valued by God than the birds?

²⁷ “Which of you by worry and anxious care can add 18 inches^a to your height?^b

²⁸ “So why do you worry about clothes? Look at the lilies out in the field, how they grow. They don’t work or make clothes for themselves.

than any rewards received in this life.

6:6a ... *even though you don’t see Him* ...

6:7a Praying the same words *when they come from the heart* is not mindless repetition. Our Lord repeated the same words three times when He prayed in Gethsemane. It’s the *empty repetition* of prayers that our Lord condemns.

6:13a James 1:12-15.

6:15a See 18:23-35.

6:16a ... *going without food as part of your earnest prayer* ...

6:19a ... *of every kind* ...

6:19-21a For a very important note here, see Luke 16:9.

6:23a If the eyes of your soul are debased and are keeping you mainly concerned about earthly satis-

factions and attainments—if they are diseased and are not being truly fixed on Heaven and the endless eternity that stretches forever before us—how dreadful that darkness is! Jesus then goes on to apply it in the next verses.

6:24a There’s nothing wrong with money and wealth that is used in a right way for the blessing of mankind and the glory of God. But wealth is treacherous, very treacherous. See Matthew 19:16-26; Mark 10:17-27; Luke 12:16-34; 16:1-13; 1 Timothy 6:10, and notes.

6:25a If God gave us the great miracles of life and a body, can’t we trust Him to supply our necessary food and clothing in some way? Luke 12:22-34.

6:27a Literally *a cubit*—between 18 and 22 inch-

²⁹ “But I tell you that even Solomon, with all the wealth and power he had, was never able to dress himself as beautifully as one of these flowers.

³⁰ “Now then, if God so beautifully dresses the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown on the fire tomorrow, won’t He even more surely provide you with clothing? How can you have so little faith!

³¹ “So don’t worry, saying, ‘Will we have anything to eat?’ or ‘Will there be something to drink?’ or ‘How will we get clothes to wear?’

³² “Those are the very things the people of the world are always so concerned about. But your Father in Heaven knows all about your need for all these things.

³³ “Your chief concern, above all else, must be to seek the Kingdom of God,^a by doing all that is pleasing to Him. If you sincerely do that, in one way or another all the things you need will be provided for you.

³⁴ “So don’t worry about tomorrow, because with tomorrow will come the ability and the opportunities to deal with tomorrow’s problems. Today’s problems are enough for you to be concerned about today.

Stop Judging Others

7 “Stop condemning others, and God won’t condemn you.

² “Because God will treat you in the same way that you treat others. The same measuring stick you use to measure others will be used by God to measure you.

³ “And why do you fret about the tiny speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye, when, look, you completely ignore the big log in your own eye?

⁴ “How can you dare say to your brother, ‘Let me take that speck out of your eye,’ when you refuse to deal with the big log in your own eye?

⁵ “You hypocrite! First remove the log from your own eye. Then you’ll be able to see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

⁶ “Don’t give that which is sacred to the dogs, or throw your pearls in front of the pigs.^a If you do, they may merely trample them under foot, and then turn on you and tear you to pieces.

To Pray Effectively

⁷ “When you pray, you must earnestly persist^a in your asking; then what you are asking for will def-

es.

6:27b The Greek word *beylikian* can refer either to the *length of one’s life* or to one’s *stature*. We believe that the correct translation in this case is *stature*. One could hardly know whether or not he had added any time to his life; but he would know if he had added height. In Luke 12:25-26 Jesus calls this addition of stature *of little importance*. He wouldn’t likely say that about prolonging life, but it certainly is true about adding a cubit to one’s height. Scientific experiments have revealed that people who exercise vigorously three times a week live longer than those who don’t. So one can add years to one’s life, but not many inches to one’s height.

6:33a This refers to both God’s Kingdom in your heart (Luke 17:21) and to His Kingdom in Heaven and on earth. To *seek God’s Kingdom* above everything else means that God’s Kingdom everywhere, and especially in Heaven, becomes your greatest and all-consuming concern. To seek that Kingdom means 1) to acknowledge your need for God’s forgiveness thru Jesus the Savior, 2) to live now to please God in everything you think, do, and say, and 3) to become interested and active in those exploits and pursuits that will please and glorify God. This certainly includes obeying the last command of Jesus (28:18-20) so that God may reign as King in every heart. Luke 17:21. To seek to really know

God and His will must be the main business of every Christian. It is when you make God’s deep concern for the lost your deep and earnest concern, that Christ promises that God will supply all your needs in this life. Philippians 4:13-19.

7:6a The meaning is, don’t waste much time with people who are savage and snarling haters of the Great News. Use your time wisely, and seek those who are willing to listen. Do witness to those who oppose you, but if you encounter continued strong opposition, just say to the person, “Listen, Heaven is real—but so is Hell! In which direction are you going? In which direction is your family going? If you don’t warn them about Hell, and tell them how they can receive God’s forgiveness for their sins, and how they must then live in order to get to Heaven, who will?” Most people will then listen, because most people are deeply concerned about their family. At least, at this point, encourage them to read the New Testament and discover the answers for themselves.

But very, very few are hostile to the Great News when it’s presented in love, and when you speak to them one on one. The great majority of the unconverted are more willing to listen to the Great News than most Christians are willing to speak to them about it! But are we really converted to Christ if we refuse to obey Christ and speak to others about Him? Consider Romans 10:9-10 here.

initely^b be given to you. Keep on diligently seeking,^a and you definitely^b will find what you are looking for. Keep on loudly knocking,^a and the door will open for you.

⁸“Because everyone who keeps on asking^a is definitely^b in the process of receiving, and everyone who keeps on seeking^a is definitely^b in the process of finding, and for the one who keeps on knocking,^a the door will open.^c

⁹“Would any of you men here give a stone to your children if they asked you for bread?^a

¹⁰“Or if they asked for a fish, would you give them a snake? Of course not!

¹¹“If you, then, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good things to those who earnestly persevere in asking^a Him for them!

¹²“In every situation, treat others in the same way that you want them to treat you. This is the very heart of the Law of Moses and the books of the prophets.

The Narrow and Wide Gates

¹³“You must find and enter the narrow gate in

order to get onto the road that leads to eternal life! The gate that leads to Hell and destruction is wide, and the road leading there is broad, and most everyone is traveling that easy road.^a

¹⁴“The reason so many travel the broad road is because of the narrowness of the gate one must enter to get onto the road that leads to life, and because the road that leads to life is also narrow and difficult.^a So there are few who are looking for it with enough diligence to find it.^b

Beware of False Teachers

¹⁵“You must constantly be on the alert^a for men who preach a false message. They come to you looking like gentle sheep, but if you could look inside their hearts, you would discover that they are bloodthirsty wolves who will tear you apart!

¹⁶“You will be able to tell what they really are by the fruits^a they bear. Do you gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?

¹⁷“The obvious truth is: Every good tree always produces good fruit, but a bad tree always produces poisonous or worthless fruit.

¹⁸“A good tree cannot produce poisonous or

7:7,8,11a All are present tense in the Greek, representing continuous action. See Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8.

7:7-8b All are indicative mood, the mood of certainty. See important Luke 11:9-10 note.

7:8c See important notes for Luke 17:6; John 14:13-14.

7:9a Pita bread in the Middle East is still baked in the shape of a round, flat stone.

7:13a We are all on a journey. As soon as children reach the age of accountability, they find themselves on the broad road, unless by that early age they have been led to accept Christ as both Lord and Savior. Romans 3:23.

There's great liberty on the broad road. You can do anything and you're still on the road. There's popularity, appearance of ease and enjoyment, (since anything goes), and jolly companionship.

But there are many disillusionments. Only a few get rich or famous. Most of those who do are discontented, miserable, disappointed and dissatisfied. The same applies to most of the others on this road. **The road ahead for those who are unfaithful to God's instructions is a miserable, treacherous, weary road.** Proverbs 13:15; Galatians 6:7-8.

The way gets wider as you feed your appetites as you wish. These appetites eventually become insatiable.

There's lots of company on this road. There are the atheists, agnostics, nonreligionists, the unconverted, people of pleasure, people of “progress”,

every age, rank, employment—and nominal Christians. These “Christians” believe in God and Christ with their minds, but not with their hearts. They have little interest in fellowship with God in prayer, in Bible reading, in witnessing to others, or obeying all of Christ's commands. They do many good things, but they fail to realize that God considers their selective obedience as rebellion. See vss 21-27.

But there's one great disadvantage in traveling this road. It leads to destruction—to the fires of an awful Hell! Psalm 9:17; Revelation 20:11-15. No mere human warns of this; it's the warning of Jesus Christ. Matthew 10:28; Luke 16:19-31. If you are satisfied with the disappointing side effects caused by living this way, and the destruction and endless, excruciating, racking pain and suffering at the end of the road, continue on. But if you want real life, look for the narrow gate that leads to eternal life thru Jesus Christ as both Lord and Savior.

Read Appendix 247, page 520, entitled, *The Amazing Story of God*. There you will discover your destiny—who you really are, what you can be, and how to reach Heaven, for sure.

7:14a “In other words, the whole course is as difficult as the first step.”—*Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown*. See Luke 13:24.

7:14b Are all who consider themselves Christians on the narrow road that leads to Heaven? See Appendix 200A, page 465.

7:15a Present tense.

7:16,20a This is plural in both verses because we

worthless fruit, and a corrupt tree cannot produce good fruit.

¹⁹“Every tree that fails to produce good fruit will soon be cut down and thrown into the fire.”^a

²⁰“So you will be sure to recognize false preachers by the fruits^a they produce.

²¹“Not everyone who continues to call Me ‘Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who practice obedience to My Father in Heaven will be allowed in.”^a

²²“On Judgment Day there will be many who will say to Me, ‘But, Lord! O Lord! Didn’t we prophesy and preach in Your name? We even drove out demons and performed many miracles in Your name!’

²³“Then I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get out of My presence, you who insist on living as you please instead of obeying God!’^a

Wise and Foolish People

²⁴“So everyone who is listening to what I have just said, and continues to put My words into practice, is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

²⁵“The rain came down in torrents, and the flood waters rose. The winds blew fiercely and pounded the house, but it didn’t break apart because it was built on the rock.”^a

²⁶“But everyone who hears what I have just said, and still ignores Me and fails to put My words into practice, is like a man who was foolish enough to build his house on sand.

²⁷“The rain came down in torrents, the flood waters rose, the winds blew fiercely, pounding the house, and it collapsed, with devastating results.”^a

²⁸When Jesus finished talking, the people who had heard Him were utterly amazed at the way He had taught.

²⁹Because He didn’t teach at all like the teachers of the Law of Moses, lacking confidence, but with great authority.

The Healing of the Leper

8 After Jesus came down from the hillside, great crowds followed Him.

²Suddenly a man suffering with leprosy came and kneeled down in front of Him, pleading, “Sir, I know that if You want to, You are able to make me well.”

³Jesus reached out His hand and touched him, and said, “I do want to. Be well!” Immediately the man’s leprosy was gone!

⁴“Make sure you don’t tell anyone about this,” Jesus told him. “But go to the priest and show him that you are now well. Bring an offering, as Moses instructed,^a as a testimony to everyone that you are now healed.”

A Servant Healed

⁵When Jesus arrived in Capernaum, a Roman army captain came to Him with an urgent request.

⁶“Sir,” he said, “my servant is lying at home paralyzed and in frightful pain.”

⁷“I will go and heal him,” Jesus replied.

⁸“Sir,” the captain responded, “I’m not worthy to have you come into my home. Just give the command, and my servant will be healed.

⁹“Because I have officers who give orders to me, and I have soldiers who take orders from me. I command, ‘Go’ to one, and he goes. To another I say, ‘Come’ and he comes. I tell my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

¹⁰Jesus was so amazed when He heard this, that He said to those following Him, “I tell you the truth, I haven’t found such great faith anywhere, not even among the Jews.

¹¹“Many^a will come from the east and the west, I tell you, and will sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the Feast in the Kingdom of Heaven.

¹²“While many who should have been in the Kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”^a

¹³Then Jesus said to the Roman captain, “Be on your way, because what you have believed would

are not only to judge the life of the preacher, but we are to judge the results of his preaching in the lives of his listeners. Have they become doers of God’s message as a result of his preaching, or merely listeners? James 1:21-22. Within five years, the majority of a congregation will have the same views and values as its minister. Pastor, what a responsibility is yours! And what a responsibility rests on those who choose or retain a certain pastor!

7:19a John 15:1-6.

7:21a We must have one goal in mind—*obedience to the King!* Otherwise we are not converted.

7:23a Just how serious is this warning? Turn to Appendix 200B, page 466, for the answer.

7:24-25a This is a most important prophecy by Jesus Christ. Notice what He says about acting according to what He has taught and commanded. And James says, “Faith that doesn’t result in obedi-

happen has already happened.” And his servant was healed that very moment.

Many People Healed by Jesus

¹⁴ When Jesus arrived at Peter’s house, He found Peter’s mother-in-law sick in bed with a fever.

¹⁵ He simply touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got right up and started preparing a meal for them.

¹⁶ When evening came, the people brought many to Him who were demon possessed. He drove the evil spirits out with a single word, and He healed all who were sick.

¹⁷ In doing this, He made the prophecy of Isaiah come true that says:

He Himself took our sicknesses and carried away our diseases.^a

The Cost of Following Jesus

¹⁸ Sometime later,^a when Jesus noticed how large the crowd was growing, He ordered the Twelve to prepare to cross to the other side of the lake.

¹⁹ A teacher of the Law then came up to Him and said, “Teacher, I’ll follow You wherever You go.”

²⁰ “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests,” Jesus replied, “but the Son of Man has no home or possessions here, not even a pillow He can call His own.”

²¹ Then another of His followers said, “Sir, let me stay at home until I bury my father.”

²² “Follow Me,” Jesus responded, “and let those who are spiritually dead bury their own dead!”^a

Jesus Calms a Storm

²³ Then Jesus and His followers got into the boat and started across the lake.

²⁴ Suddenly, when they were part way across, a fierce storm swept down over the lake, creating such extreme turbulence that the waves towered over the boat and threatened to bury them. But Jesus just lay there sleeping.

²⁵ So His followers rushed over to Him and franti-

cally shook Him awake, shouting, “Lord, save us! We’re about to die!”

²⁶ “Oh, what little faith you have!” He replied. “Why are you so afraid?” Then He stood up and ordered the wind and the waves to stop their violence, and everything became completely calm.

²⁷ The men were utterly amazed. “What kind of man is this!”^a they exclaimed. “Why, even the wind and waves obey Him.”

Two Men with Demons Healed

²⁸ When they arrived at the other side of the lake, in the district of the Gergesenes, two demon-possessed men came out from among the tombs in a graveyard and met Him. They were extremely fierce, so much so that no one dared to travel the road there.

²⁹ Suddenly they screamed, “What business do You have in coming to us, Jesus, You Son of God^a? Have You come to torment us before the appointed time?”

³⁰ Not far from them was a large herd of pigs feeding.

³¹ “If You force us out,” the demons pleaded, “please allow us to enter that herd of pigs.”

³² All Jesus said was, “Go!” And they came out of the men and promptly entered the herd. But immediately, that whole herd of pigs ran violently down a steep bank and into the lake, and drowned.

³³ When that happened, the men herding the pigs ran into town and reported everything that had happened, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men.

³⁴ And listen! It looked like everyone in town was coming out to angrily confront and threaten Jesus. But once they saw Him, they merely begged Him to leave their part of the country.

Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man

9 So Jesus got into the boat and crossed back over to the town where He lived.

² Soon after, some men came to Him bringing a

ence to God is dead.” James 2:20. The *rock* does not refer in this instance to the sacrifice of Christ, but rather, *to His commands*. The New Testament is filled with Jesus’ commands to His followers. Notice the importance Jesus places upon our obedience to those commands. See also Hebrews 5:9.

7:26-27a To be fairly warned regarding Christ’s statement here, see Appendix 200C, page 466.

8:4a Chapters 13 and 14 of Leviticus.

8:11a ... *like this man* ...

8:12a See Mark 9:44-48 note.

8:17a Isaiah 53:4.

8:18a Implied, from Mark 4:35.

8:22a This man wanted to follow Jesus, but wanted to wait until his father had died, which could be many years later. Christ wanted him to know that following and serving Him was of far more importance than any other obligation.

8:27a Just who is Jesus Christ? See Appendix 246, page 512, for the answer.

8:29a The demons knew who Jesus was.

9:2a Mark 2:3-12.

man who was paralyzed, lying on a stretcher. Seeing how strong and determined their faith was,^a Jesus said to the paralytic, “Cheer up, My son. Your sins are forgiven.”

³ Immediately some of the teachers of the Law thought to themselves, “This man’s a blasphemer^a!”

⁴ But Jesus knew what they were thinking, so He said, “Why are you thinking such evil thoughts?

⁵ “Which is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or, ‘Get up and walk’?

⁶ “But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . . ‘Stand up!’” He said to the man. “Now fold up your stretcher and be on your way home.”

⁷ And he got right up and went home!

⁸ When the crowd saw this, they were astounded, and praised God for giving such power to men.

The Calling of Matthew

⁹ As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting in the tax collector’s booth. “Come with Me,” Jesus invited him. And Matthew got right up and went with Him.

¹⁰ Matthew then invited Jesus and His followers to his home for dinner. He also invited many other tax collectors^a and other sinners.

¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His followers, “Why does your teacher eat with these crooked tax collectors^a and other sinners?”

¹² Upon hearing this, Jesus said, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor, but sick people do.

¹³ “But go and learn what this Scripture means:

I am even more concerned that you be merciful to others, than that you sacrifice to Me.^a

I didn’t come to call those who consider themselves so godly that they have no need of further help. I’m here to call sinners to turn from their sinning to living lives of obedience to God.”

A Question about Fasting

¹⁴ One day the followers of John the Baptizer came to Jesus and asked Him, “Why is it that we

and the Pharisees often go without food, but Your followers never fast?”

¹⁵ “Would you expect the guests at a wedding reception to go without food while the bridegroom is with them?” Jesus asked in reply. “But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them. They will indeed fast then.

¹⁶ “No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth onto an old garment, because when the patch would shrink, it would pull away from the old cloth and make a bigger hole.

¹⁷ “Nor does anyone pour new wine into old wineskins, because the wine would swell and burst the old skins. Then the wine would spill out, and the skins would also be ruined. New wine is put into new wineskins; then both are preserved.”

One Dead and One Sick

¹⁸ While He was still speaking to them, an official of the synagogue rushed up and knelt before Him, saying, “My daughter has just died! But come and put Your hand on her, and she will live again.”

¹⁹ So Jesus and His followers got up and went with him.

²⁰ Then with extreme urgency, a woman who had suffered a severe bleeding problem for 12 years came up behind Him and touched the fringe^a of His prayer shawl.^b

²¹ “If I can just touch His shawl,” she had said to herself, “I will be healed.”

²² Jesus turned around, and looking at her, He said, “Take courage, My daughter, your faith has made you well.” And the woman was instantly healed!

²³ When Jesus entered the official’s home and saw the funeral musicians and the wailing crowd,

²⁴ He said, “Everybody out! The girl is not dead, but asleep.” The people there couldn’t believe anyone would say such a thing at such a time, and they laughed at Him in scorn.

²⁵ But when the crowd had been put out, He went into the girl’s room and took her by the hand, and the girl got right up!

9:3a “... *Who does he think he is? Only God can forgive sins!*” Mark 2:7; Luke 5:21.

9:10-11a See 5:46-47 note.

9:13a Hosea 6:6. See also 1 Samuel 15:1-23.

9:20a The Greek can be translated border, hem, fringe, or tassel.

9:20b The word is *garment*, and can refer to His robe, cloak, or prayer shawl. The border or hem of His robe would have been very low in the back, so it’s likely that she touched His prayer shawl.

9:30a For the reason see 12:16 note.

9:38a The Greek *deōmai* means *beg, plead, implore*—not merely *ask*. This harvest is a matter of life or death, forever!

9:38b This is the actual meaning of the Greek word *ekballō*. “The verb *ekballō* really means to drive out, to push out, to draw out with violence, or without violence.”—A.T. Robertson, in *Word Pictures in the New Testament*.

The Greek here is actually *ekballay*, the subjunc-

²⁶News about this great miracle spread thruout all that part of Israel. vest field.”

Two Blind and One Mute Healed

²⁷As Jesus left there, two blind men began following Him and shouting, “Son of David! Have pity on us!”

²⁸When He went indoors, the blind men went in too. So Jesus asked them, “Do you believe I am able to do what you are asking?”

“Yes, Sir, we do!” they replied.

²⁹So He touched their eyes, and said, “Let it happen then, as you believe.”

³⁰Immediately they could see! “Now listen:” Jesus strongly ordered them, “Do not tell anyone about this.”^a

³¹But when they left, they told everyone about Him thruout that whole region.

³²And as these men were leaving the house, a man was brought to Jesus who was demon-possessed and couldn’t talk.

³³After Jesus forced the demon out, the man started talking! The crowd was amazed, saying, “Nothing like this has ever happened before in Israel!”

³⁴But the Pharisees said, “It’s the ruler of the demons who gives him the power to drive out demons.”

A Bumper Harvest—Pray for Workers!

³⁵Jesus traveled thru all the cities and towns, teaching in their synagogues, telling the Great News about the Kingdom of God, and healing every kind of disease and sickness of the people.

³⁶When He saw the crowds, His heart went out to them, because they were weary and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

³⁷“There are so many people to harvest,” He said to His followers, “but so few workers to harvest them.

³⁸“So plead most earnestly^a with the Lord of the harvest so that He may use His great power in forcibly thrusting out^b laborers into His great har-

Jesus Chooses Twelve Apostles

10 Then Jesus called together His twelve followers. He gave them power to drive out evil spirits and to cure every kind of disease and sickness.

²The names of the twelve apostles^a were: Simon, better known as Peter; his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee; his brother John;

³Philip; Bartholomew; Thomas; Matthew, the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus; Lebbaeus, whose last name was Thaddaeus;

⁴Simon, the Canaanite; and Judas Iscariot, the one who later betrayed Him.

Apostles Instructed and Sent Out

⁵Jesus sent these twelve out with the following instructions: “Do not go to the Gentiles,^a and don’t go into any Samaritan^b towns.

⁶“Instead, go to the lost sheep of Israel.

⁷“As you go, cry out to the people, ‘The Kingdom of Heaven has come very near to you!’

⁸“Heal the sick, cure the lepers, restore the dead to life, and drive out the demons. What you received was given you free of charge; now give without expecting to be paid.

⁹“Don’t bring gold, silver, or money of any kind with you.

¹⁰“Don’t carry a knapsack^a or an extra coat or shoes or walking stick; because the worker is worthy of being supported by those to whom he ministers.^b

¹¹“When you come to a city or town, ask the people there who they could recommend as an upright and worthy person, and stay in his home until you leave.

¹²“And when you go to a home, greet the people there warmly.

¹³“If they offer you their support and cooperation, ask God’s blessing on them. But if they offer no help, keep the blessing you had reserved for them.

ative mood, the mood of probability. So God, in reality, has limited Himself to exert His great power, *when we really pray*. Your fervent, believing prayer is **so important!** Romans 12:11; James 5:16.

10:2a One who is sent as a messenger.

10:5a All who are not Jews.

10:5b Samaritans were a mixed blood, only part Jewish. 2 Kings 17:24.

10:10a ... *for food and other essentials* ...

10:9-10b The Lord wanted them to experience

how well He could supply all their needs as they served Him, if they would only have faith in God to meet their needs. Take care not to spend your life making provision for self-support before obeying the call of God. Later (see Luke 10:4; 22:35-36) Jesus instructed His workers to bring along and use anything in their possession that could be used in their support, even a sword for defensive purposes.

10:14a It was possible that not one home in an

¹⁴ “And when you leave the house or city where the people refuse to receive you or listen to your message,^a shake the very dust of that place from your feet!^b

¹⁵ “I tell you the truth, God will show more mercy to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than to the people of that city or home.

Beware of Trouble

¹⁶ “Now listen! I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as clever as snakes and as harmless as doves.

¹⁷ “You must constantly be on your guard against certain people, because they will have you arrested, tried in their religious courts, and whipped in their synagogues.

¹⁸ “And because you represent Me, you will be brought before governors and kings, so that you can tell them and their people about Me.

¹⁹ “But when they arrest you, don’t worry about what you should say at your trial, or how you should say it, because the words will be given you when it’s your time to speak.

²⁰ “It won’t be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father in Heaven will be speaking thru you.

²¹ “A man will even betray his brother and have him put to death. Fathers will betray their own children, and children will turn against their parents and have them put to death.

²² “You will be hated by everyone because of the stand you take for Me.^a But if you remain faithful to Me to the end of your life, you will be saved.^b

²³ “When they persecute you in one city, move on quickly to the next, because I tell you the truth, you won’t even cover all the cities in Israel before the Son of Man comes.^a

²⁴ “A student can’t expect to be treated with greater respect than his teacher; nor a servant, than his master.

²⁵ “So a student should be satisfied if he is treated in the same way that his teacher is, and a servant, in the same way that his master is. If they have called Me, the Master of the house, Beelzebul,^a it is certain they will call the members of My household even worse names.

entire town would open to them.

10:14b By this symbolic action they would vividly separate themselves from all connection with those who were rejecting the Lord, severing themselves from all guilt or responsibility for that rejection.

10:22a The early Christians were very bold in their stand for Christ. They spoke out and reached the then-known world with the message of the Savior. According to the apostle Paul, the same is necessary for Christians today if we are to be saved. See v 39 and note, and Romans 10:9-10. Can you truthfully say you love God if you refuse to obey Christ (28:18-20) and open your mouth to speak out for Him, and warn those who are lost of their awful condition, and point them to your Lord and Savior?

Read what God told John would happen to cowards. Revelation 21:8. And God is saying the same to every Christian today that He said to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 33:8-9), when He said, *When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you don’t speak out and do your best to persuade him to change his ways, that wicked person will die because of his sin, but I will hold you responsible for what will happen to that lost person because of your neglect and unwillingness to obey Me and speak to him. But if you do warn that wicked man to turn from his evil ways, but he still doesn’t do so, he will die lost because of his sin, but you have saved your own soul.*

It’s time that those who claim to be Christians take the bold stand for Christ that God demands.

When we wake up to the seriousness of our responsibilities, God will bring the great spiritual awakening that is so desperately needed. For help in your witnessing read the notes on Matthew 28:18-20 and Appendixes 212, p 477, 226, p 486, and 247, p 520.

But be warned: When the Church really goes on the offensive, as God demands, you can expect to be hated and persecuted even as the early Church was. But we will also see the same results that they saw. We are living in the end of the age, and we don’t have long years ahead of us to do the work for Christ that needs to be done. We must work while we still have the opportunity. The harvest is ripe and ready to be brought in! Always remember that Romans 10:9-10 is just as relevant to your salvation as John 3:16.

God is deeply concerned that you be deeply concerned about the welfare and salvation of others, to the same extent that you are concerned about the salvation of your own soul. See 22:39. Jesus was willing, at awful cost, to be your Savior, and now He expects you to expend yourself and be the savior of others! Otherwise your claim to being converted to Him is a very hollow claim. And when you witness to others be sure to let them know that being converted to Christ includes going public for Him.

For far too long, the Christian world has been given the false impression that speaking out for our Lord is optional. That’s a lie from Satan! Eternal life or judgment by God are at stake! You can easily begin a witness for Christ with anyone by simply

Fear only God

²⁶“But don’t be afraid of them, because there’s nothing that’s now covered up that won’t one day be uncovered; and nothing hidden that won’t then be exposed.

²⁷“Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak it out in broad daylight; and what I whisper in your ear, preach it from the housetops^a!

²⁸“Never be afraid of people. The most they can do is kill your body, but they can’t kill your soul. But always fear God, who is able to bring both body and soul to utter ruin in Hell!

²⁹“Don’t they sell two sparrows for a mere copper coin? Still, not one of them falls to the ground without your Father knowing about it and allowing it.

³⁰“But as for you, God even knows the number of hairs on your head.

³¹“So don’t be afraid, because you are of far more value to God than an enormous number of sparrows.^a

We Must Never be Ashamed of Jesus!

³²“So then, if you will speak out and share with others what you know and believe about me,^a I will speak to My Father in Heaven about you. I will tell Him that you are one who belongs to Me.

³³“But if you ignore or disown Me when with others^a—I will also disown you before My Father in Heaven.^b

Jesus’ Declaration of War and His Call to Arms!

³⁴“Don’t get the idea that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but war!

³⁵“Because My coming, and the message I bring, will turn sons against their fathers, daughters against their mothers, and daughters-in-law against their mothers-in-law.

³⁶“Your worst enemies will many times be the members of your own family.^a

³⁷“But if you love your father or mother or son or daughter more than you love Me,^a you are not qualified to be a follower of Mine!

asking them, “Are you planning on making it to Heaven?” Their answer to the question will tell you what to say next. You can ask that question of anyone, at any time, at any place. You can even go up to a perfect stranger and begin a witness for Christ by asking that question. Even if they walk away you have at least planted a seed in their heart and mind.

Jesus said, *If you are ashamed of Me among the sex-crazed and other sinners of your time, ashamed to fly your colors and share with them the message of Life that I came from Heaven to earth to give lost mankind, I, the Son of Man, will also be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of My Father with the holy angels.* Mark 8:38. What will be the destiny of those who are ashamed of Christ and are unwilling to take a stand and speak out for Him? See Appendix 209, page 474.

10:22b Revelation 2:26.

10:23a ... *to judge Israel.* Which happened when Rome crushed Israel only 40 years later, in A.D. 70.

10:25a Beelzebub (lord of flies) was a god of the Ekronites. 2 Kings 1:2. In derision the Jews changed one letter in the word and gave the name to Satan in an Aramean form—Beelzebul (god of dung, or filth). By giving the name to Christ, they poured upon Him the greatest possible abuse and contempt. Because the Jews had given this name to Satan, they were actually calling Jesus Satan.

10:27a Freely and fearlessly tell others all that

God has taught you. Leave the consequence with God.

10:31a God created you to be one of His children. And thru Christ He has made it possible for you to be forgiven your rebellion and sin and be restored to His family. He has such great plans for you!

10:32a A confession of Christ includes our actions as well as our words. We are therefore to confess Christ in every circumstance of life and before everyone. It is not merely in *one* act that we are to do it, but in *every* act, taking advantage of every opportunity to speak out for the Lord, and to take a stand for Him. See Luke 12:8-9; Romans 10:9-10; Revelation 3:5,14-16.

10:33a Christ can be disowned by both words and actions, and by silence, by refusing or neglecting to speak out and act according to His many commands. Obedience refused is to deny or disown Christ as Lord. To be born again means that we have turned from our rebellion toward God, and we now obey Him. Without obedience (holiness) a person will never see God. Matthew 7:21-23; Romans 6:22; 10:9-10; Hebrews 12:14. When either Heaven or Hell are at stake, silence is treason! Be sure to read Appendix 212, p 477, and 226, p 486; also Matthew 28:18-20, and notes.

10:33b Mark 8:38.

10:36a When you in truth *take your stand for Christ and for what He taught*, you will be declar-

³⁸“Neither are you qualified to receive all that I came to give if you are unwilling to take up your own cross^a and follow My example.^b”

³⁹“If you insist on living your life as you yourself please, you will lose it, but if you are willing to lose your present life for My sake, you will find it in eternal life.^a”

Promised Rewards

⁴⁰“The person who welcomes you is welcoming Me, and the one who welcomes Me is actually welcoming the One who sent Me.

⁴¹“When you welcome and help someone who is faithfully and boldly speaking out for God, because you recognize him as a true messenger of God, you will receive the same reward that he will. And when you welcome and assist a good man because of the fact that he is living to please God, you will receive the same reward that he will.

⁴²“And if you give as little as a cup of cold water to one of the least admired followers of Mine, because of the fact that he is My follower, I tell you the truth, you won’t fail to be rewarded, even for that.”

Messengers from John the Baptizer

11 When Jesus had finished instructing His twelve followers, He left there to teach and preach in the neighboring cities.

²While in jail, John heard about the things the Messiah^a was doing, and he sent two of his followers to Him.

ing your opposition to the lost world’s standards. And the opposition you will face can be very brutal.

10:37a ... *and are more concerned about pleasing them than pleasing Me ...*

10:38a The cross Christ is speaking of here is not sickness, suffering, trials, disappointment, or adversity of any other kind. A cross is an instrument of death! Christ calls *all* of His followers to death—to willingly die to all selfish desire and ambitions, and work industriously to further His Kingdom and glory and our future glory. Proverbs 3:35; Romans 5:2; 8:18; I Corinthians 15:43. See Appendix 221.

10:38b Christ died for you. He now asks you to die to yourself for His sake and the sake of others. He asks for your affection—unto death! Are we worthy of His love and sacrifice for us if we give Him anything less? To carry our cross and follow Him means to do our full duty toward God and man, no matter what others may think, say, or do.

10:39a Christ is actually saying, “Anyone who is mainly concerned about ‘having it made’ in this life, with his comfort, security, and pleasures here,

³“Are You the One we were promised^a would come?” they asked Him. “Or are we to keep on looking for someone else?”

⁴“Go back and tell John what you’ve been hearing and seeing,” Jesus replied.

⁵“People who were blind now see, those who were lame are walking, lepers have been cured, the deaf can hear, the dead are being brought back to life, and the Great News is being preached to the poor.

⁶“Happy and blessed by God is the person to whom I will not be a stumbling block.”

⁷As John’s followers were leaving, Jesus said to the crowds concerning John, “What kind of person did you go out into the wilderness to see? Were you looking for someone like tall grass that is easily swayed this way or that by whichever way the wind is blowing?^a”

⁸“But what kind of person did you actually go out to see? Were you looking for a man dressed in expensive clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes live in expensive homes.

⁹“But why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and you found one who is far greater than any other prophet.

¹⁰“Because John is the one about whom God was speaking when He said to His Son:

Listen! I am sending My messenger to go ahead of You. He will prepare the people to receive You.^a

¹¹“I tell you the truth, no woman has ever given birth to anyone who has risen to a higher level of greatness than John the Baptizer. But even the

and who denies Me by avoiding any rejection he might experience by openly confessing to one and all that he loves Me and lives only to please Me (Romans 10:9-10), will lose eternal life. But the one who lives only to please Me, and is willing to lose out in much, or all, that this brief life offers as he gives his life to Me, will gain eternal life.”

We are not saved by works, it is true. But it is also true that we are not saved unless we are truly born again, resulting in a sincere desire and intention to do all that is required of us by our Lord, according to His instructions in Scripture. To see that all this refers to eternal life, and not merely eternal rewards, see Mark 8:34-38, and the notes.

11:2a *Messiah* (Hebrew) and *Christ* (Greek) have the same meaning—the *anointed One*.

11:3a Deuteronomy 18:15,18; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 9:9.

11:7a Meaning *someone who is swayed by every person’s opinion or criticism*. See Luke 7:24 note.

11:10a Malachi 3:1.

11:12a “Our Lord is describing the energy with

least important person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John is now.

¹²“And from the days that John the Baptizer started preaching, until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been under siege, but only those who are thoroughly and fiercely determined to enter are gaining entrance.^a”

¹³“Because all the pronouncements of the Law of Moses and of the prophets before John^a looked forward to this time.

¹⁴“And if you are willing to receive it, John is Elijah,^a who is yet to come.

¹⁵“If you have been given ears for the purpose of hearing, then give serious consideration to this.

¹⁶“But to what can I compare the response of you people of today? The situation is similar to children sitting in the marketplaces, whose playmates call out to them and complain,

¹⁷‘We played wedding music for you on the flute, but you wouldn’t dance! We sang funeral songs, but you wouldn’t cry!’

¹⁸“Because when John came he didn’t eat or drink with others, and they said, ‘He has a demon in him.’

¹⁹“On the other hand, the Son of Man came eating and drinking with anyone and everyone, and they say, ‘Look at him! He’s nothing but a gluttonous drunkard and a friend of tax collectors and other sinners!’ But wise actions are always later proved to be right by the results.”

Disaster Awaits Unrepentant People

²⁰Then He began to publicly denounce the people in the cities where most of His miracles had been performed, because they hadn’t turned from their sinning to live to please God.

²¹“Awful misery and suffering lies ahead for you people in Chorazin! The same awaits you in Bethsaida! Because if the great miracles I did for you in your cities had been performed long ago in sinful Tyre and Sidon, those people would have turned from their sinning and obeyed God. And to show their sorrow for their past sins, they would have dressed in rough sackcloth and put ashes on their heads.

²²“I assure you, the people of ancient Tyre and Sidon will receive a lighter sentence on Judgment Day than you will!

²³“And you people of Capernaum, you who have been lifted up to Heaven,^a you will be delivered down into Hell! Because if the great miracles I did for you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained a city to this day.

²⁴“And I tell you, those who lived in Sodom will receive a lighter sentence on Judgment Day than you will.”

There is Rest for the Weary

²⁵Then, in reference to what He had just said, Jesus prayed, “O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, I thank You for hiding these things from those who consider themselves to be so wise and learned, and

which some people are pressing in, and urging the need of such energy if salvation is to be obtained.”—A. Lukyn Williams, in *Pulpit Commentary*.

“He that will take, or get possession of, the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and spiritual joy, must be in earnest. All Hell will oppose him in every step he takes; and if a man be not absolutely determined to give up his sins and evil companions, and have his soul saved at all hazards, and at every expense, he will surely perish everlastingly. This requires a *violent* earnestness.”—Adam Clarke *Commentary*. See Luke 13:24.

11:13a They were the instructors concerning the Messiah who was to come, until John came.

11:14a Very likely meaning, John is *like* Elijah, because even John said he was not Elijah. John 1:21. He came in the spirit of Elijah. Luke 1:17. Elijah will return shortly before God judges the earth *before the coming of the great and dreadful Day of the Lord*. Malachi 4:5-6.

John was not Elijah reincarnated. Nowhere does

the Bible teach reincarnation. Hebrews 9:27 states, “It has been determined by God that men are to die only once. After that they must stand before Him for judgment.” If Enoch and Elijah are the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-13, they will not be reincarnated, because neither of them has died yet. Genesis 5:18-24; 2 Kings 2:1-11.

In the Passover seder (service) today, Jews still put a place setting on the table for the prophet Elijah. The final segment of the seder is called the “cup of Elijah” looking forward to the coming of Elijah as the forerunner of Messiah.

11:23a Jesus had made Capernaum His headquarters during His entire public life. It was the most favored spot on earth, the most exalted in privilege. Today, some of God’s greatest witnessing is being done in the USA. As in Capernaum, God is offering you Heaven—unless you are satisfied to continue on to Hell. Romans 3:23; 6:23.

11:27a The Son will reveal many things about the Father to all who give clear evidence of true and

revealing them instead to those who are childlike in faith and acceptance.

²⁶“Yes, My Father, because that’s the way You were pleased that it should be.”

²⁷Then turning to His followers He said, “My Father has delivered everything into My hands. No one has a thorough comprehension of the Son, except the Father. And no one has a thorough comprehension of the Father, except the Son, and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.^a

²⁸“Come to Me, all of you who are working so hard and are burdened down with so many cares, and I will give you rest.

²⁹“Accept My direction for your life and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

³⁰“Because My yoke^a is easy to wear, and the load I ask you to carry is truly light.”

A Question about the Sabbath

12 Around that time, Jesus was walking by some grainfields on a Sabbath day.^a His followers were hungry, so they began breaking off some heads of wheat and eating the kernels.

²When the Pharisees saw this, they said, “Look, your followers are harvesting grain on the Sabbath! That’s unlawful!”

³“Haven’t you ever read,” Jesus replied, “what David did when he and his men were hungry?

⁴“He went right into the house^a of God and ate the sacred bread, which was not lawful for him or his men to eat. Only the priests were allowed to eat it.

⁵“Or haven’t you read in the Law of Moses that on the Sabbath days the priests work in the Temple, actually breaking the Sabbath law, but are not judged guilty?

⁶“But I’m telling you that One far greater than the Temple is with you now.

⁷“And if you had known the meaning of the

Scripture,

I am even more concerned that you show kindness to others, than that you sacrifice to Me,^a

you would not have condemned the innocent.

⁸“Because I, the Son of Man, am even the Lord of the Sabbath.”

Jesus Heals on the Sabbath

⁹After leaving there, Jesus went into their synagogue, where He saw a man with a withered hand.

¹⁰Looking for a way to bring a charge against Jesus, some men asked Him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”

¹¹“If one of your sheep fell into a pit on a Sabbath,” He replied, “which of you men wouldn’t grab hold of that sheep and lift it out?

¹²“Consider then how extremely valuable a man is compared with a sheep! Of course it’s lawful to do good on the Sabbath!”

¹³“Stretch out your hand,” He then said to the man. So he stretched it out, and it was restored, just as full of life and vigor as the other!

¹⁴But the Pharisees went out and plotted together as to how they might destroy Him.

Jesus, God’s Chosen Servant

¹⁵Knowing this, Jesus withdrew from there. But still, great crowds followed Him, and He healed all who were sick.

¹⁶But He strongly ordered them not to tell anyone what He had done for them.^a

¹⁷All this happened so that what God had said thru Isaiah the prophet would come true, when He said:

¹⁸ Look! Here is My Servant whom I have chosen. I love Him dearly, and have found such great delight in Him. I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will alert people everywhere of their duty toward their God and the consequences of disobedience.

total desire to make Him Lord of all their life.

11:30a A *yoke* is a wooden frame to fasten two animals together to pull a load, a plow, etc.

12:1a Saturday, the Jewish day of rest.

12:4a That is, the tabernacle tent. The Temple hadn’t yet been built.

12:7a Hosea 6:6.

12:16a Too much public acclaim would only increase the fury of the opposition, causing them to demand His death immediately, before His work was finished.

God had chosen the time and place for Him to die. He was the Lamb of God (Exodus 12:1-14;

29:38-39; Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29,36; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 5:6; 12:11) who must die in Jerusalem on the day of Passover as God’s sacrifice for the sins of the world. The Passover Lamb was killed at twilight (right after sundown, which was the beginning of the day in Israel), on the 14th day of the first Jewish month, Nisan. Leviticus 23:5. Christ was sacrificed on the same day at 9 o’clock in the morning (Mark 15:25), as the 14th of Nisan began at the previous sundown. And He died at 3 in the afternoon of the same day.

So the last Jewish Passover recognized by God was observed during the first 12 hours of the 14th of

¹⁹ He will not argue or shout, and no one will hear Him preaching loudly in the streets.

²⁰ He will not break off a reed that is bruised.^a And He will not snuff out a faintly burning flame,^b until He has caused justice to triumph.

²¹ People throughout the nations will put their hope in Him.^a

Jesus and Beelzebul

²² Then some people brought a man to Jesus who was blind and couldn't talk because he was demon-possessed. And Jesus healed him, so that he could both see and speak.

²³ That entire great crowd was amazed, and exclaimed, "This Man couldn't be the Messiah, could He?"

²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that statement, they said, "The only reason he's able to drive out the demons is because he's doing it with power given him by Beelzebul,^a the ruler of the demons."

²⁵ Jesus knew what they were thinking, and He told them, "Any country that's divided, with one side fighting another, is in the process of being destroyed. Any city or family that allows internal fighting won't last either.

²⁶ "So if Satan allows part of his forces to war against his other forces, he's fighting himself. How long could his kingdom continue under such conditions?

²⁷ "If I'm driving out demons with power given Me by Beelzebul, by whom do your own followers drive them out? So even they will refute and cut the ground out from under your claim.

²⁸ "But if I'm driving out demons by the power of the Spirit of God, that proves that the Kingdom of God has arrived among you.

²⁹ "Or look at it this way: How can a man enter a strong man's house and take what he has, unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can take whatever he wants.^a

³⁰ "Anyone who is not working with Me is working against Me.^a And everyone who is not gathering souls with Me is actually chasing them from Me.^b

³¹ "That's why I tell you, people can be forgiven any sin and any evil thing they say, but anyone who says anything evil against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

³² "If you speak evil against the Son of Man, you can be forgiven, but anyone who speaks evil against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven—not in this age or in the age to come.

Two Kinds of Fruit

³³ "If you want good fruit, you must plant a tree of a good variety; if you plant a tree of a poor variety, you won't be able to eat the fruit. The kind and variety of a tree is known by the fruit it bears.

³⁴ "You children of snakes! How can you, filled as you are with evil, say anything good? Because whatever fills a man's heart comes out in what he says.

³⁵ "From the good treasures in a good man's heart come good things, and from what an evil man treasures in his heart come evil things.

³⁶ "I am warning you, that on Judgment Day everyone must give an account of every worthless word they have ever spoken.

³⁷ "By the words you have spoken, you will either be declared free from guilt, or you will be condemned."

The Demand for Proof

³⁸ Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law said, "Teacher, we want you to show us a miraculous sign."^a

³⁹ "You're asking for another sign," He replied, "because you're part of an evil and adulterous generation that refuses to believe Me. But no further sign will be given you except the sign that will

Nisan. After which, God made His sacrifice (during the last 12 hours of the same day) for the sins of all the world.

When this happened it was God's New Testament, or God's New Agreement with mankind, regarding the forgiveness of our sins. See John 3:16.

12:20a He will not break the person who is weeping and mourning and broken in spirit because of sin; that is, He will not be severe, unforgiving and cruel. He will pardon, heal, and give strength.

12:20b He will not further oppress those who have little strength. He will not extinguish life and hope when it seems to be almost gone.

12:21a Isaiah 42:1-4.

12:24a See 10:25 note.

12:29a Jesus is the One who can tie up Satan's demons.

12:30a There is no middle ground.

12:30b There can be no neutrality concerning Christ. You are either truly for Him and working with Him, or you are against Him, and your indifference or opposition gives evidence of it. To fail to openly take a definite stand for Christ, and openly defend His truths and His true servants, is to be a deserter and a traitor. Romans 10:9-10.

12:38a Previously, these men had claimed that

resemble what happened to the prophet Jonah.

⁴⁰“Because just as Jonah was inside a great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.”^a

⁴¹“The people of Nineveh^a will rise from their graves on Judgment Day at the same time you do and condemn you, because they turned from their sinning to obey God when Jonah preached to them.”^a And the truth is, One who is far greater than Jonah is speaking to you now!

⁴²“The Queen of the South^a will also rise from her grave on Judgment Day when you do, and she will condemn you as well, because she came a long way to listen to the wisdom of Solomon. The truth is, One who is far greater than Solomon is here now!”^b

An Evil Spirit Will Return, Unless God Is Invited in and Obeyed

⁴³“When an evil spirit goes out of a person, it looks in the desert for a place to rest.

⁴⁴“When it doesn’t find any it says to itself, ‘I’ll go back to the home I left.’ When it returns, it finds the place empty, clean, and everything in order.

⁴⁵“Then it goes off and gets seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they all come and live there. As a result, the person is now worse off than he was before. And the same thing will happen to you people who continue to live in sin today!”

The True Family of Jesus

⁴⁶While He was still speaking to the crowds, His mother and brothers came and stood outside the packed house, asking to speak to Him.

⁴⁷“Sir,” someone said, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to talk to You.”

⁴⁸“Who is My mother?” He replied. “And who are My brothers?”

⁴⁹Then stretching out His hand toward His followers, He said, “Here are My mother and My brothers!

⁵⁰“Because whoever does what My Father in Heaven wants him to do is My brother, sister, and mother.”^a

A Story about a Farmer

13 That same day, after Jesus left the house, He went down to the lake and sat down.

²But such great crowds came to Him there, that He soon got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while the people stood on the shore.

³Then He talked to them about many things, using parables to illustrate what He was saying. “Once there was a farmer,” He said, “who went out to plant seed.

⁴“As he scattered the seed, some fell on the hard path alongside the plowed field, and the birds flew down and ate them.

⁵“Some fell on rocky areas where there was little soil. The stalks came up quickly because the soil was shallow and warm.

⁶“But when the sun rose higher they were scorched, because they weren’t able to put their roots down. So they withered away.

⁷“Some fell among thistles, and the thistles sprang up and choked them.

⁸“But some seed fell into good soil and produced a crop that was 100, 60, or 30 times what had been sown.

⁹“Let the one who has been given ears with which to hear, seriously consider what I’ve said.”

The Purpose of Parables

¹⁰Some of His followers then asked Him, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

¹¹“Because you have been given the privilege of understanding the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven,” He replied, “but it has not been given to them.

¹²“Because whoever is continuing to highly esteem and preserve what he is receiving from Me,^a will be given more, and he will end up with great understanding. But whoever does not highly esteem what he’s receiving,^a even the little he

Jesus’ power came from Satan. Now they’re asking for further proof that His power is from God. Luke 11:16 records that they asked for *a sign from the sky*. They wanted Him to cause something to happen in the heavens. But He had given sufficient proof already. Even today, people still doubt the great sign He promised in the next verses that He would give. See vss 39-40. Later on, in Matthew 16:1, some Pharisees again ask for a sign in the sky.

12:40a ... *Then He will rise back to life again.*

12:41a Jonah 3:1-10.

12:42a I Kings 10:1-13.

12:42b ... *and you refuse to listen to Him and believe Him.*

12:50a As dear and tender as the ties were that bound Him to His mother, brothers, and sisters, those that bound Him to His true followers (those who obeyed His Father) were even more tender and sacred. How great is His love for His followers, when it is even greater than that for His mother! And what a brilliant illustration of His own teaching, that we must be willing to forsake father, moth-

now has will be taken from him.

¹³ “That’s the reason I use these illustrations—because although they can see, most of them are not looking with any real interest. And although they can hear, they aren’t really listening, nor do they make any real attempt to understand.

¹⁴ “These people fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah, thru whom God said:

When it comes to hearing, you will keep on listening, but you won’t really understand; and when it comes to seeing, you will keep on looking, but you won’t really grasp the truth.

¹⁵ **Because the heart-center of the deep emotions of these people has become flabby. So it’s hard for them to listen to what’s being said, and they’ve closed their eyes. If they hadn’t allowed themselves to get into such a deplorable spiritual and moral condition, they would be able to see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts. Then they could be changed in their thinking and in their ways, and I, the Lord, would heal them.**^a

¹⁶ “But how fortunate you are, because your eyes are taking in what there is to see, and your ears are intently listening to what I say.

¹⁷ “I tell you the truth, many prophets and good men of the past had great longing to see what you are now seeing, but they didn’t see it, and to hear what you are now hearing, but they didn’t hear it.

The Meaning of the Parable

¹⁸ “So listen now to the meaning of the parable about the farmer:

¹⁹ “When someone hears the message about the Kingdom of God, but he has little real interest in understanding it, Satan comes along and snatches away the words that were planted on his hard heart. That was illustrated by the seed that fell on the hard path alongside the plowed field.

²⁰ “The rocky areas that received the seed represent the one who, upon hearing the message, immediately and joyfully accepts it.

er, friends, houses, and lands to be His followers.

Though many of Christ’s followers are poor, despised, and unknown by the rich and famous, they are more dear to Him than mother, sisters, and brothers. So cheer up if you are a faithful follower of Christ. You are loved by the greatest One of all, and by His Father, who is Lord of all.

13:12a The present tense in this context is a present continuing action. And the subject under consideration is knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of spiritual truth. Mark 4:25; Luke 8:18; 19:26.

²¹ “But he doesn’t allow the teaching to go deep into his life, so the message and its effect last for only a short while. When he’s given a hard time and is persecuted because of his faith in the message, he quickly gives up and falls away.

²² “Now the thistle area that received the seed represents the man who gladly understands and accepts the message, but because of his divided interest, in being anxiously concerned about his earthly problems and the deceitful glamour of money, the great message is choked. He comes at last to the place where he isn’t bearing any fruit.^a

²³ “But the one who earnestly listens to, and also reads God’s message for himself with an honest and open heart, who then understands and accepts its demands, restricting conditions, and promised great blessings and rewards is like the good soil that received the seed. He then shares his testimony and what he has learned with others, and brings 30, 60, and even 100 or more into God’s Kingdom.”^a

About Wheat and Weeds

²⁴ Then Jesus gave them another parable: “The Kingdom of Heaven is also like what happened when a man sowed good seed in his field.

²⁵ “One night, when everyone was asleep, his enemy came and sowed weeds^a in the field where the wheat had been sown, and then left.

²⁶ “When the wheat grew and formed heads of grain, then one could see the heads of the weeds too.

²⁷ “The farmer’s hired men then went to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Then where did all these weeds come from?’

²⁸ ‘An enemy did this!’ he exclaimed.

‘Shall we go out then and pull up the weeds?’ his men asked him.

²⁹ ‘No,’ he said, ‘you’d be in danger of uprooting the wheat at the same time.

³⁰ ‘Let them both grow together until harvest time. Then I’ll tell the harvesters to first gather the

13:14-15a Isaiah 6:9-10.

13:22a See John 15:1-6, and the note for Luke 8:14, to discover what happens to those who don’t bear fruit.

13:23a Where do you fit into this parable? See Appendix 205, page 471.

13:25a Actually *darnel*, a weed resembling wheat. This is a good illustration of cults. They resemble the real thing, but are not.

13:31a This is evidently the black mustard, *Brassica nigra*. The seed is the size of a fleck of ground

weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned, and then bring the wheat into my barn.”

A Mustard Seed and Yeast

³¹ Then He told them another parable: “The Kingdom of Heaven is also like what happens when a man plants a mustard seed^a in his field.

³² “It’s the smallest seed of all, but when it’s grown, it’s larger than any other plant, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.”

³³ Then He gave them still another parable: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast, which a woman mixed into a large bowl of flour, causing the whole batch of dough to rise.”

³⁴ Jesus illustrated everything He said to the crowd that day with a parable. He didn’t say anything to them without using a parable.

³⁵ In doing this He fulfilled what the prophet declared, when he said:

I will open My mouth and speak in parables,
revealing things that have been kept secret since
the world was created.^a

A Parable Explained

³⁶ Following this Jesus sent the crowds away and went into a house. His followers then came to Him and said, “Please tell us what You meant in the parable about weeds in the wheat field.”

³⁷ “I, the Son of Man, am the One planting the good seed,” He replied.

³⁸ “The field is the world, the good seeds are the people who belong to the Kingdom of God, the weed seeds are Satan’s followers.

³⁹ “The enemy who planted weeds among the wheat is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are the angels.

⁴⁰ “Just as the weeds are to be gathered up and burned, that’s what will happen at the end of the age.

⁴¹ “The Son of Man will send out His angels to

sort out of His Kingdom all persons who tempt others to sin, and all who practice sin.

⁴² “Then they will throw them into the blazing furnace, where they will weep and wail in awful anguish and regret, and gnash their teeth in pain.”^a

⁴³ “Then those who have lived pure and honorable lives will shine as brilliantly as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Let those who have been given ears for the purpose of hearing, listen!

Buried Treasure

⁴⁴ “Also, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man found hidden in a field. He hid the treasure again, and was so ecstatic about it that he sold everything he had and bought the field.”^a

⁴⁵ “The Kingdom of Heaven is also like a merchant looking for beautiful pearls.

⁴⁶ “When he found one that was extremely valuable, he went out and sold everything he had, and bought it.”^a

Like Sorting Fish

⁴⁷ “Also, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a dragnet thrown into the lake, which caught every kind of fish.

⁴⁸ “When it was full, the fishermen pulled the net ashore. Then they sat down and sorted the good fish into containers and threw the bad ones out.

⁴⁹ “That’s how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will sort out those who have lived sinful lives from those who have lived to please God,

⁵⁰ and will throw the sinful ones into the blazing furnace, where they will weep and wail in awful anguish and regret, and gnash their teeth in pain.

⁵¹ “Do you understand all of this now?” Jesus asked.

“Yes, Lord,” they said. “We do.”

⁵² “Very well,” Jesus continued. “Because you say you understand, let Me say this: Every person who has been instructed in the things of the Kingdom of Heaven, to the point where he understands the

pepper, and the plant may grow to a height of 15 feet. It is still common in Israel. See Mark 4:32 note.

13:35a Psalm 78:2.

13:40-42a Matthew 25:41; Luke 16:19-31; Revelation 14:9-11; 20:10-15. See Mark 9:44,46,48 note.

13:44a The Kingdom of Heaven is indeed a great treasure! It is worth giving our all to obtain! It’s only our selfishness and the wrongful pampering of our various appetites that are keeping us from that eternal treasure of everlasting life there. And we can only obtain it by accepting God’s forgiveness

thru Jesus Christ, and making a full surrender of our lives to Him as Lord. Do it! Failure to do so will mean no eternal treasure of eternal life in Heaven to look forward to—only the Great Judgment, for sure.

Don’t delay! Satan wants you to put it off until later, and then later, and then ... **Don’t wait!** Satan’s game is fixed. You can’t win with him. Open your heart to Jesus now! You have no promise of a sure tomorrow, only the present moment is yours. Do it now!

13:46a Here the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to

truth, is like the owner of a home who is able to bring out both antique and new furniture from his storeroom.”^a

Jesus Rebuffed in His Home Town

⁵³When Jesus finished giving these parables, He left the area.

⁵⁴When He came to His hometown^a and began to teach in their synagogue, the people were astonished. “Where did he get all this wisdom?” they asked. “And the ability to do these miracles?”

⁵⁵“Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t Mary his mother? And aren’t James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas his brothers?”

⁵⁶“Don’t all his sisters live here in our town? Where then did he get all this?”

⁵⁷And they deeply resented Him. But Jesus told them, “A prophet isn’t without honor, except in his hometown and among his own family members.”

⁵⁸So He didn’t do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

John the Baptizer Beheaded

14 It was at this time that Herod, the ruler of Galilee, heard the news about Jesus.

²“That’s John the Baptizer!” Herod told his attendants. “He’s come back to life again, and that’s why he has power to do these miracles!”

³Because he was living in adultery with Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, Herod had earlier ordered John’s arrest, and had him chained in jail,

⁴because John had kept telling him, “You are breaking God’s Law^a by living with your brother’s wife!”

⁵Herod had wanted to put him to death, but he was afraid the people would mob him if he did, because they considered John a prophet.

⁶But when they celebrated Herod’s birthday, the daughter of Herodias danced for those at the party.

⁷And Herod was so immensely pleased that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she wanted.

⁸After being pressured by her mother, she said, “I want the head of John the Baptizer right here, on a platter.”

⁹The king was greatly distressed that she’d made that request, but because of the oath he had made in front of all his dinner guests, he ordered John’s head to be given her.

¹⁰So he sent someone to behead John in jail.

¹¹The head was then brought on a platter and given to the girl, who brought it to her mother.

¹²Afterward John’s followers came and took his body and buried it, and then went and told Jesus what had happened.

Jesus Feeds 5,000 People

¹³Upon hearing of John’s death, Jesus immediately went by boat to a deserted area to be alone. But when the crowds heard He was leaving, they left the towns and followed Him on foot.

¹⁴When Jesus got out of the boat and saw the huge crowd, His heart was filled with pity for them, and He healed the sick among them.

¹⁵As evening was approaching, His followers went to Him and said, “This is a deserted area, and it’s getting late. You’d better send these people away, so they can go into the towns and buy food for themselves.”

¹⁶“They don’t need to leave,” Jesus responded. “You give them something to eat.”^a

¹⁷“But all we have here are five small loaves of bread^a and two fish!” they replied.

¹⁸“Bring them here to Me,” He said.

¹⁹Then He told the people to sit down on the grass. And taking the five loaves and two fish, He looked up to Heaven and asked God to bless the food. Then He broke the loaves and gave them to His followers, who in turn gave them to the people.

²⁰All the people ate until they were full. And when they collected the leftovers, they filled twelve baskets!^a

²¹About 5,000 men had eaten, not counting women and children.

the most beautiful and most valuable gem that one can find. We should gladly be willing to sacrifice all other things to obtain it. Even the *anticipation of eternal life with God* is a joy and an immense pleasure each day.

13:52a In ministering to others they were now to use truth from both the Old Testament and from the new truth He was giving them. When you have come to understand the truth, you are then able to teach others, by bringing out the truth from both the Old and New Testaments, from old and new

experiences in life (both spiritual and physical), from old truths to be rediscovered and from new truths yet to be discovered in God’s message.

13:54a Nazareth.

14:4a Leviticus 18:6,16; 20:21.

14:16a See Mark 6:37 note.

14:17a A loaf of bread was generally seven inches in diameter and half an inch to one inch thick.

14:20a After feeding that immense crowd, they had far more food left over than when they started!

Jesus Walks on the Lake

²² Immediately after this, Jesus made His followers get into the boat and go ahead of Him across the lake, while He sent the crowds away.

²³ After He had dismissed the crowds, He went away by Himself into the hills to pray. When it got dark, He was there alone.

²⁴ Meanwhile, the boat was being tossed about by the waves in the middle of the lake. What's more, they were rowing against the wind.

²⁵ Sometime between 3 and 6 o'clock in the morning, Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake!

²⁶ When His followers saw Him walking toward them on the water, they were terrified. "It's a ghost!" they cried out in fear.

²⁷ Immediately Jesus spoke to them. "Keep up your courage, men!" He said. "It is I. Don't be afraid."

²⁸ "Lord," Peter then spoke up, "if it's really You, order me to come out to You on the water."

²⁹ "Come," Jesus responded. And Peter climbed out of the boat and started walking on the water toward Jesus.

³⁰ But when he noticed the big waves caused by the powerful wind, he became frightened and began to sink. "Lord, save me!" he cried out.

³¹ Instantly Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. "Oh, what little faith you have," He said. "Why did you doubt Me?"

³² And the instant Jesus and Peter climbed into the boat, the wind stopped blowing.

³³ Then those in the boat came and bowed down and worshiped Jesus, saying, "Truly, You are the Son of God!"

³⁴ After crossing the lake, they landed at Genesaret.

³⁵ When the people there recognized Jesus, they spread the news of His coming thruout the whole region. Soon they were bringing all the sick people to Him.

³⁶ And they begged Him to let them at least touch the fringe of His prayer shawl.^a And all who did were made perfectly well!

It's What's Inside that Matters

15 Then several Pharisees and teachers of the Law from Jerusalem came up to Jesus.

² "Why don't your followers obey the traditions of the elders?" they challenged Him. "They don't even go thru the hand-washing ceremony before they eat their food!"

³ "And why do you disobey God's commands in order to obey your traditions?" Jesus replied.

⁴ "God has commanded,

Honor your father and mother.^a Anyone who treats his father or mother with disrespect must be put to death.^b

⁵ "But you say, 'Whoever tells his father or mother, "Whatever financial help you might have received from me, I have dedicated as a future gift to God's work," is no longer allowed to use his money or property to help his father or mother.'^a

⁶ "By doing so, you have nullified God's commands to honor one's father and mother, in favor of your tradition^a!

⁷ "You hypocrites! God spoke the truth about you thru Isaiah when He said:

⁸ **These people draw near to Me and honor Me with words, but their hearts are far from Me.**

⁹ **The worship they offer Me is worthless, because what they teach as truth is merely a set of rules made up by men, instead of the laws I have given them.^a**

¹⁰ Then He called the crowd together and said, "Listen! This is something you must understand!

¹¹ "It is not what a person puts into his mouth that makes him unclean, but what comes out of it—that's what pollutes his soul."

¹² Following this, His followers went to Him and said, "Do You know that the Pharisees have been greatly offended by what You've been saying?"

¹³ "Every plant that My Father in Heaven didn't plant will be pulled up by the roots," was Jesus' reply.

¹⁴ "Don't bother with them. They are blind leaders who are leading the blind. And when a blind person leads another who is blind, both will fall into a pit."^a

¹⁵ Then Peter spoke up and said, "Please explain what You meant by what You said about unclean-

14:36a See notes for Matthew 9:20.

15:4a Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16.

15:4b Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:9.

15:5a See Mark 7:11 note. This all applies to money. But it is just as important that we show real loving care for our parents in many other ways as

well. Failure to do so is known by God, and will surely bring down His wrath in judgment upon us sooner or later.

15:6a ..., *in order to get their money for yourselves when they pass away!*

15:8-9a Isaiah 29:13.

ness.”

¹⁶“Are you still as dull as the rest?” Jesus replied.

¹⁷“You certainly know that whatever food you put into your mouth goes into your stomach and is finally eliminated.

¹⁸“But foul words coming from a person’s mouth come from the very heart of his being, and that’s what reveals how unfit he is to be with God.^a

¹⁹“Because it’s from the very central core of a person’s being that evil thoughts come that lead to murders, adulteries, sexual immorality, thefts, false testimony, and slander.

²⁰“These are the things that pollute a person. But to eat with hands that have not been ceremonially washed has nothing to do with making a person unfit to be with God.”

A Woman’s Constant, Unrelenting Faith

²¹Jesus then left there and went to an area near the cities of Tyre and Sidon.

²²While there, a Canaanite woman living in the area pled with Jesus and persistently continued pleading, “O Lord, Son of David, have pity on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and is suffering frightfully!”

²³But Jesus completely ignored her. After awhile, His followers went up to Him and urged Him to do something about her, saying, “Please send her away.^a Her constant pleading back there is getting to us.”

²⁴“I haven’t been sent to anyone except to the lost sheep of Israel,” Jesus replied.

²⁵Then the woman, herself, went right up to Jesus and, kneeling before Him, pleaded, “Please, sir, help me!”

²⁶“It’s not right for Me to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs,”^a He replied.

²⁷“That’s true, Sir,” she said, “but even the little dogs get to eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”

²⁸“O woman, your faith is indeed great^a!” Jesus replied. “Your request is granted.” And her daughter was instantly healed!^b

²⁹Leaving there, Jesus traveled toward Lake Galilee, where He walked up a hillside and sat down.

³⁰Immense crowds converged on Him there, bringing the lame, blind, dumb, disabled, and many others, and laid them down at His feet. And He healed them.

³¹That huge crowd was amazed at what they both saw and heard. People who couldn’t speak were now talking. Disabled people were made well and strong, those who had been lame could now walk, and the blind could see. That whole crowd rejoiced and praised the God of Israel.

Jesus Feeds 4,000 People

³²Then Jesus called His followers to Him and said, “I have deep concern for these people. They have stayed with Me now for three days, and have nothing left to eat. I don’t want to send them away hungry, or some of them may collapse on their way home.”

³³“But where can we ever get enough food in this wilderness to satisfy everyone in this massive crowd?” His followers responded.

³⁴“How many loaves of bread do you have?” Jesus asked them.

“Seven, and a few small fish,” they replied.

³⁵So He ordered the people to sit down on the ground.

³⁶Then He took the seven loaves^a and the fish, and gave thanks to God for them. Next He broke the loaves and fish into pieces, which His followers then distributed to the crowd.

³⁷Everyone ate until they were full! Then they gathered up seven large hamper baskets full of leftovers!

³⁸Four thousand men had eaten, besides women and children!

³⁹Then He sent the people on their way, got into a boat and went to the region of Magdala.

Another Demand for Proof

16 There the Pharisees and Sadducees came to test Jesus, asking Him to prove He was from God by causing something miraculous to happen in the sky.

²“When the sky is red in the evening,” He replied, “you say, ‘It will be a beautiful day tomorrow, because the sky is red.’

15:14a Isaiah 9:13-17; Jeremiah 5:30-31; Luke 6:39; 2 Timothy 4:3-4, and the notes.

15:18a 12:33-37.

15:23a ... *with her cure*. This is certainly implied from Jesus’ next words.

15:26a The Jews considered themselves children of God. And they were accustomed to referring to

all other people as *dogs*.

15:28a Jesus said she had great faith because she refused to be denied. Luke 11:5-13; 17:6; 18:1-8.

15:28b See Mark 7:29-30.

15:36a See 14:17 note.

16:4a See 12:38-41.

16:8a ... *and concluding among yourselves*

³“But when the sky is red in the morning you say, ‘It will be a stormy one today, because the sky is red and threatening.’ You hypocrites! You know how to interpret what the sky is revealing, but you can’t interpret the signs that apply to these times!

⁴“You’re asking for another sign because you’re part of an evil and adulterous generation that refuses to believe Me. But no further sign will be given you except the sign that will resemble what happened to the prophet Jonah.”^a Then He left them and left the area.

The Warning about Yeast

⁵When they got to the other side of the lake, Jesus’ followers realized they had forgotten to bring any food with them.

⁶So when Jesus warned them, “Watch out and always be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees,”

⁷they discussed the matter among themselves, and concluded, “He said that because we didn’t bring any bread with us.”

⁸Knowing what they were discussing, Jesus declared, “Oh, what little faith you have! Why are you worried about not bringing bread^a?”

⁹“Don’t you understand yet? Don’t you remember the five small loaves that fed the 5,000 men, and the many baskets of fragments you gathered up?

¹⁰“Or the seven small loaves that fed 4,000 men, and the many large hamper baskets of leftovers you gathered up?

¹¹“How is it that you don’t understand that I was not talking to you about bread when I warned you to constantly be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees?”

¹²Then they realized that Jesus had not been telling them to be on their guard against the yeast in bread, but to watch out for the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Peter Confesses Jesus to be Messiah

¹³When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi,^a He asked His followers, “What are people saying about Me? Who do they say the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴“Some say You’re John the Baptizer,” they replied. “Some say Elijah; others, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets.”

¹⁵“What about you? Who do you say I am?”

¹⁶Simon Peter spoke up and said, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷“Right you are, Simon, son of Jonah,” Jesus replied. “But you didn’t make up your mind about this by human reasoning. My Father in Heaven favored you by revealing it to you.

¹⁸“You know that I have named you Peter,^a and it is on the solid rock of your confession^b that I will

that I’m concerned about the same thing?

16:13a Caesarea Philippi. The setting could hardly be more dramatic. The city was a symbol of the might and splendor of the Roman Empire, located at the foot of Mt. Hermon. Here a huge cave (regarded by the Greeks as the “Gate of Hades”) opened up in the rock facing of the mountain from which flowed one of the sources of the Jordan River. Beside it was a gleaming white temple dedicated to Augustus Caesar. Up the valley from here stood a vast triad of Graeco-Roman temples dedicated to Jupiter, Dionysus, and Venus.

In this setting, Christ prophesied that the Church would attack the “Gates of Hades”. v18. Indeed, within a century the Christian Great News had essentially turned “the world upside down” thruout the heathen world in spite of fierce imperial persecutions. The true Church is again pitted against demonical-energized forces in the world as the age draws to a close.

16:18a ... a stone ...

16:18b The *Rock* on which Christ would and has built His Church was the affirmation that Peter had just given, that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God.

16:18c Ancient cities were surrounded by walls. In the entrance gateways were the principal places for holding court, transacting business, and deliberating on public matters. The meaning here is that no plots or attacks of any kind by Satan’s cohorts against Christ’s Church, would ever be successful in overpowering it.

16:18d *Or the gates of Hell will never be able to stand against it.* Meaning, the gates of Hell do not have power to stand against the powerful offensive march of Christ’s triumphant Church. This is also true.

A good modern paraphrase of Christ’s words here could be, *No matter how brilliantly the forces of Hell conspire and plot, and powerfully attack to bring about its downfall, they will never succeed in overpowering it in its powerful forward march.* But when the work of the Church is finished, Christ will allow the Antichrist to finally overpower them. Daniel 7:20-22,25; 8:24; 11:32-35; 12:7b; Matthew 24:9; Revelation 13:7. But just when Antichrist thinks everything is going his way, Christ will return and powerfully defeat the forces of Hell, and set up His eternal Kingdom.

16:19a See 18:18 note, as the same rule of gram-

build My Church. And no plots or attacks from the gates of Hell^c will ever overpower it.^d

¹⁹“And I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you may forbid on earth must be that which is already forbidden in Heaven, and whatever you may permit on earth must be that which is already permitted in Heaven.”^a

²⁰Then He gave a firm command to His followers not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah.^a

Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection

²¹From that time on, Jesus began to tell His followers that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer in many ways at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the Law; that He must be killed; but that three days later, He would be raised back to life again.

²²On hearing this, Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. “God forbid!” he said. “No, Lord, such a thing must never happen to You!”

²³Turning to Peter and squarely facing him, Jesus said, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, because you don’t see things as God sees them. You reason only from man’s viewpoint!”

Take Up Your Cross!

²⁴Then Jesus said to His followers, “Whoever makes up his mind to follow Me^a must determine

to refuse to live any longer for the purpose of pleasing and satisfying his own natural desires.^b Taking up his own cross,^c he must die to those selfish and flesh-satisfying desires, and make it his practice to continually endeavor to fully obey what I have taught and commanded.^d

²⁵“Because if you choose to continue to satisfy your desire to live as you, yourself, please, you will lose your soul! But if you will make it your definite purpose in life to put to death your own desires, and live as I desire that you live, you will save your soul.”^a

²⁶“Because what good would it do you even if you gained all the wealth and power and all the flesh-fulfilling experiences in all the world,^a but then found yourself barred from Heaven and sent to your judgment in Hell? Or look at it this way: If you suddenly found yourself in awful suffering in Hell, how much would you then be willing to give of yourself to God in order to gain His forgiveness and eternal life?^b

²⁷“Because I, the Son of Man, will soon come in the glory of My Father with His angels. I will at that time reward every person according to what he has done.”^a

²⁸“I tell you the truth: Some of you standing here right now will definitely not die until you have seen the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.”^a

mar applies here. Also notice that while Jesus is here speaking to Peter, He gives the same keys of the Kingdom to all of His followers in 18:18.

16:20a That is, they were not to witness to this fact at this time. See 12:16 note for the reason. The actual meaning is *that He was the expected Savior, the One anointed by God to be Lord of all*. The name Jesus means *Savior: Christ, or Messiah*, means *The Anointed One*.

16:24a That is, to be a Christian.

16:24b See notes for Mark 8:34.

16:24c Regarding *your cross* see Appendix 221.

16:24d Literally *must follow Me*.

16:25a What does He mean? See Appendix 206.

16:26a And you’re willing to settle for so little of it, for so brief a time—that could end tonight; when all is yours for all eternity if you will turn from your rebellion and sin, and turn to God and accept His rightful lordship of your life, and His forgiveness. And when you do, remember, you will not be on your own. God will help you all the way. See Philip-
pans 2:13.

16:26b In a full sense the Lord is actually saying: *Or look at it this way: If you die tonight, lost, and suddenly find yourself suffering extreme pain*

and anguish in Hell, how much will you then be desperately willing to give of yourself to God, and utterly die to all your sinning by refusing any longer to satisfy the appetites of your body and mind in a wrong way, and instead, sincerely worship, obey, serve, and take a firm stand for God, in order to get free and escape to Heaven?

But then it will be too late! In Hell there will be no possible way out, even if you’d be willing to serve God as a slave for all eternity. Give yourself to Him now! You cannot be sure you’ll be here tomorrow.

But you do have the present moment.

Today is your day to decide for God and be saved! Then in Heaven you will live for all eternity as one of God’s glorified children, enjoying riches, pleasures (Psalm 16:11), and total fulfillment of such magnitude that it cannot even be imagined by the present human mind. See 1 Corinthians 2:9. Act now, before it’s forever too late. See extensive notes on the same statements by Christ in Mark 8:34-38.

16:27a Jesus is saying here that He is the Judge who will come. And He will judge us according to how we have obeyed His warnings and commands in verses 24-26. He will reward those who have taken these words to heart and obeyed them. He

When Heaven Came Down

17 Six days later, Jesus took Peter and the brothers, James and John, and led them up a high mountain where they were alone.

²As they were standing there, Jesus became altogether changed in appearance! His face became as brilliant as the sun, and His clothes became as dazzling white as light!

³Then suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared and began talking with Him.

⁴Peter then spoke up and said, "Lord, it's wonderful that we can be here! If you are willing, allow us to put up three shelters—one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

⁵But even as he was speaking, a bright cloud covered them completely, and a voice spoke from the cloud, saying, "This is My Son whom I love so dearly, and with whom I am so well pleased. Keep on listening to Him!"^a

⁶On hearing God speak, Jesus' followers were so terrified that they threw themselves facedown on the ground.

⁷Then Jesus walked over and touched them. "Stand up," He said. "Don't be afraid."

⁸When they looked up, they saw no one there but Jesus.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them strict orders, saying, "Don't tell anyone about the vision you've just seen until the Son of Man has risen from the dead."

¹⁰His followers then asked Him, "Why then do the teachers of the Law insist that Elijah must come before the Messiah will come?"^a

¹¹"It's true," Jesus replied, "Elijah will come first. And when he comes, he will restore everything."^a

¹²"But I tell you, Elijah has already come^a but the Jews didn't recognize him, and they treated him in whatever way they pleased. The Son of Man is about to suffer in the same way at their hands."

¹³The followers then realized that He was speak-

ing about John the Baptizer.

The Healing of a Boy

¹⁴When they came down to the crowd that was waiting, a man came up to Him and kneeling before Him, most earnestly pled,

¹⁵"Lord, have pity on my son! He's an epileptic, and suffers so frightfully from seizures that he often falls into fire or into water.

¹⁶"I brought him to Your followers, but they couldn't heal him."

¹⁷"O you unbelieving and hard-headed people!" Jesus reprimanded them. "How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy here to Me."

¹⁸Jesus then sternly commanded the demon in the boy to come out, and it came out. The boy was instantly healed.

¹⁹Later Jesus' followers went to Him when He was alone and asked Him, "Why couldn't we drive that demon out?"

²⁰"Because of your unbelief," Jesus replied. "I tell you the absolute truth: If you will continue to exercise^a whatever faith you have in the same determined, persistent way that a tiny mustard seed goes to work,^b you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.

²¹"But the only way this kind of demon can be forced out is by both prayer and fasting."

²²While they were staying in Galilee, Jesus told His followers, "The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men who will kill Him.

²³"But three days later, He will be raised back to life again." His followers were extremely sad when they heard this.^a

Paying the Temple Tax

²⁴When Jesus and His followers arrived at Capernaum, those who collected the Temple tax approached Peter and said, "Your Teacher does pay the Temple tax, doesn't he?"

will give them glory, honor and eternal happiness in Heaven. But those who have ignored His warnings and commands will be sent to Hell as their reward. No plea of church membership or of service rendered can take the place of obedience to any of Christ's commands. Hebrews 5:9; 2 Peter 1:10.

16:28a See Mark 9:1 note.

17:5a We likewise must keep on listening to Him.

17:10a ... *if You are the Messiah, and Elijah is to come before You?* Malachi 4:5-6.

17:11a His ministry will be to restore people to faith in God and to obedience to Him, and to a

proper understanding about the Messiah.

17:12a John the Baptizer came in the spirit of Elijah. Luke 1:17. But the Scripture is clear that Elijah will return in person shortly before God judges the earth (Malachi 4:5-6), and some believe he may be one of the two witnesses of Revelation 11:1-14. See Matthew 11:14 note.

17:20a Present tense (continuous action).

17:20b See Luke 17:6 notes.

17:23a All that registered in their minds at the time was that He would be killed.

18:3a ... *without selfish ambition, pride, or a*

²⁵“Of course He does!” Peter replied.

When Peter entered the house, Jesus spoke before Peter had a chance to open his mouth. “What are you thinking about, Simon?” He asked. “From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or taxes—from their own children, or from others?”

²⁶“From others,” Peter responded.

“Then the King’s children don’t have to pay,” Jesus returned.

²⁷“But so that we don’t offend them, go to the lake and throw out your fishing line. When you open the mouth of the first fish you catch, you will find a coin. Take that and pay the Temple tax for the two of us.”

The Greatest in Heaven

18 It was at this time that Jesus’ followers came to Him and asked, “Who will be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?”

²In answer, Jesus called a little child to Himself, and had the child stand in the middle of the group.

³“Now I tell you the truth,” He said, “unless there’s a drastic change in your life, and you turn from your sinning to living in obedience to God, and take upon you the humble attitude of a little child toward God and the world,^a there’s no way that you will even gain entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.^b

⁴“So whoever humbles himself and becomes the most like this little child will be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

⁵“And whoever warmly welcomes a little child like this, to do for him what I would do,^a is welcoming Me.

Frightful Punishment Awaits Tempters

⁶“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believes in Me to lose his faith, or to sin, would be far better off if someone had hung a massive millstone around his neck and had

haughty attitude. We must regard ourselves as God regards us, as mere beginners. It cannot be degrading to think of ourselves as we really are. But haughty pride, or any attempt to be thought of as more important than we really are, is foolish, wicked, and degrading.

18:3b ... *let alone being the greatest* ...

18:5a Literally ... *child like this in My name* ...

18:6a ... *before he had a chance to commit such a dastardly act.* This is a frightful warning for anyone who would tempt someone to sin. The *little ones* here applies especially to Christians who are children in the faith, and easily led. Pastor, Sunday

drowned him in the bottom of the ocean!^a

⁷“Woe to everyone in the world because of all the temptations there are. These temptations are sure to come, but awful misery and suffering lie ahead for the person who does the tempting.

⁸“So if your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away! It’s far better for you to gain eternal life maimed or crippled, than to have two hands and two feet and be thrown into the fire where the flames will rage forever.

⁹“And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away! It’s far better for you to gain eternal life with only one eye, than to have both eyes and be thrown into the fires of Hell!

¹⁰“You must always be most careful not to look down on or mistreat any of these little ones, because I warn you, their guardian angels are continually making their reports in Heaven directly to My Father.^a

¹¹“Because the Son of Man has come to save all who are lost.^a

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

¹²“What does a man with a hundred sheep do if one of them wanders away? Doesn’t he leave the 99 and go into the hills and search diligently for the lost one?

¹³“And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he will rejoice more about that sheep than about the 99 that didn’t go astray.

¹⁴“That’s the way it is with your Father in Heaven. He doesn’t want even one of these little ones to be lost.

If a Follower Sins Against You

¹⁵“If a follower of Mine sins against you, talk to him privately about the wrongdoing. If he listens and admits his wrong, you have won him back.

¹⁶“But if he won’t listen, go to him again and take one or two other people with you, so that ‘everything may be supported by the testimony of

School teacher, are you preaching and teaching the truth as God’s message reveals the truth, or as you want to believe it? Consider the consequences!

18:10a ... *telling Him how those under their guardianship are being treated. Spiritually—Be most careful that you don’t despise anyone who has become humble and childlike in their life and attitude toward God, because their guardian angels* ...

18:11a So Jesus is deeply interested in even the very weakest, the least talented, and least desirable person. He deeply loves even me!

18:16a Deuteronomy 19:15.

two or three witnesses.”^a

¹⁷ “If he still won’t listen, bring the matter up before the church. But if he won’t even listen to the judgment of the church, then treat him as an unbeliever or as one who is working for the benefit of the enemy.”^a

¹⁸ “I tell you the truth, whatever you forbid on earth must be that which has already been forbidden^a in Heaven, and whatever you permit on earth must be that which has already been permitted^a in Heaven.”^b

¹⁹ “And listen! If two of you agree on earth concerning anything you are praying for, My Father in Heaven will do it for you.

²⁰ “Because where even two or three of you come together as My followers, I will already be there with you.”

Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

²¹ Then Peter asked Jesus, “Lord, how many times should I forgive someone who keeps on sinning against me? Seven times?”

²² “Not just seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven.”^a

²³ “You see, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a king who wanted to bring his accounts up to date with his servants.

²⁴ “He had just begun to do so when a man was brought to him who owed him over 11 million ounces of silver.”^a

²⁵ “But because he was unable to pay, his master ordered that everything he had was to be sold, and that the man and his wife and children were to be sold into slavery to pay off the debt.

²⁶ “Upon hearing the sentence, the servant fell to his knees before him, frantically pleading, ‘Master, be patient with me, and I will pay you everything I owe!’

²⁷ “The king was genuinely sorry for him, so he released him and forgave the debt.

²⁸ “But that same servant went out and found one

of his fellow servants who owed him a mere 100 denarii.”^a He grabbed him and began choking him, demanding, ‘Pay me what you owe me!’

²⁹ “The man fell to his knees at his feet, earnestly pleading, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you everything!’

³⁰ “But he wouldn’t listen. Instead he had him arrested and thrown in jail until he had paid what he owed.

³¹ “When his fellow servants saw this, they were very upset and went to the king and told him all that had happened.

³² “So the king called the first servant back in and said, ‘You detestable, worthless servant! I forgave you that entire enormous debt because you so earnestly pleaded with me.

³³ ‘Shouldn’t you also then have pity on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’

³⁴ “His king was so angry that he sent him to the torture chambers to be tortured until he had paid all that he owed.

³⁵ “And that is exactly what My heavenly Father will do to you, unless each of you sincerely forgives the person who has sinned against you.”^a

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

19 When Jesus had finished speaking, He left Galilee and went into Judea, and then to the other side of the Jordan River.

² Giant crowds followed Him there, too, and He healed those who were sick.

³ The Pharisees also came, again testing Him. “Does our Law allow a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” they asked Him.

⁴ “Haven’t you read the Scripture,” He replied, “that says that the Creator, who made people at the beginning, **made them male and female,**”^a

⁵ and then said, **For that reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife; and the two shall become so devoted to each other that they become as one person**^a?

18:17a Literally *tax collector*. These were Jews who collected taxes from Jews for Rome, their conqueror.

18:18a Both of the words *forbidden* and *permitted* are in the perfect tense. “The perfect is the tense of completed action. It implies a process, but views the process as having reached its consummation and existing in a finished state. The point of completion is always that which has existed before the time implied or stated in connection with the use of the perfect.”—*Dana and Manty Greek Grammar*. So our judgments must always agree with what

God’s message to us already reveals as truth.

18:18b See 16:19.

18:22a Luke 17:3-4.

18:24a Or *ten thousand talents of silver*. This is figured according to the weight of a Jewish talent of that day, which was 94 pounds. Troy ounces, 12 to the pound, are used in this calculation. If 16 ounces to the pound, the amount of silver owed would be 15 million ounces.

18:28a Less than 20 ounces of silver.

18:35a See 6:14; Mark 11:25-26; esp. Luke 17:3-4. Is there a debt of some kind that you also need to

⁶“So they are no longer two, but one. And man must not separate what God has joined together.”

⁷“Why then did Moses say that a man could hand his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?” they demanded.

⁸“Moses allowed you to divorce your wives,” Jesus replied, “because of the hardness of your hearts.^a But that’s not the way it was in the beginning.

⁹“And I’m telling you that whoever divorces his wife, and then marries another woman, is committing adultery. The only exception is if his wife had been unfaithful and had sexual relations with another man. And whoever marries a person who has been divorced because of marital unfaithfulness is committing adultery.”

¹⁰“If that’s how it must be between a husband and his wife,” His followers then spoke up, “it’s really better not to get married.”

¹¹“Not everyone would agree with you about that,” Jesus replied, “only those who have been given the grace to stay single.

¹²“Because there are some who cannot bring a marriage to completion because they were born eunuchs. Others have been made eunuchs by men. And others stay single for the sake of promoting the Kingdom of Heaven. Allow those who are able to abstain to do so.”

Jesus Welcomes the Little Children

¹³Then little children were brought to Him, so that He might place His hands on them and pray for them. But His followers scolded the people and told them to stop bothering Jesus with little children.

¹⁴“Let the little children come to Me!” Jesus corrected them. “Don’t stop them! Because the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who become like these little ones.”^a

¹⁵After He had placed His hands on the children and blessed them, He left the area.

A Rich Man’s Question

¹⁶A man came to Jesus one day and said, “Good Teacher, what good thing must I do so that I may live forever?”

¹⁷“Why do you call Me ‘good?’” Jesus asked. “No one is truly good except One, and that is God. But if you desire to enter into everlasting life, obey God’s commands.”

¹⁸“Which ones?” the man asked.

Jesus replied,

“Don’t murder. Don’t commit adultery.^a Don’t steal. Don’t tell lies about anyone.

¹⁹Honor your father and mother.^a And love others in the same way that you love yourself.”^b

²⁰“I’ve obeyed all of these from the time I was a child,” the young man said. “What else must I do?”

²¹“If you want to be perfect,” Jesus replied, “go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor. By doing so you will be transferring your investments to Heaven.^a Then come and follow Me.”

²²When the young man heard this, he walked away with a heavy heart, because he was very rich.^a

²³“I tell you the truth,” Jesus then said to His followers, “it will be very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

²⁴“It is easier, in fact, for a camel to go thru the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God.”

²⁵When His followers heard that, they were utterly amazed, and questioned, “Well, who then can be saved?”^a

²⁶Looking straight at them Jesus replied, “Yes, it’s impossible for people who look at money from man’s sense of values to be saved, but not for the one who draws near to God and gladly receives his orders from Him. Because even when a rich person continues to live in close fellowship with God,

forgive? Consider all that God has forgiven you. What will God’s judgment be in this regard concerning you? Make that call, or write, *now*.

19:4a Genesis 1:27; 5:2.

19:5a Genesis 2:24.

19:8a See Mark 10:5 note.

19:14a See Matthew 18:1-4, and the note.

19:18a See v 9.

19:19a ... *by loving obedience during your childhood and youth, and by providing for them when they are sick, weary, old and feeble*. One of the greatest provisions you can give them is your

sincere love and friendship, at all times. Exodus 20:12-16; Deuteronomy 5:16-20.

19:19b Leviticus 19:18.

19:21a See Luke 16:9, and the note.

19:22a See Mark 10:22,25 notes.

19:25a Wealth was considered by the Jews to be a sign of blessing and approval by God. If these men, approved by God, couldn’t make it to Heaven, they questioned, who could?

19:26a See Luke 18:27 note.

19:27-29a Mark 10:29-30; Luke 18:28-30.

19:27-30a See Mark 10:28-31 note.

everything is possible.”^a

²⁷Peter then spoke up, “Look, we’ve left everything and followed You, so what will our situation be?”

²⁸“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “when the earth and everything in it has been restored to its original perfect state, and the Son of Man is sitting on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

²⁹“And everyone else who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake, will receive a hundred times more than he gave up, and will inherit everlasting life.”^a

³⁰“But many who are now first will then be last, and many who are now last will be first.”^a

Parable of the Vineyard Workers

20 “Because the Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who went out early one morning to hire men to work for him.

²“After he had agreed to pay them the usual amount for a day’s work, he sent them into his vineyard.

³“About 9 o’clock, he went out again and found others standing around in the marketplace.

⁴“So he said to them, ‘I want you men working for me as well. I’ll pay you whatever is fair.’ And they went to work.

⁵“Then at 12 and again at 3 o’clock, he did the same.

⁶“When it was almost 5 o’clock, he went out and found still others standing idle. ‘Why have you men been wasting your time standing here all day doing nothing?’ he asked them.

⁷‘No one hired us,’ they replied.

‘Go to work in my vineyard,’ he said, ‘and I’ll pay you whatever is right.’

⁸“So when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages. Begin with those hired last and end with those I hired first.’

⁹“When those hired about 5 o’clock came before the foreman, they each received a full day’s wage.

¹⁰“So when those hired first came before him, they supposed they would receive more, but they were paid the same as the others.

¹¹“Upon receiving it, they protested to the owner of the vineyard.

¹²“These men worked only one hour,’ they bitterly complained. ‘And still you’ve paid them the same as those of us who worked hard all day in the hot sun!’

¹³‘Listen, friend,’ he answered one of them, ‘I haven’t cheated you. Didn’t you agree to work for me for one denarius?’

¹⁴“Now take what you have coming, and go. It’s my desire to give the last men hired the same as you.

¹⁵‘Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I’m generous?’

¹⁶“So,” Jesus concluded, “the last will be first, and the first last. Because many are being called,^a but only a few are chosen.”^b

For a Third Time Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection

¹⁷Then as Jesus journeyed toward Jerusalem, He took His twelve followers aside by themselves.

¹⁸“Listen now,” He said, “we are on our way up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be betrayed and handed over to the chief priests and teachers of the Law. And they will condemn Him to death.

¹⁹“Then they will turn Him over to the Romans, who will treat Him with utter disrespect and whip and then crucify Him. But three days later, He will rise back to life again.”

A Mother’s Request

²⁰The mother of James and John then came to Jesus with her sons, and kneeling before Him, she said she had a request to make.

²¹“What is it you want?” He asked.

“Please let one of my sons sit at Your right

20:16a ... to labor in My vineyard, and all will be rewarded as I have promised ...

20:16b ... to shine like the stars forever and ever. Daniel 12:3.

20:22a Baptized means *immersed*. Here, immersed into awful suffering.

20:22b ... the suffering and death into ...

20:20-23a The statement of Jesus at the end of these verses should be an overwhelming inspiration and challenge to every Christian alive today. Those

positions of highest honor will certainly be awarded to the two persons who are most worthy of them. No Christian is too old or too young to so wholly dedicate himself to the Lord that he might be one of those chosen to sit at the right hand or at the left hand of Christ in His Kingdom.

Such promises of positions of honor, of glory, and of privilege in future service should overwhelmingly challenge every Christian to so live and serve now that he might attain to as high a position as possi-

hand," she said, "and the other at Your left in Your Kingdom."

²² "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus replied. "Are you able to drink the bitter mixture in the cup of the suffering and sorrow that I am about to drink, and be baptized^a into the baptism into^b which I am about to be baptized?"

"Yes, we are," James and John responded.

²³ "You will indeed drink from My cup," He replied, "and be baptized into the baptism into which I am to be baptized, but I do not have the authority to decide who will sit on My right and on My left. My Father has plans for those positions, and He will decide who will fill them."^a

²⁴ When the other ten heard this request, they were thoroughly disgusted with the two brothers.

²⁵ So Jesus called them together, and said, "You know how heathen rulers lord it over their subjects, and how the very top rulers lord it over those rulers.

²⁶ "But that's not the way it's to be among you. If any of you desires to become great, you must be one who serves others.

²⁷ "So if someone among you wants to be your leader, make sure that he considers himself your slave.

²⁸ "Let him be like the Son of Man, who did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His very life as a ransom for many."

Two Blind Men Receive Their Sight

²⁹ As they were leaving Jericho, a huge crowd was following Him.

³⁰ And when two blind men sitting beside the road heard that it was Jesus who was passing by, they started shouting loudly, "Oh, Sir, Son of David! Have pity on us!"

³¹ "Stop that! Calm down!" the crowd scolded them. But instead, they shouted even louder, "Oh, Sir, Son of David! Have pity on us!"

ble in the Lord's coming Kingdom.

21:3a Literally *The Lord of them*.

21:5a Zechariah 9:9.

21:7a This indicates clearly that Jesus rode both the donkey and her colt. Some propose that Jesus rode the old donkey until He came to the place on the Mount of Olives where He wept over Jerusalem. Luke 19:41-44. Then He got off the old donkey and mounted the colt. This could symbolize God's dealing with Israel thru the Old Agreement, and now entering into a New Agreement with them. Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 10:16-18. The Church does not replace Israel in God's New Agreement, but

³² So Jesus stopped and called them to Himself, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

³³ "Sir," they said, "we want to be able to see!"

³⁴ Jesus was deeply moved with pity for them, so He touched their eyes. And immediately they could see, and they, too, then joyfully followed Him down the road.

The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

21 As they were approaching Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage near the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of His followers on an errand.

² "Go into the town up ahead," He told them. "As soon as you get there you'll find a donkey tied up, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to Me.

³ "If anyone asks why you are untying them, tell him, 'Their true Owner^a needs them,' and he will immediately let you take them."

⁴ All of this was done so that the saying of the prophet would be fulfilled, who said:

⁵ "Tell the people of Jerusalem,

Look, here comes your King! He is humble, riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the offspring of a beast of burden."^a

⁶ So the two went ahead and did as Jesus had told them.

⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their robes on them, and Jesus sat on them.^a

⁸ Then most of the crowd that had gathered spread their robes on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

⁹ Then the crowds ahead, as well as those behind, began to shout:

"Hosanna^a to the Son of David! 'God bless the One who comes in the name of the Lord!'^b Hosanna in the highest heavens!"

¹⁰ When He entered Jerusalem, the whole city

rather participates with Israel.

Many of the translations omit the *and* in the phrase *and on a colt* in v 5, but the *and* should be retained. It's in all the Greek texts, and in the Hebrew in Zechariah 9:9. The word *and* in Greek can be translated *even*, but not in this context, where both the donkey and her colt were brought to Jesus. And the Greek is definitely plural in v 7 where it says that "Jesus sat on *them*."

21:9a Hosanna means *save now*. It later became an exclamation of praise.

21:9b Psalm 118:25-26.

went wild with excitement, and everyone began asking, “Who is this?”

¹¹The crowds with Him replied, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee!”

A Violent Encounter at the Temple

¹²Then Jesus went into the Temple area and angrily drove out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and knocked down the benches of those selling pigeons.^a

¹³“It is written in the Scriptures that God has said,

My House shall be called a House of Prayer,^a”

He passionately protested, “but you have turned it into

a safe place for thieves to do business^b!”

¹⁴Then those who were blind and lame came to Him there in the Temple area, and He healed them.

¹⁵But when the chief priests and teachers of the Law saw the wonders He was performing, and heard the children shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant.

¹⁶“Do you hear what these children are saying?” they angrily challenged Him.

“Yes,” He replied, “and haven’t you ever read the Scripture:

You have determined that You will receive praise even from the mouths of little children and infants^a?”

¹⁷Then He left them and went out of the city and went to Bethany, where He spent the night.

A Fig Tree Miraculously Withers

¹⁸As He was returning to the city, early the next morning, He was hungry.

¹⁹Seeing a fig tree by the side of the road, He went up to it. But finding nothing on it but leaves, He said to it, “May you never bear fruit again.” And instantly that fig tree dried up!

21:12a The selling of animals and birds for sacrificing was legitimate, and also the exchanging of Roman for Jewish coins, but not the greedy merchandising that was evidently going on.

21:13a Isaiah 56:7.

21:13b Jeremiah 7:11. These merchants were selling birds and animals to the visiting pilgrims to sacrifice. But they were taking advantage of them and robbing them by charging exorbitant prices. The exorbitant prices charged the public by some professional and business people today comes under the same solemn indictment.

21:16a Psalm 8:2.

The Lesson from the Withered Fig Tree

²⁰When His followers saw this happen, they were amazed. “How could that fig tree dry up so quickly?” they questioned.

²¹“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “if you have faith, and don’t doubt and waver, you will not only do what was done to that fig tree, but more. Even if you should say to this mountain, ‘Get up from here and throw yourself into the sea,’ it will happen.

²²“And that applies to everything. Whatever you ask for in prayer, you will receive—if you continue to believe.”

Jesus’ Authority Challenged

²³As Jesus was teaching the people after coming into the Temple area, the chief priests and the elders of the people came right up to Him. “What right do you think you have to do the things you did here in the Temple yesterday?” they demanded. “Who gave you such authority?”

²⁴“I will also ask you a question,” Jesus replied. “If you answer Me, then I will also answer you and tell you where I got the authority to do what I did.

²⁵“Who gave John the right to baptize people? Did he get it from God, or was it just his own idea?”

They thought about the matter, and then said among themselves, “What shall we say? If we say, ‘From God,’ He will ask us, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’

²⁶“But if we say, ‘It was his own idea,’ this whole mob will tear us apart, because they’re all convinced that John was a prophet.”

²⁷So their answer to Jesus was, “We don’t know.”

“And neither will I tell you where I got the right to do what I’m doing,” Jesus replied.

Faithful and Unfaithful Sons

²⁸“But what do you think of this? A man with two sons went to the older son and said, ‘Son, go

21:31 & 32a These were Jews collecting taxes from their own people for Rome.

21:42a Psalm 118:22-23. In the Passover seder (service), to this day, this psalm is sung in the concluding part of the seder. At His first coming, Messiah was rejected by most of His own people. But God has made Messiah to be the Cornerstone of His coming Kingdom on earth.

The Jewish historian Neander said that by the end of the first century A.D. more than one million followers of the Messiah were Jewish. So not all Jews rejected Him. The first church was entirely Jewish.

21:43a This prophecy has already been fulfilled.

out and work today in my vineyard.’

²⁹“But the son answered, ‘No, I won’t!’ Later he was sorry and changed his mind and went.

³⁰“The man then said the same thing to his younger son. ‘Sure, I’ll go,’ he said. But he didn’t.

³¹“Which of the two did what his father wanted?”

“The older one,” they replied.

“And I tell you the truth,” Jesus responded, “that the despised tax collectors^a and former whores are doing more about making sure that they enter the Kingdom of God than you are.

³²“Because John the Baptizer came to lead you to live to please God. But you wouldn’t believe that God had sent him, and accept his message. But the despised national traitors^a and whores did. Even after you saw the results of John’s message in changing the lives of these sinners, you didn’t turn from your sinning and live what he preached.

Murderous Sharecroppers to be Replaced

³³“Listen to another comparison: A landowner planted a vineyard. He built a wall around it, dug a hole for a winepress, and built a watchtower. Then he rented it out to sharecroppers and left the area.

³⁴“When it was time to harvest the grapes, he sent his servants to the sharecroppers to receive his share of the harvest.

³⁵“But the sharecroppers attacked the servants. They beat one up, killed another, and threw stones at a third.

³⁶“He sent other servants—more than at first—but the same happened to them.

³⁷“Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’

³⁸“But when the renters saw the son coming, they said to each other, ‘Look! Here comes the heir! Come on, let’s kill him. Then we’ll get this vineyard for ourselves that he would otherwise inherit.’

³⁹“So they grabbed him, dragged him out of the vineyard and killed him.

⁴⁰“So what do you suppose the owner of the vineyard will do to those renters when he comes?”

⁴¹“He will cause those wretches to suffer miserably, and then destroy them,” they replied. “Then he will rent his vineyard to other sharecroppers who will give him his share of the harvest at the proper time.”

⁴²Jesus then said, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

The Stone that the builders threw out as worthless has become the Chief Cornerstone. This was done by the Lord, and it is marvelous to consider and look into^a?

⁴³“And it’s for that reason, I tell you, the Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will give God His rightful and proper harvest.^a

⁴⁴“Whoever falls on this Stone will be broken, but on whomever It falls, It will grind him to powder!”^a

⁴⁵After listening to His parables, the chief priests and Pharisees realized He was speaking about them.

⁴⁶But when they wanted to arrest Him, they were afraid to, because the great crowds there considered Him a prophet.

The Wedding Banquet

22 Then Jesus spoke to the people again, using parables. He said:

²“The Kingdom of Heaven is like what happened when a king prepared a great wedding banquet for his son.

³“When he sent some servants out to tell the invited guests that the banquet was now ready, they refused to come.

⁴“So he sent out other servants, instructing them, ‘Tell my guests, “Look, dinner is ready! My choice roasts are turning on the barbecue spits, and everything is ready. Come now to the wedding banquet.”’

⁵“But they paid no attention. One went to his

The Kingdom of God was taken from the Jews long ago and given to the Gentiles (the non-Jewish people). It is mainly among the Gentiles that Christ has been received. But a day is coming—soon now, we trust—when great numbers among the people of Israel will also turn to Christ. Revelation 7:1-8. At this writing there has already been a great increase in converts to their Messiah among the Jewish people.

21:44a All who cast themselves on Christ, the Rock of humanity’s salvation, and seek mercy from

Him, must do so with such abandon that they are completely broken in their rebellion and self-will. Without this death to self, there is no conversion, no born-again experience. Mark 8:34-38. Those who reject His mercy and reject His Lordship over their lives will experience the awful descending blow of judgment. They will be crushed at last by the Supreme Judge of the earth.

22:12a A white robe was provided by the host on such occasions. To spurn the robe offered was an expression of highest contempt. In this parable, the

farm, another to his place of business.

⁶“Others grabbed hold of his servants and beat them up, and then killed them.

⁷“When the king heard about it, he flew into a rage and ordered his armies out and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

⁸“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those who were invited didn’t deserve enjoying this pleasure.

⁹‘Go out now into the streets and invite everyone you find there to the wedding.’

¹⁰“So his servants did just that. They went out on the streets and invited everyone they could find, both good and bad. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹“But when the king came in to greet his guests, he saw that one man wasn’t wearing a wedding robe.

¹²‘Friend,’ he said, ‘how did you get in here without wearing a wedding robe?’^a The man was speechless.

¹³“Then the king said to his servants, ‘Tie him up, hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

¹⁴“Because many are invited, but only a few are the chosen ones.”^a

The Question about Paying Taxes

¹⁵The Pharisees then left and began plotting how they could trick Jesus into saying something for which they could have Him arrested.

¹⁶So they sent some of their men to Him along with some of Herod’s followers.^a “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you always tell the truth, and you also teach the truth about what God wants us to know and do. We know you’re not trying to gain the favor of anyone, and that you’re not swayed by the importance of anyone.

¹⁷“So would you give us your opinion on a matter? Is it right, according to the Laws that God has

given us, for us Jews to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor, or should we refuse to pay them?”^a

¹⁸But Jesus knew what their evil plan was, so He said, “You hypocrites! Why are you trying to trap Me?

¹⁹“Show Me the coin you use to pay the tax.” So they brought Him a denarius.

²⁰“Whose picture and name are these on here?” He asked.

²¹“The Emperor’s,” they replied.

“Then give the Emperor what belongs to him,” He said, “and give to God what belongs to God.”

²²Upon hearing that, they were stunned. And they left Him and went their way.

On Marriage after the Resurrection

²³That same day, the Sadducees, who say that no one who dies will come back to life again, came to Him with a question.

²⁴“Teacher,” they said, “Moses said that if a man dies without having any children, his brother must marry the widow, and raise up a child for his brother.”^a

²⁵“We had a case here involving seven brothers. The first one married, but he died before having any children, so he left his wife to his brother.

²⁶“The same thing happened to the second brother, and the third, and on down to the seventh.

²⁷“Finally, the woman died.

²⁸“So which of the seven brothers will be married to her after the resurrection, since she was the wife of all of them?”

²⁹“You are mistaken,” Jesus replied, “because you don’t know what the Scriptures teach about the resurrection.”^a And you don’t realize how powerful God is.”^b

³⁰“After the resurrection, no one will marry or be given in marriage. In Heaven everyone will be like God’s angels.

³¹“As for the resurrection of the dead, haven’t you read what God told you about that, when He

robe represents the right standing with God, provided by Him thru Jesus Christ. Those refusing to wear this robe will be rejected by God and thrown into outer darkness.

22:14a Those chosen by God to eternal life (Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2) are those whom He foreknew would be determined to meet His conditions for being born again (Matthew 11:12; John 3:1-8): by trusting in Jesus as their Savior; and obeying Him as their Lord, by turning from their sinning to living in obedience to Him, obeying both what He has told us to be busy doing, as well as

what He has told us to keep from doing.

Only those who are determined to enter Heaven will gain entrance there. 11:12. They are the ones who are indeed born again. They realize full well that mere selective obedience will not gain them entrance into Heaven. See Appendix 211, page 476.

22:16a See Mark 3:6 note.

22:17a As the Passover lamb was examined for four days before Passover, so Jesus was examined by the religious leaders of the nation thru intense questioning.

22:24a ... to inherit his property.

said,

³² **“I am the God worshiped by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”^a**? He is not the God of dead people, but of those who are very much alive!”

³³ When the crowd heard this, they were amazed at the knowledge and wisdom of His teaching.

The Greatest Command of God

³⁴ When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they got together for another strategy session.

³⁵ Then one of them, who was an expert in the Law of Moses, asked Him another question to try to trap Him.

³⁶ “Teacher,” he said, “which is the most important command in the Law?”

³⁷ Jesus replied,

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”^a

³⁸ “This is the most important and the greatest of all of God’s commands.

³⁹ “The second most important is like it:

“You shall love others in the same way that you love yourself.”^a

⁴⁰ “The entire Law of Moses and all the writings of the prophets are founded upon the principles contained in these two commands.”

A Question about the Messiah

⁴¹ While the Pharisees were gathered together there, Jesus, in turn, asked them a question.

⁴² “What is your opinion about the Messiah?” He asked them. “What family will He come from?”

“He’ll be a descendant of King David,” they replied.

⁴³ “How is it then,” He questioned, “that, inspired by the Holy Spirit, David calls Him ‘Lord’? Because David said:

⁴⁴ **God said to My Lord,^a “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies into a footstool for Your feet.”^b**

⁴⁵ “Now if David called Him ‘Lord’, how can He be his descendant?”^a

⁴⁶ No one had even one word to say in reply. From then on no one dared to put any more questions to Him.

The Jewish Leaders Condemned

23 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to His followers:

² “The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law are experts in explaining what the Law of Moses teaches.

³ “So whatever they explain to you about the Law, be sure that you pay close attention and follow their instructions and do as they direct. But don’t do what they do, because they don’t practice what they teach.

⁴ “They put heavy loads of religious requirements on people’s backs, that are hard to carry, but they won’t use even one of their own fingers to lift and ease the burden.

⁵ “Everything they do is for the purpose of drawing attention to themselves. Notice how they’ve enlarged the little boxes containing Scriptures to be worn on the forehead and arm. Also notice how long they’ve made the fringes on their robes.

⁶ “They love a place at the head table at banquets, and the prominent seats in the synagogue.

⁷ “And, oh, how they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and have people call them ‘Master’.^a”

⁸ “None of you should be called ‘Great Teacher’ because you have only one Great Teacher, which is the Messiah, and you are all brothers and sisters.

⁹ “And don’t call anyone on earth ‘Father’, because you have only one Father, who is in Heaven.

¹⁰ “Nor are you to be called ‘Leader’, because you have only one Leader, who is the Messiah.

¹¹ “The greatest among you will be the one who serves you.

22:29a See v 32 and Job 19:25-27; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2.

22:29b There is absolutely nothing too hard for God. Whatever He has promised, He will do. Therefore the dead definitely will be raised. Genesis 18:14a.

22:32a Exodus 3:6,15.

22:37a Deuteronomy 6:5.

22:39a Leviticus 19:18.

22:44a This was God the Father speaking to God the Son.

22:44b Psalm 110:1.

22:45a Christ is actually the Son of God, therefore David’s Lord. But He took on human form, and received His human body thru the ancestry of David. For that reason, He is called the Son of David, or, a descendant of David.

23:7a The word *Rabbi* was an honorary title which meant *Lord, Master, Great Teacher*, or *My Lord*, for outstanding teachers of the Law.

23:16a See 15:5.

23:18a See Mark 7:11 note.

23:24a They placed such importance upon little

¹²“So whoever promotes himself will be pulled down. But whoever humbly helps others will be honored.

The Leaders' Hypocrisy Condemned

¹³“Woe to you Pharisees and teachers of the Law! You hypocrites! Because you shut the door to the Kingdom of Heaven in people's faces. Not only are you not entering it yourselves, but when others try to enter, you stop them.

¹⁴“Woe to you Pharisees and teachers of the Law! You hypocrites! You cheat widows out of their homes and other properties, and then pretend to be so holy by your long prayers. Therefore your sentence on Judgment Day will be even greater than what's given other sinners.

¹⁵“Woe to you Pharisees and teachers of the Law! You hypocrites! You travel to the ends of the earth to win one convert, and after you win him, you make him twice as fit for Hell as you are yourselves.

¹⁶“Woe to you, you blind guides, who say, ‘You don't need to fulfill your promise when you make a promise by swearing by the Temple; but whoever swears to God concerning a future gift of gold he vows to bring to the Temple is obligated to fulfill his promise.’^a

¹⁷“You blind fools! Which is greater, the gold, or the Temple that makes the gold sacred?

¹⁸“You also say, ‘You don't need to fulfill your promise when you make a promise by swearing by the altar; but whoever swears by the gift he vows to sacrifice to God there, is obligated to perform his oath.’^a

¹⁹“You blind fools! Which is greater, the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred?

²⁰“So the one who swears by the altar also swears by everything on it.

²¹“And the one who swears by the Temple also swears by God, who lives there.

²²“And the one who swears by Heaven, swears by the throne of God and by the One who sits on that throne.

²³“Woe to you Pharisees and teachers of the Law! You hypocrites! You give God a tenth of even the spices from your garden, such as mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected to obey the more important matters of the Law, such as justice, mercy, and honesty. You should do the good you are doing, but not to the neglect of these more important matters!

²⁴“You blind guides! You strain out a tiny fly from your soup, but then swallow a camel!^a

²⁵“Woe to you Pharisees and teachers of the Law! You hypocrites! You wash the outside of your cups and dishes so diligently, but inside yourselves you are rotten with the filth of cheating others and thinking only of yourselves.

²⁶“You blind Pharisees! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, then the outside will also be clean.^a

²⁷“Woe to you Pharisees and teachers of the Law! You hypocrites! You are like white marble tombs, beautiful on the outside, but inside, full of dead men's bones and other filth.

²⁸“In the same way, your outward appearance causes people to believe you are so pure and honest, but inside you are full of pretense and rebellion against what God wants you to be and do.

²⁹“Woe to you Pharisees and teachers of the Law! You hypocrites! You build monuments for the prophets and decorate the tombs of those who

things, but ignored the truly important things.

23:26a First clean the inside (your heart), then the outside (the things you say and do) will also be clean.

23:32a This was a prediction of what they were about to do to Jesus. He was saying, in effect, “By slaying Me, you will fill up to the brim the cup containing the sins of your fathers until that measuring cup is full—until as much has been committed as God can possibly stand. But then you must take the consequences.” And they have been taking the consequences ever since A.D. 70.

23:34a Or *preachers*.

23:34b ... *in an endeavor to awaken you to the truth*.

23:36a The horrendous slaughter and destruction of Jerusalem took place less than 40 years later, in A.D. 70. The Romans killed well over a million Jews

during the siege, then burned the city, and drove almost 100,000 Jews into captivity.

23:38a See 24:1-2.

23:39a Psalm 118:26.

24:1a Mark 13:1 states that it was one follower who did the speaking.

24:2a See 23:36 note.

24:3a Mark 13:3 reveals that only Peter, James, John, and Andrew were sufficiently interested to question Jesus about His startling statements in front of the Temple. Luke 21:5-36

24:3b Christ was approached twice that day by His followers concerning some amazing statements He had just made. According to Luke 21:7, it appears that Christ gave the prophecy recorded there, to all who were standing near Him outside the Temple.

Now, when Christ had left the Temple and was on His way to Bethany, having reached the top of *the*

lived good lives,

³⁰and then you say, ‘If we had lived when our ancestors did, we wouldn’t have had any part in killing the prophets.’

³¹“But you witness against yourselves, because you admit that you are the children of those who murdered the prophets.

Their Awful Punishment Predicted

³²“Go ahead! Fill up to the top the measuring cup which already holds the sins of your fathers!”^a

³³“You snakes! You children of vipers! How can you expect to escape being condemned to Hell?

³⁴“For that reason, I will indeed send you prophets^a and wise men and teachers.^b But you will kill some, and nail others to crosses. Others you will whip in your synagogues, and then chase and persecute from one city to the next.

³⁵“For that reason, the punishment due for the murder of godly men thruout the whole world will fall on you—from the murder of righteous Abel, to the murder of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the Temple and the altar.

³⁶“I tell you the truth, the total of all the judgments for all these atrocities over the centuries will fall upon you people who are alive today!”^a

Jesus’ Love for Jerusalem

³⁷“O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! You who have killed the prophets and stoned to death the messengers sent to you! How often I have wanted to gather your people together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

³⁸“Look! Your Temple is about to be utterly abandoned by God.”^a

³⁹“I tell you, there is no way that you will see Me

again until the day when you will say, ‘How wonderful and blessed by God is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.’”^a”

Destruction of Jerusalem Predicted

24 As Jesus was leaving the Temple area, some of His followers^a came up to Him to point out some of the interesting things about the Temple buildings.

²“Yes, take a good look at these beautiful buildings,” Jesus responded, “because I tell you the truth, when Jerusalem is destroyed,^a not one stone will be left upon another. They will all be torn down.”

The Signs of the End of the Age

³Later, as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, some of His followers^a went to speak to Him privately. “Tell us,” they inquired. “When will all these things happen? And what will happen to alert us that You are soon coming again, and that the end of the age is near?”^b

⁴“One of the main things,” Jesus replied, “is to be on your guard so that no one fools you.

⁵“Because many will come claiming to be Me, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and many will be fooled.”^a

⁶“And you will hear of wars, and rumors of more wars, but don’t be alarmed. All of these events must take place, but they do not mean that the end has come.

⁷“*Because when the end is actually approaching,*^a many nations will rise up and war against many other nations, and kingdoms against other kingdoms. And there will be famines, disease epidemics, and earthquakes in various places.

⁸“But even these are only the beginning of the

Mount of Olives, He sat down. Mark 13:3 informs us that it was at this location that four of Jesus’ followers—Peter, James, John, and Andrew—*asked Him privately* to explain more fully what He had said in front of the Temple. They wanted the inside, full story.

At the Temple, the people listening had asked Jesus what would alert them of the impending destruction of the Temple, about which He has just told them. Luke 21:6-7. He answered their question (Luke 21:12-24), also adding some details about His second coming. Luke 21:8-11, 25-32. Afterward, *on the Mount of Olives*, these four followers approached Him to ask for more details concerning His brief mention of His *second coming*. “*Tell us,*” *they said, “when will all these things happen,* these things you just referred to in front of the Temple, *and what will happen to alert us that you are*

soon coming again, and that the end of the age is near?””

In front of the Temple, Jesus had been asked for a sign that would alert them that the great Temple building was about to be destroyed. Luke 21:7. Now, He is asked for a sign that would alert them concerning the end of the age and of His returning in *power and great glory*. Luke 21:25-28.

24:4-5a The Lord again warns His followers, as He had in front of the Temple (Luke 21:8), of possible deception. As He stood before the Temple (Luke 21:20-24), Jesus dealt with the subject of the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in A.D. 70. Several historians, *including Josephus*, wrote that there arose a number of imposters claiming to be the Messiah between the time of Christ’s resurrection and the destruction of Jerusalem. Some of the people were deceived by these men.

birth pangs.^a

⁹“Then they will hand you over to be brutally mistreated, tortured, and put to death. You will be hated by people in all nations because of your solid allegiance to My name.^a

¹⁰“At that time, many will give up and turn away from their faith in Me, and betray and hate one another.

¹¹“Many false prophets will also appear on the scene and will fool many.^a

¹²“And because people will be sinning everywhere and in every way, multiplied times worse than ever before, even many of My followers will grow cold in their love for Me and My teachings.^a

¹³“But those who remain faithful to Me to the end of their life will be saved.^a

Even though *false Christs* arose in that era, a double fulfillment of this prophecy, as is true of many other prophecies, is to be expected. “A.C. Gaebelein says that the false Christs of other days and of today (1924) are but faint shadows of what will take place in the end time soon to come.”—*Biederwolf*, in *The Millennium Bible*.

And today, as the end is fast approaching, there are many men claiming to be Jesus Christ. No doubt, their numbers will continue to increase.

24:7a Implied.

24:6-8a Jesus now tells His followers how they could discern when the world was actually entering into *the beginning of the birth pangs* that would bring about the rebirth of Israel and ultimately the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. The approach of the end of the age would see several phenomena on the earth occurring at the same time. Those phenomena, would be: 1. *Many nations rising up against many other nations* 2. *Kingdoms rising against kingdoms* 3. *Famines* 4. *Disease epidemics* 5. *Earthquakes in various places*. In Mark 13 the word *troubles* is used by our Lord instead of disease epidemics. It could be that the Lord used both words.

Wars between *nations*, or even between *kingdoms*, is and has been a common occurrence. History has recorded *famines* at various times. There have been times of great *disease epidemics*. There have been *earthquakes* in the past, but increasingly so in the present day. Jesus tells His disciples, however, to be awaiting a specific time during which all of these phenomena would be in evidence at the same time. The first such time in world history occurred during the years of World War I (1914-1918) and immediately following.

World War I broke out when the heir apparent to the Austrian throne was assassinated by a Serbian zealot. Hostilities between the two countries over this incident resulted in Austria declaring war on Serbia one month later. This was *nation against nation*.

Shortly after this *the nations and kingdoms* of the world chose sides and entered the war. Before the war had ended, four years later, 43 of the principal nations of the world had entered the conflict. It was a vastly greater conflict than had ever before

been waged on earth. In other conflicts, hundreds of thousands had been involved, but in World War I there were tens of millions in uniform. Never before had so many *nations risen up against other nations* and *kingdoms against other kingdoms*—all involved in the same war.

* * *

Widespread *famine* in many areas followed World War I. Many homes today still remember the loss of a loved one in the *disease epidemic* of that same time—the terrible flu epidemic raged out of control. About 20 million people, including more than 500,000 Americans, died in that epidemic in 1918-1919. And today, AIDS! *Earthquakes* not only took their toll but have occurred with increasing frequency thruout the world from that time until now.

World War I, then, was evidently *the beginning of the birth pangs* that would give rebirth to Israel and eventually give birth to God's Kingdom on earth, as well. It was during World War I that the wheels were set in motion to bring about the rebirth of Israel as a nation. Israel will one day be born spiritually as a nation, at the return of Christ (Isaiah 66:7-9), but in 1948 she came to full birth as a nation in modern times. And at this writing, she again controls her own land. See very important notes relating to this in regard to 1 Thessalonians 5:3.

24:9a This means, *because you believe and are living all that My name* (the Lord Jesus Christ) *implies. You are obeying Me as your Lord, you are trusting Me as your Savior* (the meaning of the name Jesus), *and you believe Me to be the Christ* (the One chosen, anointed and blessed by God—the coming King of all the earth). Acts 16:31. It costs something to be a Christian. In the days ahead, it may very likely cost you tribulation and death. But your resurrection to eternal life will be worth being hated and killed a million times over for your Lord and Savior. It has been rightly said, *When you get to Heaven, the Lord won't look you over for degrees but for scars*.

This verse is another example of the twos of the Bible. In His discourse in front of the Temple, as recorded in Luke 21:12-19, the Lord prophesied imminent persecution for His followers. Here He goes beyond their immediate future, to tell of their

¹⁴ “*In spite of the great falling away,*^a the Great News about the Kingdom of Christ^b will be preached thruout the whole world and solemnly declared in every nation. Then the end will come.

The Sign to Flee Judea

¹⁵ “So when you see the abominable thing that represents the one who has caused so much devastation, standing now in the Temple area, just as

the prophet Daniel said would happen (let whoever reads Daniel give diligence to understand what he is saying),^a

¹⁶ then those in Judea must flee to the hills!

¹⁷ “If you are out on your roof deck when you hear the news, don’t go down into the house for anything at all.^a

¹⁸ “The person in the field must not go back into the house or anywhere else, even to get his

final persecution in the end time. This last attack on Christians would correspond to *the beginning of the birth pangs*. The word *then* means, *at that time*, at the time of *the beginning of birth pangs*.

* * *

Christians have been persecuted since the time of Christ, and especially during the first 300 years following His crucifixion and resurrection. Multiplied thousands upon thousands were martyred during those years. But following the beginning of World War I, there have already been more martyrs of the Christian faith than the total of all previous Christian martyrs. These martyrdoms have occurred mainly in Russia, China, eastern Europe, South America, and Asia. But the end is not yet.

The prophecy states that *you will be hated by all nations, because of your solid allegiance to My name*. The time is coming when every true Christian thruout the world will be a marked person. In addition to being hated, followers of Jesus are likely to be martyred by the hundreds of thousands and by the millions in days to come. See also Mark 13:9-13; Daniel 7:20-22,25; 8:24; 11:32-35; 12:7b; Revelation 13:7.

A reading of the above Scriptures will reveal that Antichrist will wage war against all true followers of the Lord when he comes on the scene. And when he has finally succeeded in conquering them, then the Lord will return and send him to his place. Revelation 19:11-21.

24:11a There have been *false prophets* from the beginning of the early Church, and thruout the centuries. Today, however, false cults and *false prophets* are literally flooding the land and the world in a greater than ever tide. No doubt their number will continue to increase. Included among the false prophets are those preachers who are preaching an easy way to Heaven—which will not get you there! Sadly, our Lord’s prophecy that they will deceive many is also coming true.

24:12a See God’s warning to such, in Revelation 3:16.

24:13a 10:22.

24:14a Implied.

24:14b The Great News about salvation thru Jesus Christ, and about His Kingdom, was preached to all

the then-known-world by the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Once again, however, as the present age is ending, this prophecy of Jesus is being fulfilled—this time on a much larger scale. The Great News is again going forth *thruout the whole world* with emphasis on *the Kingdom message*—that Christ must be made Lord and King in one’s life, and the Great News about the coming new and wonderful Kingdom of our Lord on earth.

After *the Great News about the Kingdom of Christ* has been proclaimed world-wide, *then the end will come*. That day is fast approaching, as the Great News is now being broadcast world-wide by preaching, personal witness, the printed page, radio, television, and many other modern means.

24:15a The words *the abominable thing that represents the one who has caused so much devastation* come from Daniel 9:27; 11:31; and 12:11. From these verses in Daniel and from Revelation 11:1-2, we have the prophecy that the Antichrist will make a 7-year pact *with many*. In the middle of the 7-year period, he will break this treaty (Daniel 9:27) and cause his *abominable image to stand in the Temple area* in Jerusalem to be worshiped.

* * *

The words *abominable thing* are translated from the Greek word *bdélugma*, which means *something detestable, disgusting, hateful, shameful, something that stinks*. From our study of this word in the Hebrew in Daniel 9:27, we find that it evidently refers to an idol. And we do read of an idol in reference to Antichrist in Revelation 13:14-15. Reference is made to this idol image more than once. See Revelation 14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4; Daniel 11:31; 12:11; Mark 13:14.

The word *devastation* is translated from the Greek word *eraymóseos*, which means *to lay waste, to bring to or make desolate*. The Jews will have built their Temple in Jerusalem by this time, and the practice of sacrificing animals on the altar will have commenced again.

Continued ➞

From our study of Daniel 8:11-14, we discover that evidently what this *abominable thing* and *devastation* refers to is that when Antichrist turns against the Jews in Jerusalem (Isaiah 33:7-9), in the middle of his 7-year treaty, he will blast the altar of

clothes.^a

¹⁹“This will be a frightful and difficult time for those who are expectant mothers, and for those with nursing babies.^a

²⁰“Pray that you won’t need to escape in winter or on the Sabbath.^a

²¹“Because there will then be frightful persecution, calamity, and suffering—far greater than any other since the beginning of time until now. There will never again be anything like it.

²²“If God didn’t cut that time short, there would-

n’t be any life left on earth. But for the sake of God’s chosen ones, He will cut that time short.^a

²³“If anyone then tells you, ‘Look! The Messiah is over here!’ or ‘Over there!’ don’t believe it.

²⁴“Because false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and do such amazing wonders and miracles that they will be convincing enough to deceive even God’s chosen ones, if that were possible.

²⁵“Pay attention, and realize that I have warned you before all of this takes place.

²⁶“So if anyone tells you, ‘Look! He’s out in the

sacrifice out of the way and cause his image to *stand* there in its place. Revelation 13:14-15.

Be sure to read *Daniel 8:11-14* in connection with this.

* * *

Jesus ends His statement concerning the abominable thing with the following admonition: *Let whoever reads Daniel, give diligence to understand what he is saying.* The meaning of the words *abominable thing* and *devastation* have been obscure and not really understood thruout the centuries. But the time is now near at hand for the fulfillment of this *abominable thing* and *devastation*, and the Lord is making known to His people the true meaning of what will actually occur, so that believing Jews in Israel may know what to expect, and may prepare to heed our Lord’s strong warning to *flee to the hills* when the *devastation* of the altar takes place and the *abominable thing* is erected in its place.

Concerning the *understanding* of these things in the last days, our Lord told Daniel (Daniel 12:10b), “And none of the wicked will understand; but the wise will understand.” “The wise” refers to the true followers of Christ.

Be sure to read Zechariah 14:1-7 in regard to this. Also, don’t fail to read Appendix 245, page 505, entitled, *God’s Prophesied Timetable For The End!*

* * *

In 168 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes sent General Apollonius with 22,000 soldiers to Jerusalem (pretending to come peacefully) and then attacked and plundered the city. They then desecrated the altar of burnt offerings by building an altar dedicated to Zeus upon it, and killing and offering pigs upon their altar. A statue of Zeus was also erected in the Temple area. But Jesus said (v 15) the primary fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy is yet future.

24:17a Only those who flee absolutely immediately will escape.

24:16-18a Jews living in Judea at this time are hereby warned by our Lord that when this happening is announced by radio, or seen on television, (the altar removed and the image of the Antichrist

erected) they are to flee out of the country without stopping for anything. It would be wise for believing families in Israel to discuss flight plans ahead of time so that when this terrible event occurs, everyone will be prepared. Anyone *going back to the house* to assist others or to save any material thing will no doubt lose his life.

Our Lord’s warning here indicates that it is only those who flee immediately and directly who will escape. Any person within a house is *not to go to another part of the same house* to take a single thing with him. *Those in the fields* are to head for the mountains *without returning home*.

The destruction coming upon Israel at that time will be sudden and terrible. Only a small portion of the Jews will escape. Only those few who are willing to drop everything and flee according to the Lord’s instructions will be saved.

* * *

In our study of Zechariah 14:1-7, we find that the Lord will cause the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, to divide in the middle and provide a valley of escape for those who are willing to drop everything and flee thru it. They will flee thru the valley into the country of Jordan.

From the time of the *devastation* in Jerusalem until Jesus returns in power and glory to rule over this world as King of kings and Lord of lords, approximately three-and-one-half years will pass. But these will be three-and-one-half years of the most terrifying tribulation the world has ever known. See vss 21-22.

24:19a This flight from Judea and Jerusalem will be particularly difficult for women with children and for any woman who is about to give birth to a child. Even in such cases, however, faithful and immediate heed to the Lord’s warning to flee the country will no doubt ensure escape.

24:20a Let the people of Israel take notice! The Lord encourages you to *pray* that this hour of flight will not come during the winter when the weather would make the escape most difficult, and to also *pray* that it not be on the *Sabbath day* when the orthodox Jew is allowed to travel less than a mile.

desert!" don't go out there. Or if they say, 'He's in a room back there!' don't believe it.

²⁷ "Because when the Son of Man comes, He will be as visible for everyone to clearly see as a bolt of lightning is when it flashes in the east and then brilliantly travels all the way across the sky to the west.^a

²⁸ "Because wherever there's a body about to die, there you will find the vultures gathered together.^a

The Second Coming of Messiah

²⁹⁻³⁰ "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light.^a The stars will fall from the sky,^b and the natural forces in the heavens controlling the planets will be shaken.^c

³⁰⁻³¹ "Then the sign that will herald the coming of the Son of Man will appear in the sky! When that happens, all the people on earth will mourn,^a because then they will see the Son of Man whom

For other Scriptures concerning Israel's flight into the wilderness in Jordan see Isaiah 26:20-21; 33:2-3; 41:10-20; 44:1-7; Jeremiah 30:4-9; Ezekiel 20:35-38; Hosea 2:14-15; Micah 5:3 (1-15); Zechariah 10:11a; 12:10a; 13:8-9; 14:3-7; Mark 13:14-23; Luke 17:26-37; Revelation 12:1-6, 13-17.

24:21-22a The tribulation of the last days of this dispensation will be so devastating, with so much loss of life, that unless *that time were cut short, there would be no life left on earth*. In God's future plans, He has already determined that this time will be a short time. Events will not be allowed to run their natural course, or everyone on earth would be killed.

Though it is unlikely that the period of 3 1/2 years will be shortened, God will evidently curtail the frightful devastation and slaughter on the earth in some way so that mankind is not completely blotted from the face of the earth. God will show this mercy *for the sake of His elect*. The elect are all the chosen of God, whether Jew or Gentile. They are those persons who truly love Him, and obey and serve Him.

24:23-27a Christ showed His deep concern about false Christs, as He warned about them in front of the Temple (Luke 21:8), at the beginning of this discourse (vss 4-5), and now again. As we previously stated, false Christs appeared a few years after Christ's resurrection (though not many) and now again, a second time, false Christs (many of them) will appear. They will evidently be inspired by Satan, and this time given power by him, because they will perform *amazing signs and wonders*. These signs and wonders will be so convincing that even the elect will almost be fooled.

Jesus definitely states, however, that His second coming will be neither secret nor humble. Rather, the glory and brightness of His person and power (v 27) will be seen from one end of the heavens to the other. Those who are alive on earth during the coming days of sorrow need to be warned again and again to believe no one who claims to be Christ, no matter how convincing his arguments or the dis-

play of signs and wonders. Christ will not appear in resurrected form until after the time of darkness, earthquake, and fire (evidently 45 days, Daniel 12:11-12) which is to follow the Battle of Armageddon. See the following verses, vss 29-31.

24:28a This verse has nothing to do with the Battle of Armageddon, as many believe. These are human vultures. And when these human vultures see Israel in distress and tribulation, viewing as well this world age in its death throes, they will go to any lengths in their attempt to further their own self interests, even to pretending to be Christ, the Messiah.

24:29a Refer to Revelation 6:12-17 for a vivid description of what will take place immediately after the tribulation and the Battle of Armageddon. Revelation 6 gives an overview of end-time happenings, and vss 12-17 reveal what will take place at this momentous time in history.

It is very possible that this *darkness* and the other judgments here will affect the earth and the heavens for a period of some 45 days following Armageddon, before Christ appears in the heavens. Daniel 12:11 gives us 1,290 days for the time of the tribulation. Then in the very next verse, verse 12, he states, "Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the 1,335th day!" That is 45 days later. So this judgment of *darkness*, etc., may continue for a longer period than most Bible students have previously believed.

24:29b Greek *pesountai* can mean *disappear from view*, or refer to meteorites crashing into the earth in horrendous judgment. Isaiah 13:10; Joel 3:15.

24:29c ... *and will no longer keep those bodies in their courses*. Be sure to read the prophecy in Isaiah 13:9-14 regarding this. See also Joel 3:16; Haggai 2:6,21; Hebrews 12:26.

24:30a *Then at the end of this awful time of darkness, the sign that will herald the coming of the Son of Man will appear in the sky*. What a great and glorious day that will be when Christ comes to earth in His *majestic display of power and great*

they had spurned, coming on the clouds in the sky, with a most majestic display of awesome power and exceedingly great glory.

³¹“And accompanied with the sound of a mighty trumpet blast, I will send out My angels to gather My chosen ones together from the four corners of the earth, from the extremity of one horizon to the extremity of the other.”^a

³²“Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches become tender and grow leaves, you know that summer is near.”^a

³³“In the same way, when you see all these things beginning to happen, realize that the end is near, right at the door.”^a

glory to receive His Kingdom! See Isaiah 40:5, 9-11; Zechariah 2:10-13; Matthew 26:64; Mark 13:24-26; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 1:7-8. But what a frightful day of consternation and woe that day will be for the ungodly! Revelation 6:15-17. *All the people on earth will mourn*, because only those who have refused Christ as Savior and refused Him the lordship of their lives will be left on earth. All others by this moment will have been raptured to be with Christ.

24:31a The Apostle Paul refers to this time in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 when he refers to the Rapture of the Church taking place *at the sounding of the last trumpet*. And this is the last trumpet prophesied to sound during the age of grace. Paul also refers to this time in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 and 2 Thessalonians 1:7.

This is indeed the last blast of the *seventh trumpet*, that we read about in Revelation 11:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52. It will be a time of frightful judgment for those still upon the earth, but a time of great joy and triumph for those who in all sincerity have surrendered their lives to Christ as their Lord and Savior. This will herald the beginning of the reign of the Son of God upon earth as King of kings and Lord of lords!

Being that both Christ and the Apostle Paul state that it is at this time that the Rapture will take place, why would anyone expect it to happen before? See Appendix 201, p 467, for extensive note.

24:32, 33, 34a Many claim that the *fig tree* here is symbolic of the Jewish nation. But such an interpretation fails in light of the fact that Luke 21:29 adds, *and all the other trees*. Jesus' statement was simply a matter of everyday understanding. When one sees the trees of the forest and field putting forth leaves, he knows that summer is close at hand. Likewise, when people see these prophecies of Jesus beginning to take place, they can know that the time of His coming is near. He says, in fact, that

³⁴“I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass away before all of these things have taken place.”^a

³⁵“The heavens and the earth will in time pass away, but there's no possibility whatever that what I say will come to nothing.”^a

No One Knows the Day and Hour

³⁶“But as for the day and the hour when I will return in power and great glory, no one knows, not even the angels in Heaven. Only My Father knows.”^a

³⁷“But when the Son of Man comes, things will continue just like they did in the time of Noah.

When you see all these things beginning to happen, realize that the end is near, right at the door.

It will be so imminent that this generation (we believe He is speaking of the generation living at the time when these things begin to come to pass) *will positively not pass away before all of these things have taken place*. It is the older generation, still living today, that was born when the *birth pangs* of the end of the age began (see vss 7-8). We believe it is this generation that witnessed the beginning of the end.

According to Jesus' clear indication, the older generation of today will not die out until all things are fulfilled. If such is the case, the end must be very near! See Mark 13:30 note.

Some claim that the words *this generation* in v 34 refer to the generation living when Christ spoke these words. But that generation *did not live to see all of these things take place*. They certainly did not see the events that will follow the Great Tribulation. The only possible conclusion is that *this generation* refers to the generation living when these end time happenings begin to happen. See vss 6-8 note. These are the ones who will see the final events that will lead up to the return of Christ. It is today's older generation! So the end is rapidly approaching.

24:35a These things are so certain to come to pass that our Lord declares that even though it is true that *the heavens and the earth will in time pass away*, these words of His in this prophecy, and throughout the Bible, will positively not pass away. His words will be fulfilled to the very letter.

24:36a Our Lord does not tell us that we will not know *the approximate time* of His coming, because He has given us all kinds of signs and indications to look for which will indicate that the time is drawing near. But He does state that nobody but the Father *knows the day or the hour* when He will return. Even Christ did not know. Mark 13:32.

³⁸“During the days just before the flood, people were eating and drinking as usual. They were getting married and giving their daughters in marriage. Life was going on as usual even on the very day that Noah and his family entered the big ship he had built.

³⁹“They didn’t know that the prophesied flood would come that day, until it came and swept them all away. And that’s exactly how it will be when the Son of Man comes.^a

⁴⁰“Two men at that time will be working in the field. One will be taken away and the other will be left behind.

⁴¹“Two women will be together grinding grain. One will be taken away and the other left behind.^a

⁴²“So you must always be ready, because you don’t know what day or hour your Lord will come.

⁴³“Look at it this way: If the man of the house had known at what hour of the night the thief was coming, he would have been ready for him, to make sure his house wasn’t broken into.

⁴⁴“For that very reason, you must always be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at a time when you will least expect Him.^a

Faithful and Unfaithful Servants

⁴⁵“Who then is a faithful and wise servant? He is the one whom his master has put in charge of his household, to give them food at the proper time.

⁴⁶“He will be a very happy servant indeed if he is

24:37-39a In the days of Noah, the earth was destroyed by the great flood—God’s judgment on the shocking wickedness of people upon the earth. Genesis 6-8. It may be, on one hand, that the Lord is comparing wickedness in Noah’s day to wickedness in the days of His coming. On the other hand, He may simply be saying that life will go on as usual, even as it did just prior to the great flood. People will be *eating and drinking, getting married and giving their daughters in marriage, even on the very day* that judgment from God strikes.

24:40-41a The *two men in the field* and the *two women grinding at the mill* with the *one taken and the other left* would appear to speak of judgment. Many have believed that these verses speak of the Rapture of the Church before the Great Tribulation—the true Christian being *taken* from the earth and the unbeliever *left*. It would seem, however, that this is a continuation of the judgment scene of the previous verses.

The Lord promised in Genesis 8:20-22; 9:8-17 that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood. The next judgment will be by fire. 2 Peter 3:5-12. In vss 37-39 Christ referred to the previous judgment by water, and compared that event with the future judgment of this world (v 39b) by fire, earthquake, etc., both preceding and following Armageddon. Nahum 1:5; Malachi 4:1-3; 2 Peter 3:5-14; Revelation 6:12-17.

Many people will be destroyed in these final judgments, while others in the same place will be spared, in order that the earth might be replenished during the Millennium. Isaiah 2:2-4. So some will *be taken* in death and some will be left.

During these days of awful judgment upon the earth, following the Battle of Armageddon, God will be cleansing the earth by fire and remaking it by earthquakes, great hailstones, crashing meteorites,

etc. The resultant renovated earth will contain no more islands, and the mountains will be leveled as rolling hills. Revelation 16:20.

It is evident that even this final judgment will come as a surprise to most people still living on the earth. The Lord will have blinded their eyes because of their determination to continue in their sin. They will not recognize the time in which they live as being the time just previous to *the end of the world* as we know it today.

Just what criteria the Lord will use at this time to choose between those *taken* and those *left* is not revealed. Even among unbelievers, there are degrees of wickedness and rebellion. The righteous Lord in His infinite wisdom will be quite able to choose those to be *taken* in death at this time and those to be *left* to live during the Millennium.

It is impossible to determine for sure the exact meaning of those *taken* and those *left*. It certainly appears that judgment is the theme.

24:42-44a These verses also speak of judgment, especially v 43. It is no doubt because of just such a warning from Jesus that Peter was moved to write, “Be most diligent to make your calling and election to salvation and eternal life with God a sure thing.” 2 Peter 1:10. We must be ready to meet Him now—today! The ungodly person who trusts that he has time to continue in his sinning, before repenting, will undoubtedly find death and judgment falling upon him before he expects it.

The warning is issued, as well, to all who profess to know Christ as Lord and Savior. So much is at stake in so many lives. We have no promise of a sure tomorrow on this earth. No one knows with absolute certainty God’s timetable for this world, nor for his or her individual life. God’s call on your life will no doubt come at a time when you least

found doing what he was assigned to do when his master returns.

⁴⁷ “I tell you the truth, his master will put him in charge of everything he owns.^a

⁴⁸ “But suppose that servant is evil, and says to himself, ‘My master won’t be here for a while yet.’

⁴⁹ “So he begins to bully and beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with his drunkard friends.

⁵⁰ “The master of that servant will return on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not expecting him.

⁵¹ “His master will most severely punish him^a and assign him his proper place, with the other hypocrites, where there will be bitter weeping and gnashing of teeth.^b

The Five Wise and Five Foolish Girls

25 “At that time, the Kingdom of Heaven will be like the night when ten girls took their oil lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

² “Five were wise, and five were foolish.

³ “The foolish ones brought their lamps but no extra oil.^a

⁴ “While those who were wise brought along

containers with plenty of extra oil to keep their lamps burning.

⁵ “But while the bridegroom delayed his arrival, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

⁶ “Then at midnight, the cry rang out, ‘Everybody up! Here comes the bridegroom! Go out now to meet him!’

⁷ “And all the girls got up and began to trim the wicks of their lamps.

⁸ “But then the foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil! Our lamps are going out!’

⁹ “No!’ the wise ones replied. ‘We may not have enough for both you and us. Go to the store and buy some for yourselves.’

¹⁰ “And while the foolish ones were gone, buying oil, the bridegroom came. Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding, after which the door was shut.

¹¹ “Later, the others arrived. ‘Sir! Oh, Sir!’ they called out. ‘Open the door for us!’

¹² “But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’

¹³ “So you must always watch,^a because you do not know the day nor the hour when the Son of

expect it.

Let’s not dare to twist our Lord’s words here to fit our so-called system of theology. The Lord meant exactly what He said. We need to *watch* our lives, to make sure we are living in the will of our Lord. There is urgent need to be *ready* for His coming at all times, and to help others to be ready.

24:45-47a The position of a pastor is very opportune from the standpoint of serving the Lord. Added opportunity, of course, implies added responsibility. According to Scripture, all Christians are to be pastors to each other. Each follower of Jesus is admonished to encourage and strengthen, to challenge, to rebuke, to give guidance and leadership to fellow Christians.

The Lord promises rewards to all of His faithful servants who give His household spiritual *food at the proper time*. Verse 47 indicates that the rewards for faithful service will be great indeed.

24:51a Literally *will cut him in two*.

24:48-51b Some Christians, including some pastors, seem to have little concern for the fact that Christ may call them from this world at any moment to appear before Him. The one who thinks he can get by for a time with sin, later straightening himself out, will no doubt find his Lord coming for him at a time when least expected.

It will pay great dividends to always *watch* and be *ready* to meet the Lord. Such a life has the reward

now of peace of mind and real assurance of eternal life—and later—eternal rewards.

* * *

The *servant of the Lord* who lives in sin was either never really converted in the sense of having his life changed—being truly born again—which is the only kind of conversion recognized by the Lord (John 3:1-12; 2 Corinthians 5:17), or if converted, he somehow lost out to the temptations of the flesh and the devil. His end will come suddenly, when he is least expecting it.

After this life is over, such an unfaithful servant will find his place with those who have openly opposed the Lord, and with his own kind, *the hypocrites*. These are frightful warnings indeed, coming directly from the mouth of Jesus Himself. We will do well to take most earnest heed ourselves and to shout the warnings and urge all who profess Christ as Lord and Savior to live thoroughly what they profess. These prophecies of warning are just as certain of fulfillment as the prophecies of blessing. See Mark 9:43-47, and the note.

25:3a The foolish girls are a picture of those who want and expect to get to Heaven, but as cheaply as possible. The awful truth here is, they won’t make it.

God demands our all—all our love, all our talents and strengths to be used for His glory and the blessing and salvation of others, and full obedience

Man is coming.

A Story about Three Servants

¹⁴ “The Kingdom of Heaven is also like what happened when a man traveled to another country. Before going, he called in three of his servants and entrusted each of them with some of his money to invest for him.

¹⁵ “To one he gave five talents,^a to another two, to another one—to each man according to his ability. Then he went on his trip.

¹⁶ “The first one invested the five talents, and made another five.

¹⁷ “The one who had two did the same, and made two more.

¹⁸ “But the one who had received the one talent dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

¹⁹ “After a long time, the master returned home. He soon called in each servant to report what he had done with his money.

²⁰ “So the one who had received the five talents came with them and also brought the five additional talents. ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘you gave me five tal-

ents, and, as you see, I have gained five more, to add to the ones you gave me.’

²¹ “Well done!’ his master replied. ‘You have been a capable and faithful servant. Because you have been faithful in the handling of a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Come on in and share my happiness!’

²² “The one who had received two talents also came. ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘you gave me two talents, and look, I have gained two more, to add to the ones you gave me.’

²³ “Well done!’ his master replied. ‘You have been a capable and faithful servant. Because you have been faithful in the handling of a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Come on in and share my happiness!’

²⁴ “Then the one who had been given one talent came. ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘I know that you are a hard man. You reap harvests where you haven’t planted, and you gather in where you haven’t scattered any seed.

²⁵ ‘So I was afraid,^a and I went out and hid your talent in the ground. Look, here now, you have what is yours.’

to all His teachings and commands. Anything less than total surrender to the Lord is not true conversion.

25:13a Meaning, watch the way you live. It’s in the present tense, imperative mood, denoting present, necessary action that must be continuous. Don’t ever think you can get by with a half measure of spiritual interest and concern and still be welcomed into Heaven. God demands your whole heart, full and brimming over with love for Him.

Is your life really pleasing to the Lord, or are you mainly living to please yourself and certain others, instead of the Lord? Do you truly love the Lord above all else and above all others? Are you truly born again? Are you continuing in the faith? John 8:31; 1 John 2:24; James 5:19-20; Colossians 1:23.

This should be a frightful warning to many believers, because the foolish girls were all followers of the Lord. That is, in a sense they were. They were waiting for the coming of the Lord. *John Calvin* once stated, “The simple and genuine meaning of the whole of this parable is just this, that it is not enough to have a lively zeal for awhile. We must have in addition a perseverance that never tires.”

The Apostle Peter warned, *Be most diligent to make your calling and election to salvation and eternal life with God a sure thing.* 2 Peter 1:10.

The Apostle Paul warned early believers (Acts 14:22) that they must *continue in the faith*. He warned the Colossians (1:23) that they would be saved ... *if you are indeed continuing in the faith, deeply rooted, unflinching, fixed in your direction, and are not allowing yourselves to be seduced and led away from the hope that came to you when you heard and accepted the Great News.*

So many other warnings in Scripture could be pointed out.

What to do? *Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.* James 4:8. How? By reading your Bible *daily*, and obeying *everything* that God teaches you there. To stay alive spiritually, you must read what God has to say, and obey it. Also, have a good daily visit with the Lord in prayer. In fact, have constant fellowship with Him.

Remember, the Lord promised and warned (Matthew 10:22 and 24:13) *Whoever remains faithful to Me to the end of their life will be saved.*

For a further note on this parable, see Appendix 202, page 468.

25:15a Very likely silver talents. In Israel, each talent of silver (troy weight) weighed 1440 ounces.

25:25a ... *afraid of failure, of rejection, of being hurt in some way.* See Revelation 21:8.

25:29a Implied.

25:14-30a Jesus pictures Himself here as a *man traveling into a far country.* Before His departure

²⁶ “But his master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you’re sure you know, are you, that I reap a harvest where I haven’t planted, and gather in where I haven’t scattered any seed?’

²⁷ “In that case, you should have at least earned honest money for me by depositing my money in the bank, so that on my return, I would have received back what belonged to me, with interest.

²⁸ “Take the talent from him,’ he told his other servants, ‘and give it to the one with the ten talents!’

²⁹ “Because everyone who diligently uses what he has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. As for the one who has nothing, *because of his fear and unfaithfulness*,^a even the little he has will be taken from him.

³⁰ “And throw the worthless servant into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”^a

The Judgment of the Nations

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, He will sit upon His glorious throne.

³² “Then all the people of all the nations in the world will be gathered before Him. And He will separate them from one another in the same way that a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats.

³³ “He will put the sheep at His right, but the goats at His left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those at His right, ‘Come, you who are now so accepted and blessed by My Father, and inherit the Kingdom that was prepared for you before the world was created.

³⁵ “Because I was hungry and you gave Me food. I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink. I was alone and away from home, and you welcomed Me into your homes.

³⁶ “I needed clothes, and you gave Me something to wear. I was sick and you cared for Me. I was in jail and you came to visit Me.’

He calls *His own servants* to His side. These servants are not rebels or ungodly men. They are persons in the employ of the Master.

All Christians are the Lord’s servants, and we all have unending, serious responsibilities. God has given various gifts and opportunities to every servant. He expects each servant to use these talents, material means, open doors, and every other means at hand for the furtherance of His message of salvation to a lost world.

To some, God has entrusted great natural capabilities or financial means. Others have lesser abilities or financial means. Whether limited to one talent or granted a large number of talents, all servants will *appear before the judgment seat of Christ*. 2 Corinthians 5:10.

And from this parable we are forewarned that this appearing will be a most serious matter. It will be a time of great rejoicing for those who have been faithful. But for the one who has been slothful, constantly giving excuses for not having served the Lord with zeal, to such it will be a day of frightful awakening.

Though we are not saved by our works, good works in obedience to the Lord’s commands must accompany faith, or that faith is counterfeit. It’s a joy to think of the two servants here who were found faithful, and were commended by their master and welcomed into His presence to great responsibilities, opportunities, and happiness. What joy to be found among the number who have been faithful in *serving the Lord* in the home, the factory, the school, the office, the church, the neighborhood,

and wherever else the opportunity has been afforded!

But the task of calling attention to the unfaithful servant is not a pleasant one. We would rather not speak of him. We would rather not think that any such thing could happen to one of the Lord’s *own servants*. We see that his final end is to be thrown *into outer darkness*. No, this was not a hypocrite, as such. He was just *slothful* and *fearful*. On the other hand, you would have to call him a hypocrite of some sort. 24:51.

* * *

It would appear that the person to whom God has given only *one talent* has the greatest opportunity of all to show himself faithful to his Lord. If you can use that one talent in such a way that it will be a great blessing and joy to your Lord, as well as to your fellow Christians and the unsaved, you can stand before the Lord with confidence. And your Master will reward you with a large place of opportunity, responsibility, and joy in His Kingdom.

Let no one say that he cannot do anything for the Lord. Most Christians can read and study God’s Word, at least, seeking to know the Master’s will, that they might *obey* Him. In the second place, our Lord created us for fellowship and communion with Himself. We can bring joy to our Lord by the times we spend with Him in prayer and praise, rejoicing that it is our privilege to be in His presence by this means for now, and later on to see Him face to face.

Every Christian also has opportunity to take his stand for the Lord in various situations. A Christian can witness to the lost simply by opening his mouth

³⁷ “Then those who had done what was right will say to Him, ‘Lord, when did we ever see You hungry, and give You food? Or thirsty, and give You something to drink?’

³⁸ “When did we ever see You alone, away from home, and invite You into our homes? When did we see You in need of clothes, and give You something to wear?

³⁹ “Or when did we see You sick or in jail, and came to visit You?”

⁴⁰ “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it for even one of the least known or least important of My brothers or sisters, you were doing it for Me.’

⁴¹ “Then the King will give vent to His anger to those at His left and declare, ‘Out of My presence, you detestable ones! Away with you into the everlasting fire^a prepared for the devil and his demons!’

⁴² “Because I was hungry, but you would not feed Me. I was thirsty, but you would not give Me a drink.

⁴³ “I was alone and away from home, but you

wouldn’t welcome Me into your homes. I needed clothes, but you wouldn’t give Me anything to wear. I was sick, and in jail, but you didn’t visit Me.’

⁴⁴ “Then they also will ask Him, ‘Lord, when did we ever see You hungry or thirsty or alone and away from home or in need of clothes or sick or in jail, and refused to help You?’

⁴⁵ “Then He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, anything you refused to do for one of these people of Mine, even for the least important one, you refused to do for Me.’

⁴⁶ “These will go away into everlasting punishment, but those who were kind and considerate to My brothers and sisters will enter everlasting life.”^a

The Plot to Kill Jesus

26 When Jesus had finished giving all of these parables and prophecies, He said to His followers,

² “As you know, the Passover celebration begins

and asking, “Are you planning on making it to Heaven?” The response to that question will give you the clue as to what to say next. There is no learning how to witness unless a person starts somehow, somewhere.

* * *

Remember, this servant had not abused or misused his talent; he had simply not put it to work for his master, as his master had ordered him.

“Spiritual indolence (inaction) is as serious a sin as active wickedness, and meets with similar punishment.” So said one of God’s servants of the 19th century. His reference for the statement was this very Scripture. It would be profitable for whoever names the name of Christ as Lord and Savior to give very serious consideration to our Lord’s prophecy here concerning His servants. When a person is honestly born again, Jesus is Lord in that life. When He is actually Lord, the servant is quite willing and anxious to take orders from Him. Most of those orders are to be found in His message.

May the day of His appearing be a crowning day for you. For additional comments on this parable see Appendix 203, page 469.

25:41a Matthew 13:41-42; Luke 16:19-31; Revelation 14:9-11; 20:10-15.

25:46a The account here of God’s judgment is not a full account of details, but it gives an indication of the criterion which will govern the verdicts.

Some believe this is a judgment of those who will still be alive on earth after the great wars and tribulation of the end time. God’s people will have gone

to meet Christ in the air as He was returning. I Thessalonians 4:16-17; Matthew 24:29-31. So they will not be included in this judgment.

Those who are here said to have been kind to Christ’s people are *not* promised the Kingdom of Heaven. They will be the citizens of the new kingdom God long ago planned for earth.

They are the people who had shown mercy to God’s people (both Christians and Jews) who were persecuted by Antichrist during the last 3 1/2 years of this age. Read Daniel, chapters 7,8,11,12, and especially verses 7:9-11,18,21-22,25; 8:24; 11:32-34; 12:7. These verses tell of the great conflict that will rage between God’s people and the Antichrist in the last years of the age. The accounts in these verses are not in sequence, but as you read them all you will begin to see the picture. We suggest that you underline these verses in your Bible, or highlight them, and that you read them over several times.

* * *

The kind of everlasting life these righteous ones will experience on earth is not explained, but the punishment given those who showed no mercy will no doubt be the same Hell that all who opposed and ignored God thruout the ages will experience.

This does not mean that those already with Christ at this time did not need to extend mercy to others to be saved. If they were truly born again they were people who lived to please God in every way. And one indication that a person is truly born again is that he is concerned about the needs of others (both physical and spiritual needs), and does something

two days from now. And that's when the Son of Man will be turned over to the Romans to be nailed to a cross."^a

³In fact, at that very moment the chief priests, the teachers of the Law, and the elders of the people were assembled in the palace of Caiaphas the High Priest.

⁴They were discussing ways and means of arresting Jesus in some underhanded way and killing Him.

⁵"But we can't do it during Passover," they said, "or the people may riot."

Jesus Honored at Bethany

⁶While Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a former leper,

⁷a woman came to Him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume. She proceeded to pour it on His head as He reclined at the table.^a

⁸When Jesus' followers saw what she was doing, they became angry, and said, "Why this waste?

⁹"That perfume could have been sold for a fabulous price, and the money given to the poor!"

¹⁰But Jesus, knowing what they were saying, said, "Why are you giving this woman a hard time? What she has just done for Me was a beautiful thing.

¹¹"You will always have the poor with you, but you won't always have Me.

¹²"When she poured this perfume on Me, she was preparing My body for burial.

¹³"I tell you the truth, wherever the Great News is preached thruout the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told, as a memorial to her."

A Traitor Negotiates to Betray Jesus

¹⁴Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests.

¹⁵"What are you willing to pay me if I hand Jesus over to you?" he asked them. And they counted out 30 silver coins and gave them to him.

¹⁶So from that time on Judas looked for a chance to hand Him over to them.

about it. Matthew 5:7; 6:12-15; 18:23-35.

Always remember, *When you help the poor* (both the physically and spiritually poor), *you are lending to the Lord, and it's the Lord who will repay you.* Proverbs 19:17.

For further note on this judgment, see Appendix 204, page 470.

26:2a Crucified.

26:7a The custom was to recline on couches while

Jesus Eats The Last Passover Meal with His Followers

¹⁷On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Jesus' followers went to Him and asked, "Where do you want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover meal?"

¹⁸He mentioned the home of a certain man, and said, "Go into the city and tell him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is drawing near. My followers and I will eat the Passover meal in your home."'"

¹⁹So His followers did as Jesus had instructed them, and prepared the Passover meal there.

²⁰When evening came, He reclined at the table with the Twelve.

²¹And as they were eating, He said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will hand Me over to My enemies."

²²The men were horrified and cut to the heart upon hearing such an announcement. And one after the other they asked Him, "Lord, You surely don't mean me, do You?"

²³"The one who has dipped his bread in the same bowl with Me is the one who will betray Me,"^a Jesus replied.

²⁴"The Son of Man will indeed go from this life in the very way it has been written in prophecy concerning His suffering and death.^a But awful judgment awaits the man who is betraying the Son of Man. It would have been better for him if he had never been born."

²⁵Then Judas, who was in the very process of betraying Him, said, "Surely, Teacher, You're not speaking of me, are You?"

"Yes, I am," Jesus replied.

Jesus Institutes the Lord's Supper

²⁶As they were eating, Jesus took some bread in His hands, and after thanking God for it and asking Him to bless it, He broke it and gave it to His followers. "Take this and eat it," He said. "This represents My body."^a

²⁷Then He took the cup, and after giving thanks to God, He handed it to them, saying, "Drink from

eating. John 12:3 states that the woman poured the perfume on His feet. She no doubt did both, as John 12:3 indicates she had a large amount.

26:23a According to John 13:21-26, Jesus evidently said this privately to John.

26:24a Psalm 22:1-22; 41:9; Isaiah 52:14; 53:1-12; Daniel 9:26; Zechariah 12:10; Luke 24:25-27, 45-47.

26:26a Meaning *this represents or is a picture of* or *will bring to your remembrance* My body,

it, all of you.

²⁸“Because this pictures My blood—the blood that guarantees and makes possible God’s New Agreement with mankind.^a It is being poured out so that many may have their sins forgiven.

²⁹“But as for me, I will never again drink this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink the new wine with you in My Father’s Kingdom.”

³⁰Then, after having sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Peter’s Denial Predicted by Jesus

³¹Then Jesus said to them, “Tonight you will all be ashamed of Me and desert Me, because it is written:

I will strike down the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.^a

³²“But after I have come back to life again, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

³³Then Peter spoke up and said, “Even if everyone else loses faith in You and leaves, I never will!”

³⁴“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “this very night, before the rooster crows at dawn, you will have said three times that you don’t even know Me.”

³⁵But Peter emphatically declared, “There’s no way that I would ever deny You, even if I must die with You!” And all the other followers said the same.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

³⁶Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane. “Sit here,” He said, “while I go on a little farther and pray.”

³⁷Taking with Him Peter and the two brothers, James and John, He became overwhelmed with grief and was deeply depressed.

³⁸“I am extremely overwhelmed with sorrow,” He said to those with Him, “so much so that I’m at the brink of death. You must stay here and keep watch with Me.”

³⁹Then He went a little farther and fell with His face to the ground, and prayed, “O My Father, if there is any way possible, let this cup be taken from Me!^a But still, I don’t want what I desire, but

whatever You know must be done.”

⁴⁰Then He went back to His three followers—and they were asleep! To Peter He said, “Is this the way you stand with Me as you promised? Couldn’t you men keep watch with Me for even one hour?”

⁴¹“You must continue to be alert, and earnestly pray, so that when temptation comes, you won’t be overcome by it and fall.^a It’s true that your spirit wants to do what’s right, but the flesh is weak!”

⁴²Then He left them and prayed a second time, saying, “O My Father! If it’s not possible for this cup to be taken away until I drink it, Your will be done.”

⁴³Then He came back and found them asleep again. They just couldn’t keep their heavy eyes open.

⁴⁴So He left them again and went back and prayed a third time, saying the same words.

⁴⁵Returning to His followers, He said, “Are you still sleeping? Still taking your rest? But look, the time has come! The Son of Man is right now being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

⁴⁶“Get up now, and let’s be on our way. Look! Here comes the man who’s betraying Me!”

Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

⁴⁷And while He was still speaking, there came Judas, one of the Twelve, with a whole mob of people carrying swords and clubs. They’d been sent by the chief priests and elders of the people.

⁴⁸Judas had prearranged a signal, saying, “The one I greet with a kiss is the man you want. Arrest him!”

⁴⁹He immediately went right up to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Teacher!” and embracing Him, kissed Him on the cheek.

⁵⁰“My friend,” Jesus responded, “why all the pretence?” Then the men with Judas came forward and grabbed Him and arrested Him.

⁵¹But suddenly, one of Jesus’ followers pulled out his sword and slashed out at one of the servants of the High Priest, and cut off one of his ears.

⁵²“Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus told him, “because all who use the sword will die by the sword.

which is being broken and sacrificed for you.

26:28a The blood that seals the new declaration of God’s will, purpose, and set of regulations—the New Testament.

26:31a Zechariah 13:7.

26:39a See the note for Mark 14:35.

26:41a Or *so you won’t be tempted* to lose faith in Me when I die.

26:53a A Roman legion equaled more than 6,000 men.

26:54,56a See v 24 references.

27:2a This possibly consisted only in tying His hands together.

27:9-10a Zechariah 11:12-13.

27:22,23a Meaning *Nail him to a cross!*

⁵³ “Don’t you realize that I could call My Father for help? If I did, He would send Me more than twelve legions^a of angels.

⁵⁴ “But if I did, how could the Scriptures be fulfilled that say that this is what must happen?”^a

⁵⁵ Then Jesus spoke to the mob, “Do you consider Me so dangerous that you needed to come out against Me as you would against a thief, with swords and clubs to take Me into custody? I sat with you in the Temple area many days as I taught, and you didn’t arrest Me then.

⁵⁶ “But all of this has happened so that the writings of the prophets^a might be fulfilled.” It was at this turn of events that all of His followers deserted Him and ran.

Jesus’ Trial Before the Sanhedrin

⁵⁷ Then those who had arrested Jesus led Him away to the home of Caiaphas, the High Priest, where all the Pharisees and teachers of the Law had gathered.

⁵⁸ But far behind was Peter, following Jesus to the High Priest’s courtyard. He went in and sat with the soldiers to see what would happen.

⁵⁹ The chief priests, the elders, and the entire Council kept trying to find someone who could convincingly give false testimony of some wrong Jesus had done, so they could have Him put to death.

⁶⁰ But they couldn’t find any. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they couldn’t find any whose testimony would make sure He would be put to death.

⁶¹ Finally two men came forward and said, “This fellow claimed he could destroy the Temple of God and then rebuild it in three days.”

⁶² The High Priest then got up and addressed Jesus, “Well, do you have an answer? Have you anything at all to say about these charges against you?”

⁶³ But Jesus didn’t say a word. Then the High Priest challenged Him, “I command you in the name of the living God that you tell us if you are indeed the Messiah, the Son of God!”

⁶⁴ “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I will also inform you that in time to come, you will see the Son of Man both sitting at the right hand of the Almighty and coming back to earth on the clouds of Heaven.”

⁶⁵ When the High Priest heard this, he tore his

clothes and shouted, “He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look! You all heard his blasphemy! What is your verdict?”

⁶⁶ “He must die!” the crowd thundered back.

⁶⁷ Then they spit in His face and pounded Him with their fists.

⁶⁸ Others slapped Him with the palms of their hands, and then jeered, “Prophecy, you messiah! Who hit you that time?”

Peter’s Denial of Jesus

⁶⁹ Meanwhile, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard when a servant girl came up to him and said, “You were also with Jesus, the Galilean.”

⁷⁰ But he denied it in front of everyone there. “I don’t know what you’re talking about!” he said.

⁷¹ When he went out near the gate, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, “This man was also with Jesus from Nazareth.”

⁷² But again he denied it, this time with an oath, declaring, “I tell you, I haven’t even met the man!”

⁷³ After a short while, the men standing nearby went up to Peter and said, “You’ve got to be one of His followers, because even your accent is proof that you’re from Galilee.”

⁷⁴ At this he began to curse. Then he declared, “I swear to God, as I told you, I haven’t even met the man!” And immediately a rooster crowed.

⁷⁵ Then Peter remembered that Jesus had told him: “Before the rooster crows at dawn, you will have said three times that you don’t even know Me.” And he went out and cried bitterly.

A Hurry-up Early Morning Trial

27 Very early that morning, all the chief priests and elders of the people met together to decide what steps should be taken to make sure that Jesus was put to death.

² Then after tying Him up,^a they led Him away and turned Him over to Pontius Pilate, the governor.

The Traitor Hangs Himself

³ When Judas, the traitor, saw that Jesus had been sentenced to death, he was extremely sorry for what he had done, and brought the 30 silver coins back to the chief priests and elders.

⁴ “I have sinned by betraying a Man who never did anything wrong!” he blurted out.

27:24a He was symbolizing that he was washing his hands of the whole affair. He was a man in a responsible position who refused to take responsi-

ble action, thinking he could absolve himself of responsibility by his inaction. There’s a lesson here for each of us as well.

"That has nothing to do with us," they sneered. "That's your problem."

⁵Judas then violently hurled the silver coins to the floor of the Temple, and left, and went off and hanged himself.

⁶As the chief priests picked up the coins, they said, "It would be against our Law to put this money back into the treasury, because it's blood money."

⁷After considering the matter they decided to use the money to buy the field from which the potter had dug his clay, as a place to bury strangers.

⁸So to this very day that field is called the Field of Blood.

⁹This fulfilled what Jeremiah the prophet had prophesied, when he said:

And they took the 30 silver coins, the amount they had been willing to pay for Him (this was the miserable value placed on Him by the sons of Israel),

¹⁰and gave them in payment for the potter's field, as that's what the Lord had told me to do.^a

Pilate Questions Jesus

¹¹Meanwhile, Jesus stood before the governor. "Are you the King of the Jews?" the governor asked Him.

"Yes, what you say is true," Jesus replied.

¹²And yet, while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He gave them no answer.

¹³"Don't you hear all the charges they are making against you?" Pilate demanded.

¹⁴But Jesus didn't say even one word in answer to his question, which utterly amazed the governor.

Jesus is Sentenced to Death

¹⁵Now it was the custom during Passover for the governor to free whichever Jewish prisoner the people wanted freed.

¹⁶At that time, a well-known rebel named Barabbas was in jail.

¹⁷So when a crowd had gathered, Pilate asked the people, "Whom do you want me to release to you— Barabbas, or Jesus, who is called the Messiah?"

¹⁸He said this because he knew very well that the Jewish leaders had turned Jesus over to him because they were jealous of Him.

¹⁹But just then, as Pilate was sitting on the judge's bench, his wife sent him a note, saying,

"Don't have anything to do with condemning this good man, because I went thru extreme suffering last night in a dream about Him."

²⁰Meanwhile, as Pilate was receiving the note and reading it, the chief priests and elders were convincing the crowd to ask for the release of Barabbas and to have Jesus put to death.

²¹So when Pilate again asked, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" the crowd shouted back,

"Barabbas!"

²²"What should I do, then, with Jesus, who is called the Messiah?" Pilate asked.

"Crucify^a him!" they all shouted.

²³"Why?" the governor demanded. "What wrong has He done?" But the crowd just kept shouting, even louder, "Crucify him! Crucify^a him!"

²⁴When Pilate realized he was getting nowhere with them, but that instead he was about to have a riot on his hands, he took a basin of water and washed his hands^a in front of the crowd, saying, "I refuse to have anything to do with killing this innocent man. It's now up to you what you do with him."

²⁵"Yes, you can place the blame for His bloody death on us and on our children!" someone shouted. And that whole mob shouted their agreement.

²⁶So he released Barabbas to them. But he ordered that Jesus be whipped,^a after which he turned Him over to the soldiers to be crucified.

The Soldiers Scornfully Insult Jesus

²⁷The governor's soldiers then took Jesus into the Praetorium, where all the soldiers of the entire garrison gathered around Him.

²⁸First they took off His clothes and put a bright red robe on Him.

²⁹After twisting some thorn branches with long, sharp thorns into a crown, they put it on His head. Then in mockery, they put a slender pole in His right hand as a scepter. In further mockery, they knelt before Him and shouted, "Hail! King of the Jews!"

³⁰After repeatedly spitting on Him, they grabbed the pole out of His hand and beat Him on the head with it again and again.^a

³¹After they got tired of mocking Him, they took the red robe off Him and put His own clothes back on, and then led Him away to be crucified.

27:26a See John 19:1 note.

27:30a ... driving the long thorns ever painfully deeper into His skull.

27:35a Psalm 22:18. See John 19:23-24.

27:36a ... to make sure no one would come and take Him down.

27:46a Psalm 22:1.

27:51a Regarding the great curtain, see Luke

The Crucifixion

³²On the way they met a man from Cyrene, in Libya, named Simon. The soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross.

³³When they came to the place called Golgotha, which means The Place That Looks Like a Skull,

³⁴they gave Jesus vinegar wine to drink, mixed with a drug to ease the pain. But when Jesus tasted what it was, He refused to drink it.

³⁵Then they nailed Him to a cross. And as He hung there, they divided His clothing among them and threw dice for His robe, thus fulfilling David's prophecy:

They divided My clothing among them and threw dice for My robe.^a

³⁶Then they sat down, to keep guard over Him.^a

³⁷Above His head, they had placed a written notice of the charge against Him, which read:

**THIS IS JESUS
THE KING OF THE JEWS**

³⁸They had also nailed two robbers on crosses, one on each side of Jesus.

³⁹And the people passing by kept shaking their heads and hurling vicious insults at Him.

⁴⁰"So you're the one who could destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days!" they shouted. "If you're the Son of God, save yourself now and come down from the cross!"

⁴¹The chief priests, elders, and teachers of the Law were ridiculing Him in the same vile way.

⁴²"He saved others," they shouted, "but he can't save himself! If he's the King of Israel, as he claims, let him come down now from the cross, and we'll believe him.

⁴³"He says he trusts in God. Well, let God deliver him now if He wants him. After all, he claims, 'I am the Son of God!'"

⁴⁴Even the robbers who were crucified with Him

threw the same insults at Him.

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁵Then at noon, a most amazing thing happened. The whole country became enveloped in darkness, a condition which lasted until 3 in the afternoon!

⁴⁶It was about 3 o'clock when Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eli! Eli! lama sabachthani?" which means, **My God! My God! Why have You abandoned Me?**^a

⁴⁷When some of the people standing there heard Him, they said, "The man's calling for Elijah!"

⁴⁸Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with vinegar wine, put it on a stick, and lifted it up for Him to drink.

⁴⁹But the rest of them said, "Leave him alone! Let's see if Elijah really will come and save him."

⁵⁰When Jesus had cried out again with a loud voice, He yielded up His spirit and died.

⁵¹Immediately, there was a great earthquake! Rocks split apart, and the great curtain in the Temple separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was torn in two from top to bottom!^a

⁵²Tombs broke open, and the bodies of many godly people who had died came back to life.

⁵³After Jesus' resurrection, these people then left the cemetery and went into Jerusalem, where many people saw them.

⁵⁴When the captain, and the soldiers who were with him guarding Jesus, felt the severe earthquake and saw everything else that happened, they were extremely shocked, and said, "Without a doubt, this Man really was the Son of God!"

⁵⁵Many women who had come with Jesus from Galilee to be of help to Him were there, watching from a distance.

⁵⁶Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of James and John.

23:45 note.

28:1a There were evidently two Sabbath days here. This would be needful if Christ was to be dead three days and three nights, as He prophesied. And the word Sabbath here is plural in the Greek text.

God had commanded that several special Sabbaths be observed each year in Israel, in addition to the regular Sabbaths. The Day of Atonement, the 10th day of the 7th month, was a special Sabbath. Leviticus 16:29-31; 23:26-32. The Feast of Trumpets, the 1st day of the 7th month, was a special Sabbath. Leviticus 23:23-25.

The Passover was observed after sundown on the

14th day of the first Israeli month (Nisan). Leviticus 23:5. The very next day, the 15th of Nisan, was always a special Sabbath. That was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It was an extra Sabbath they were commanded to observe. Leviticus 23:6-7.

So what evidently happened was that Jesus ate the Passover in the beginning hours of the 14th of Nisan, as the Jewish day begins at sundown. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon of the same day, He (the Lamb of God) died on the cross.

He must have been crucified on a Thursday. The special Sabbath (the first day of the Feast of Unleav-

Jesus Buried in Joseph's Tomb

⁵⁷In the late afternoon, Joseph, a rich man from Arimathea who had also become a follower of Jesus,

⁵⁸went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. And Pilate ordered that it be given to him.

⁵⁹After taking the body down, Joseph wrapped it in a clean linen cloth.

⁶⁰Then he laid it in his own new tomb that he had carved out of a wall of rock, and rolled a large stone in front of the entrance, and left.

⁶¹Mary Magdalene and the other Mary had been there, sitting across from the tomb, watching.

The Tomb Sealed and Guarded

⁶²The next day, the day after the day of Sabbath preparations, the chief priests and Pharisees went together to see Pilate.

⁶³"Sir," they said, "we remember what that deceiver said while he was alive. He declared, 'After three days, I will come back to life again.'"

⁶⁴"So please order the tomb to be securely sealed and carefully guarded until after the third day. Otherwise, his followers may come at night, steal his body, and then announce to the people that he has risen from the dead. In that event, the last deception would be worse than the first."

⁶⁵"Your request for a guard is granted," Pilate replied. "Go and make it as secure as you can."

⁶⁶So they left, and secured the tomb by putting a seal on the stone and leaving soldiers to watch it.

The Resurrection

28 When the Sabbath days^a had ended, and as Sunday morning began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to look at the tomb.

²Suddenly there was a violent earthquake, caused by an angel of the Lord who came down from Heaven and rolled the stone away from the door of the tomb, and then sat on it.

³His appearance was as brilliant and striking as

lightning. And his clothes were as white as snow.

⁴The soldiers guarding the tomb were so shaken up with fear when they saw him, that they fainted and appeared to be dead.

⁵But the angel spoke to the women. "Don't be afraid," he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified."

⁶"But He is not here, because He has risen from the dead, just as He said He would. Come on in and see the place where He was lying."

⁷"Now run and tell His followers that He is risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. You will see Him there. Now I have told you the message I was sent to give you."

⁸So they immediately left the tomb, after being badly frightened, but also now filled with great joy! And they ran to bring the news to His followers.

⁹But as they were on their way—suddenly, Jesus, Himself, met them. "Rejoice!" He said.

Dropping to their knees, they held Him by His feet and worshiped Him.

¹⁰Then Jesus spoke to them. "Don't be afraid. But go and tell My brothers to go to Galilee, and they will see Me there."

The Guards Agree to Lie

¹¹While they were on their way, some of the soldiers who had been guarding the tomb went into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened.

¹²When the chief priests had gotten together with the elders and considered the matter, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money.

¹³"You are to say," they were told, "'His followers came at night and stole him away while we were asleep.'"

¹⁴"If the governor hears about your sleeping, we'll pacify him somehow, and keep you out of trouble."

¹⁵So they took the money and did as they were told. And the report they spread is the report that's being spread among the Jews to this very day.

ened Bread), the 15th of Nisan, was the next day (Friday). That was then followed by the regular Sabbath, making the two Sabbaths, resulting in Jesus being dead parts of three days and three whole nights.

Mention is made in John 19:31 that the Sabbath of the next day was a *special* Sabbath.

And further proof that Jesus died on Thursday: The Sunday afternoon after the crucifixion as two of Jesus' followers were on their way to Emmaus,

they stated that it *had now been three days since Jesus died*. Luke 24:21. If He had died on Friday, it would have been only two days since He died.

28:18a ... *by My Father*, ...

28:19a This commission now becomes ours to fulfill—to reach everyone in our time. To be righteous, we must do everything that God calls us to do. Even if we cannot achieve perfection in this obedience, it must nevertheless be our sincere intention and supreme aim to do so.

The Great Commission

¹⁶Then the eleven followers went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.

¹⁷When they saw Him, they worshiped Him. But some still couldn't believe it was really Jesus.

¹⁸Then Jesus came over to them and said, "My Father has given Me unlimited power and authority^a in Heaven and on earth.

¹⁹"So I want you to go now to everyone in every nation and teach them to continue to study and

take careful note of all that I have taught you.^a Then baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit all who believe and accept what you taught them.^b

²⁰"And you must teach them that they must obey everything that I have commanded you.^a And listen! I will always be with you, even to the very end of the age."^b So be it!

28:19b Mark 16:15-16.

28:20a Obeying His commands is not optional for those who desire to inherit eternal life. It is an essential aspect of saving faith. There is no saving faith apart from obedience. Romans 2:1-10; 6:16; Hebrews 5:9. The obedience of even the most godly Christian will be imperfect; but even though imperfect, the intention to fully obey must nevertheless be real. Luke 6:46-49; John 3:36; 14:21-23; 15:8-10, 13-14; James 1:22; 2 Peter 1:8-11; 1 John 2:3-5.

28:18-20b These three verses contain what is called the Great Commission. This commission was not given only to the eleven followers of Christ. They are not living now, so they could not be reaching out to those who are alive today. The commission is to all of Christ's followers. We are all to be missionaries. All of us are to be reaching out to those who still need to hear the Great News. If we are truly born again, we will indeed be reaching out to others. See Romans 10:9-10.

God was so concerned about our lost condition that He sent His Son in the person of Jesus Christ to suffer and die for our sins. And Jesus was so concerned that He was willing to come from Heaven to be our Savior. We must likewise be intensely concerned for those who are still lost and need the message of God's love. Without God's forgiveness, and their conversion from living in sin to living in obedience to God, their future is a tragic and frightful one. Therefore, we are responsible to go to them with what we know, and learn everything else we can so that we will have the message of life to give them.

He's With Us—With Power!

Then notice that Jesus informs us that He has been given unlimited power by the Father. And in the last part of this commission, He promises He will always be with us. He will always be with us with unlimited power! With such promises, we should be willing to go forth boldly, knowing that we have Jesus with us and that He has all the power necessary to make it possible for us to effectively witness to those who are still lost.

And notice that the command is that we teach these new converts to obey *everything* that Jesus commanded His apostles to obey. Christ's message is still in force today. His commands are just as binding upon us today as they were upon the apostles.

Also, each convert is to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Don't lightly regard these commands from the Lord. It is the responsibility of every one of us to go to others with the message of life. Just a few suggestions: It is not necessary to try to move the conversation around to spiritual things in order to talk to people about the Lord. Many times the best way is to just break right into a conversation and ask the question, "Hey, are you planning on being there?" Or, "Are you planning on making it to Heaven?" Or, "Do you know how to get to Heaven—for sure?" Or even ask the question, "How does your future look?" Another question you could ask is, "What do you think of Jesus Christ?" Or, "In your opinion, what is the greatest consideration in life?"

The hardest part about witnessing for Jesus is getting started. Any one of these questions, or some other question, will enable you to get started in the conversation. Once the door is opened, you can talk to that person about his or her need. Don't wait for opportunities to witness, make opportunities! And you can make opportunities by asking such questions.

If you find it impossible to begin witnessing, apply James 5:16 here. *The fervent, persevering prayer of a person who is right with God is powerfully effective, and accomplishes great things.* Go to God in desperation in fervent prayer, and He will help you and fill you with His Spirit, who has been sent for this very purpose. Luke 11:13.

Granted, it is not always wise to use the bold approach. With neighbors, friends, relatives, etc., it is wise to use what is called Friendship Evangelism. Your very life should and must be a witness. Don't hide the light you have; let it shine, by your love for them, and by the things you say and do. But there comes a time when you must speak out for the Lord

if the subject has not come up naturally.

On the other hand, there are the many you come into contact with whom you may never see again.

These are the ones you need to speak out to boldly. You may be the only one who will ever speak to them about their need. Don't fail them! And don't fail the Lord!

Don't Worry!

Don't worry about questions or arguments that may come up for which you have no answers. Let those questions come up, and then somehow find the answer. Someone will have the answer for you, or God in some special way will bring the answer to you. Then the next time that question or argument comes up you will have the answer.

The more you witness, the more answers you will have. You learn by doing. So we can all be missionaries right where we are, wherever that may be. Begin now to obey Christ by witnessing to everyone possible! The day of reckoning will soon be here. Will you be found faithful?

Find good printed material that you can leave with those to whom you witness. In that way you will have a continuing contact with them as they read what you left them. Getting them to read the Bible or the New testament will be the greatest material you can get them to read.

What does it mean to be born again?

Whenever you ask someone if they are planning on making it to Heaven, you should follow up whatever answer they give, by asking, "Are you born again? You know, Jesus said that in order to enter Heaven you must be born again. In fact, He said that unless you are born again you will never see Heaven. So if you expect to be in Heaven you must be born again." John 3:1-21.

One of the most important questions you will need to ask folks when witnessing to them is, "Are you born again?" You may be surprised at the many who will claim to be a Christian, or they may say they attend such and such a church, but when you ask them if they are born again, many will admit they are not. They may not know what it means to be born again, but they know they are not right

with God, and are not living to please Him.

Then explain to them that the Bible reveals that every single person on earth has been selfishly living to please himself, instead of God, and that the wages for such living is death—the second death. See Romans 3:23; 6:23; Revelation 20:11-15. To be born again means that you sincerely make the decision, with God's help, to turn from living to please yourself to now live to please God. Another way of saying that is, "To be born again means: *To unconditionally surrender all that you know about yourself to all that you know about God.*"

Are you born again? As we have emphasized in the notes throughout these pages, it is not enough to merely believe the facts about Jesus, that He is the Son of God, that He suffered and died for our sins. We must also believe what He taught, and He taught the necessity of absolute obedience to God. That must be our sincere aim and intent, even if we are not always able to perfectly fulfill our intentions.

Even when a person claims to be born again, probe, to make sure that they really are. You can ask, "In your understanding, what does it mean to be born again?" Their answer will usually tell you whether or not they really are. So many people have a false hope. Do all that you can to help them see the truth! Pray much for God's guidance!

We must go!

We **must** go to everyone everywhere and share the Great News with them. We are not to wait for them to come to us! "1. Christ commands us to go. 2. The message belongs to them as well as to us. 3. Most of them are willing to listen to what we have to say. 4. We will be condemned if we keep the message from them." Edited from *R. Brewin in The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*.

See Appendixes 212, page 477, and 226, page 486 for further help and instructions about witnessing.

Stop piling up valuable material things for yourselves here on earth, where every imaginable kind of moth and corrosion can destroy them, and where thieves can break in and steal them from you.

²⁰“Instead, pile up investments for yourselves in Heaven. No disasters of any kind can destroy them there, and no thieves can break in and steal them.

²¹“Because where your investments are, that’s where your heart will be also.

²²“Your eyes act as windows for your body. If they are clear and in good condition, your whole body will be flooded with light.

²³“But if your eyes have degenerated and are now useless, your whole body will be full of darkness. In the same way, if the eyes of your understanding, which should be giving you light in your soul, are keeping you in darkness instead, consider how dreadful that darkness is.

²⁴“You cannot serve two masters, because either you will hate one of them and love the other, or you will serve one with zeal and have little or no time for the other. You cannot be zealously occupied in serving both God and money.”

—Matthew 6:19-24. See also Luke 16:9, and the note.

So then, if you will speak out and share with others what you know and believe about me, I will speak to My father in Heaven about you. I will tell Him that you are one who belongs to Me.

³³“But if you ignore or disown Me when with others—I will also disown you before my Father in Heaven.

—Matthew 10:32-33.

THE GREAT NEWS

as reported by

MARK

This is the amazing story of the Great News about Jesus the Messiah,^a the Son of God.

²Hundreds of years before Jesus came to earth in human form, God had foretold thru His prophets that someone would come on the scene to announce the coming of His Son and prepare the people of Israel to receive Him. God spoke thru His prophets Malachi and Isaiah, saying to His Son:

Look, I am sending My messenger ahead of You.

He will prepare the way for You.^a

³He will cry out in the wilderness,

**PREPARE FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD!
STRAIGHTEN OUT YOUR WAYS FOR HIM!^a**

⁴This was fulfilled when John the Baptizer appeared on the scene, baptizing people in a wilderness area. He told the people, "God will forgive your sins if you will turn from your sinning and openly declare that you have done so by being baptized^a!"

⁵Immense crowds of people from Jerusalem and from all over Judea went out to him. And he baptized in the Jordan River all who declared openly that they were giving up their sinning.^a

⁶John was dressed in rough clothes made from camels' hair, and he wore a wide leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey.

⁷The message he continued to preach was, "Very soon now, Someone will come who is far greater than I am. I'm not worthy even to kneel down and untie the straps of His sandals.

⁸"Although I baptized you in water, He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit."

The Baptism of Jesus

⁹After John had been preaching for some time, Jesus came down from the town of Nazareth in the

province of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan River.

¹⁰Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, John saw the heavens torn open and the Holy Spirit coming down like a dove and coming to rest upon Jesus!^a

¹¹Then a voice came out of the heavens, saying, "You are My Son whom I love so dearly. I have found such great delight in You."

¹²Immediately after that, the Holy Spirit compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness.

¹³And He was out in the wilderness with the wild animals for 40 days, being constantly tempted by Satan to sin. Afterward the angels came and waited on Him.^a

Jesus Calls Four Fishermen

¹⁴After John was put in jail, Jesus went to Galilee and preached the Great News about the Kingdom of God.

¹⁵"The promise God made so long ago has now been fulfilled!" He told the people. "The Kingdom of God has now come very close to you! Turn from your sinning and believe in^a the Great News!"

¹⁶One day, as He was walking along the shore of Lake Galilee, He saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were commercial fishermen and were throwing a large net out into the lake.

¹⁷"Come along with Me," Jesus invited them, "and I'll teach you how to harvest people instead of fish."

¹⁸They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

¹⁹When Jesus had walked a little farther up the beach, He saw two more brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were in their boat, mending their nets.

1:1a Or *the Christ*. See Matthew 1:16,18a note.

1:2a Malachi 3:1.

1:3a Isaiah 40:3. This message is also needed today, when we are expecting His second coming very soon.

1:4a Literally *immersed*. See Matthew 3:11.

1:5a This is the primary meaning of the words ordinarily translated *confessed their sins*.

1:10a John 1:32-34.

1:13a Evidently angels fed Him after He had fasted 40 days, according to Matthew 4:1-11.

1:15a Meaning—*Put your whole trust in the Great News and take all necessary action to obtain its promises and escape God's judgment*. See Matthew 7:13-14 and notes. For an explanation of the Great News read Appendix 247, page 520, entitled, *The Amazing Story of God*.

²⁰When He invited them to come with Him too, they immediately left their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired men and went with Him.

An Evil Spirit Driven Out

²¹Then they all went into Capernaum, and the next Sabbath,^a Jesus went to the synagogue and began to teach.

²²The people were utterly shocked and amazed at the way He taught.^a He didn't teach at all like the teachers of the Law that God gave Moses,^b but as One who had great authority.

²³Suddenly a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit began screaming,

²⁴"Leave us alone! What business do You have being here with us, You Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are! You're the Holy One^a from God!"

²⁵Immediately Jesus rebuked the spirit, commanding him, "Keep quiet, and come out of the man!"

²⁶The evil spirit let out a piercing scream and threw the man into violent convulsions, and then came out of him.

²⁷All the people were so amazed that they kept talking about it among themselves, asking, "What is this? Some new kind of powerful teaching? Why, He speaks with such authority that even the evil spirits obey Him."

²⁸News about Him spread quickly thruout the whole region of Galilee.

Jesus Heals Many People

²⁹When they left the synagogue, Jesus, along with James and John, went with Simon and Andrew straight to their home.

³⁰When they arrived, they found that Simon's mother-in-law had a fever and was lying down, so they told Jesus about her.

³¹He went to her, took her by the hand and helped her up, and immediately the fever left her! She then began to prepare a meal for them.

³²That evening after sunset,^a the people began bringing Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed.

³³Finally the whole town was gathered at the door!

³⁴He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and drove out many demons. But He wouldn't let the demons say anything because they knew who He was.

Preaching in Galilee

³⁵Very early the next morning while it was still dark, Jesus got up and left the house and went to a deserted area to pray.

³⁶When Simon and the others got up, they went out to look for Him.

³⁷When they finally found Him, they said, "Everyone is looking for You!"

³⁸"Let's go into the nearby towns, so I can preach there too," He replied. "That's the reason I've come."

³⁹So He traveled all over Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving demons out of people.

Jesus Heals a Leper

⁴⁰One day a man with leprosy came to Him, and kneeling down in front of Him he pleaded with Him for help. "If You want to," he said, "You are able to heal me."

⁴¹Jesus was deeply stirred with pity for the man, and, reaching out His hand and touching him, He said, "I do want to. Be healed!"

⁴²Immediately, as soon as He said that, the leprosy left the man, and he was healed!

⁴³Jesus then promptly sent him away, after sternly telling him:

⁴⁴"Listen, make sure you don't say anything to anyone about this. But go straight to the priest and show him that you are now healed, and present the offering for your healing that Moses commanded,^a as a testimony to everyone that you have indeed been healed."

⁴⁵But when the man left, he told everyone what had happened, and he continued to spread the news, until Jesus could no longer enter the city openly. He had to stay in unpopulated areas. Still the people kept coming to Him from everywhere.

Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man

2 Several days later, Jesus went back to Capernaum. And the news soon got around that He

1:21a Saturday, the Jewish day of rest.

1:22a The Rabbis quoted other Rabbis, and would never think of contradicting other Rabbis. But Jesus had no Rabbi. He *was* the Rabbi.

1:22b Exodus 19:1 to 31:18.

1:24a The Messiah, the Christ. Daniel 9:25-26.

1:32a They came after their Sabbath had ended. The Jewish Sabbath is from sunset Friday evening to sunset Saturday evening. Actually, the Jewish teachers taught that the Sabbath officially ended when three medium-sized stars became visible after sundown.

was back home.

²He was immediately deluged with so many people that there wasn't room for any more. Many of those still outside couldn't even get near the door.

³As He was preaching God's message to them, four men came to Him carrying a paralyzed man on a stretcher.

⁴When they couldn't even get near Him because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof right over His head. And when they had broken thru, they lowered the stretcher on which the paralyzed man was lying.^a

⁵When Jesus saw how strong and determined their faith was, He said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven."

⁶But some of the teachers of the Law were sitting there, thinking to themselves,

⁷"How can this man dare to blaspheme like that! Only God can forgive sins—no one else!"

⁸Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so He said to them, "Why are you coming to such conclusions in your hearts?"

⁹"Which is easier to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Get up, and fold up your stretcher and walk,?"

¹⁰"But so you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins ..." He then said to the paralytic,

¹¹"I command you, 'Get up, then pick up your stretcher, and be on your way home!'"

¹²And he got right up, picked up his stretcher, and walked out of there in full view of everyone! Utterly astounded, the people praised God and said, "We've never seen anything like this before!"

The Calling of Levi

¹³Then Jesus again went out by the lake, and there He preached to the crowds that continued to gather around Him.

¹⁴Later, as He was walking along, He saw Levi^a, the son of Alphaeus, sitting in the tax collector's booth. "Come along with Me," Jesus invited him. And without hesitation, he got right up and went with Him.

¹⁵Still later, Jesus and His followers were having

dinner at Levi's house. A large number of tax collectors and other sinners were also there, because many of them had been following Jesus, and they had also been invited to the dinner.

¹⁶But when the Pharisees and teachers of the Law saw Him eating with these outcast tax collectors^a and other sinners, they asked His followers, "Why does he eat and drink with these crooked tax collectors and all these other notorious sinners?"

¹⁷Jesus heard them, and He responded, "Those who are well don't need a doctor, but the sick do. I haven't come to call those who consider themselves so godly that they have no need of further help. I'm here to call sinners to turn from their sinning to living lives of obedience to God."

A Question About Fasting

¹⁸On one occasion, the followers of John the Baptist and the followers of the Pharisees had given up eating for a time. And they went to Jesus and said, "How is it that John's followers and the followers of the Pharisees fast, but Your followers never do?"

¹⁹"Would you expect the guests of the bridegroom at a wedding party to refuse to eat while the bridegroom is with them?" Jesus replied. "They won't fast as long as they have the Bridegroom with them.

²⁰"But the time will come when the Bridegroom will be taken from them. They will indeed fast after that happens.

²¹"No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, because later the new patch will shrink and pull away from the old cloth and make a bigger hole.

²²"Neither does anyone pour new wine into used wineskins. Because the new wine would burst those wineskins, the wine would be lost, and the skins ruined. New wine must be put into new wineskins."

A Question About the Sabbath

²³One Sabbath, as Jesus and His followers were walking by some grain fields, His followers began breaking off some heads of wheat and eating the

1:44a Leviticus 14:1-32.

2:4a Oriental houses were constructed with flat roofs accessible by outside stairs. So access thru the roof was possible as described here. Roofs were places of relaxation and social exchange.

2:8a Their hearts (the emotional centers of their beings) were the cause of their conclusions, not merely their minds. They were jealous, and were

looking for ways to discredit Him. See Matthew 27:18.

2:14a Also called Matthew. Matthew 9:9.

2:15-16a Israel was a captive nation at this time, paying taxes to Rome. And Jews who were willing to collect these taxes and get their cut were thoroughly despised by other Jews.

grain.

²⁴“Look!” the Pharisees challenged Jesus. “Why are your followers harvesting grain on the Sabbath? That’s unlawful!”

²⁵“Haven’t you ever read what David did when he and the men with him were hungry and in need of food?” Jesus replied.

²⁶“When Abiathar was High Priest, David went into the house of God and ate the sacred bread. Only the priests are allowed by the Law to eat this bread, but David even gave some to his men.

²⁷“The Sabbath was made for the benefit of man,” Jesus continued, “not man for the benefit of the Sabbath.

²⁸“And I, the Son of Man, am the Lord who decides what can and what cannot be done even on the Sabbath.”

Jesus Heals a Shriveled Hand

3 Another time when Jesus entered the synagogue, a man with a shriveled hand was there.

²Some of the Jewish religious leaders continued to watch Him closely, to see if He would heal this man, so they could accuse Him of working on the Sabbath.

³So Jesus said to the disabled man, “Step out into the middle of the room.”^a

⁴Then He asked those who were carefully watching Him, “Does our Jewish Law allow us to do good on the Sabbath, or are we to do evil^b? Are we to save life, or kill^b?” But no one said a word.

⁵So after looking around at them in anger, but also deeply grief-stricken by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And as he did so, it was restored! It was now just as well and strong as the other.

⁶When this happened, the Pharisees immediately went out and began plotting against Him with the Herodians,^a as to how they might destroy Him.

A Crowd by the Lake

⁷But Jesus withdrew with His followers to the lake. As the news had continued to spread about the many things He was doing, great crowds had converged on Him from Galilee,

⁸from Jerusalem and thruout Judea, from east of the Jordan River, from Tyre and Sidon, and even from Idumea.

⁹Because the crowd was so great, He told His followers to get a boat ready for Him to sit in on the lake, to keep the crowd from crushing Him.

¹⁰He had healed so many people that all the others who had various diseases and sicknesses kept pressing forward to touch Him.

¹¹And whenever evil spirits saw Him, they would cause those they were controlling to fall down before Him, and cry out, “You are the Son of God!”

¹²But He sternly commanded them not to reveal who He was.^a

Jesus Chooses Twelve Apostles

¹³Then Jesus went up into the hills. Later He called to Himself the men He wanted.^a

¹⁴When they came to Him, He appointed twelve to be constantly with Him, whom He would also send out to preach.

¹⁵He would also give them power^a to heal those with various diseases and to drive out demons.

¹⁶He chose Simon, to whom He added the name Peter;

¹⁷Zebedee’s two sons, James and John, whom He called Boanerges, which means, “Sons of Thunder”;

¹⁸Andrew; Phillip; Bartholomew; Matthew; Thomas; James, the son of Alphaeus; Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite;

¹⁹and Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Him.

Jesus and Beelzebul

²⁰Then they *came down from the hills and*^a went into a house. Again the crowds came, so many that Jesus and His followers couldn’t even eat.

²¹When His family heard about it, they tried to take custody of Him, because some were saying, “He’s out of his mind!”

²²And the teachers of the Jewish Law who had come from Jerusalem said, “He’s possessed by Beelzebul^a! He’s able to drive out demons because the king of the demons is doing it thru him.”

3:3a ... *where everyone can see you.*

3:4a ... *by refusing to do the good we are capable of doing?*

3:4b ... *by refusing to save the life we are capable of saving?*

3:6a The Herodians were not a religious sect, but a political party supporting Herod’s dynasty, which had been created by Caesar. The Pharisees regard-

ed them as untrue to their religion and country. But here we see them banding together with their bitter enemies against Christ as a common enemy.

3:12a He didn’t need or want their testimony.

3:13a Luke 6:12-13.

3:15a Matthew 10:1.

3:20a Implied.

3:22a See Matthew 10:25 note.

²³ So Jesus called them over to Him and spoke to them in parables, saying, “Why would Satan drive out Satan?”

²⁴ “If a nation is divided and fights itself, that nation won’t last long.

²⁵ “And if a family is divided and they fight among themselves, that family won’t last either.

²⁶ “So if Satan’s kingdom is divided and he’s fighting himself, his kingdom will fall apart and come to an end.

²⁷ “On the other hand, no one can enter a strong man’s house and rob him of what he has, unless he first of all ties the man up. Then he can take whatever he wants.

²⁸ “I tell you the truth: You can be forgiven all kinds of sin—even all kinds of abusive language and cursing.

²⁹ “But if anyone curses or speaks against the Holy Spirit, he will never be forgiven! He is guilty of a sin that will bring eternal judgment.”

³⁰ He said this because they were saying, “He’s possessed by an evil spirit.”

Jesus’ Mother and Brothers

³¹ Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside they sent in a message, asking Him to come out to them.

³² A crowd was sitting around Him when He was told, “Master, Your mother and brothers are outside asking for You.”

³³ “And just who is My mother?” he replied. “And who are My brothers?”

³⁴ Then looking around at the people sitting around Him, He said, “Look! Here are My mother and My brothers.

³⁵ “Because whoever does what God wants him to do is My brother, My sister, and My mother.”^a

Four Kinds of Soil

4 Another time when Jesus began to teach by the lake, such a large crowd gathered around Him that He got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while the crowd stood along the shore.

² He then taught them many things using parables.

³ “Listen!” He said. “A farmer went out to scatter

seed in a field.

⁴ “And it happened that as he scattered the seed, some fell on the hard path alongside the field, and the birds flew down and ate it.

⁵ “Some fell on a rocky area that had only a thin layer of soil on top of it. And because the soil was shallow and warm, the green stalks sprang up quickly.^a

⁶ “But they weren’t able to put their roots down,^a so when the hot sun came up they were scorched, and withered away.

⁷ “Some seed fell among thorns. And the thorns grew up and choked the good plants, so they didn’t produce any grain.

⁸ “But other seed fell on good soil. It sprang up and continued to grow, and finally produced a crop. Some produced 30, some 60, and some even 100 times as much as had been planted.”

⁹ Then He said, “Those of you who have been given ears for the purpose of hearing, listen!”

Why Jesus Used Parables

¹⁰ But when He was alone, some gathered around Him, together with the Twelve, and asked Him what He meant by the parable.

¹¹ “You have been given the privilege of understanding the secrets of the Kingdom of God,” He replied. “But to those outside the kingdom, all they hear is the parable.

¹² “The reason is, as the Scripture says:

While they do look, and can see, they are never able to gain knowledge. And while they do listen, and are able to hear, still they are never able to understand. If they did, they would be converted,^a and they would receive forgiveness for their sins.^b

¹³ “Do you mean that you don’t understand this simple parable?” He then asked them. “If that’s the case, how can you understand any of the other parables I’ll be giving?”

¹⁴ “The farmer is anyone who is sowing God’s message.

¹⁵ “The hearts of some people are like the hard path. They hear the message, but because of their hard hearts, Satan is able to come along immediately and take away the message that had been sown in their hearts.

3:35a What does this say about you, as to your relationship to Jesus?

4:5a ... *because the sun could heat the thin soil on the rock more quickly than the other soil.*

4:6a ... *to get any moisture or nourishment, because of the hard rock, ...*

4:12a They would then turn from their sinning

and begin to obey God. Notice that one must be converted from living to please oneself to living to please God if one is to receive God’s forgiveness for past sins. Unless there is this true conversion there is no forgiveness.

4:12b Isaiah 6:9-10.

¹⁶ “By using the same method of interpretation, those who received the seed on the rocky area are those who hear the message and immediately accept it joyfully.

¹⁷ “But since they don’t allow the message to take deep root in their hearts and lives, they last for only a short while. As soon as they’re given a hard time and are persecuted because of their faith in the message, they quickly fall away.

¹⁸ “Those who received the seed among thorns, are those who indeed continue to listen to the message,^a

¹⁹ “but because of their anxious concern about their earthly problems, and being deceived by desire to be rich and by desire for many other things—all of these take such possession of their lives that the message is choked, and it never produces any fruit.^a

²⁰ “But those who received the seed in good soil are those who continue to listen to the message and receive it with open hearts. These produce a crop for God—some 30, some 60, and some 100 times what had been planted.”^a

²¹ Then He said, “When you bring a lamp into a room, do you put it under a basket or a bed? No! You put it on a table.

²² “In the same way, whatever is now hidden will one day be revealed by the light. And whatever has been done in secret will then be exposed for everyone to see.

The Importance of Listening

²³ “If anyone has been given ears for the purpose of hearing, he must now listen!

²⁴ “You must continue to highly prize what you are hearing,” He continued. “Because to the extent that you put My words into practice and also share all that you learn with others, to that same extent you will be blessed with further truth and understanding. Also, to the extent that you continue to listen intently, to that same extent you will be given still more knowledge.

²⁵ “Because whoever continues to highly prize the knowledge he has, will be given more. But whoever does not highly prize what he has, even what he now has will be taken from him.”

Parable of the Growing Seed

²⁶ Then He said, “The Kingdom of God is like what happens when a farmer scatters seed on the soil.

²⁷ “Night and day, whether he sleeps or works, the seeds sprout and the stalks grow, even though he doesn’t know how they do it.

²⁸ “Because the soil produces the crops all by itself. First comes the tender stalk. Then the head forms. Then the full-grown grain finally forms in the head.

²⁹ “When the grain ripens, the farmer immediately cuts it down with the sickle, because harvest time has come.”

A Mustard Seed

³⁰ Then He continued, “To what else shall we liken the Kingdom of God? Or with what parable can we further describe it?

³¹ “It’s like what happens when a tiny mustard seed is planted in the ground. It’s the smallest of all seeds.

³² “But once it is planted, it grows up and becomes larger than all other garden plants. It shoots out branches so large that even the birds can perch in its shade.”^a

³³ As they were able to absorb them, He used many such parables to bring His message to the people.

³⁴ He didn’t say anything to the crowds without using parables. But when He was later alone with His followers, He explained everything to them.

Jesus Stops a Storm

³⁵ When evening came, Jesus said to His followers, “Let’s go across the lake.”

³⁶ So after Jesus dismissed the crowd, they took Him along in the boat just as He was,^a and several others followed Him in small boats.

³⁷ Suddenly a violent storm hit the lake. The wind became so fierce that it blew the waves into the boat until it was nearly full of water.

³⁸ But Jesus was in the back of the boat, asleep on a cushion. They frantically shook Him awake and shouted, “Teacher, don’t You care that we’re about to die?”

4:18a Such people even today go to church every Sunday and listen, but that’s about all they do.

4:19a Be sure to read John 15:1-6 here.

4:20a Where do you fit into this parable of Jesus? See Appendix 205, page 471.

4:32a This type of mustard plant is a tree that takes several years to mature. This resembles the

small seed of truth that is planted in a heart, which when nurtured over the years results in a mature Christian. It also resembles the Church of Christ, which began so small, and is now making its influence felt thruout the world. See Matthew 13:31 note.

4:36a He had been sitting in the boat teaching the

³⁹He then stood up and commanded the wind to stop blowing, and said to the waves, “Stop your violence! Be calm!” And the wind died down and the lake became perfectly calm.

⁴⁰“Why are you so fearful?” He asked them. “Do you still have no faith in Me?”

⁴¹They were totally awestruck, and said to one another, “Who is this Man? Why, even the wind and the waves obey Him!”

Jesus Frees a Man from Demons

5 When they arrived on the other side of the lake, in the country of the Gadarenes,

²Jesus had just gotten out of the boat, when a demon-possessed man came running up to Him from the burial caves nearby.

³This man lived in the caves, among the tombs.^a He was so wild that no one could keep him tied up, not even with chains.

⁴He had often been tied up with chains and leg irons, but he had ruthlessly torn the chains apart and smashed the iron shackles. No one was strong enough to control him.

⁵Day and night he constantly wandered among the tombs and in the hills, screaming and cutting himself with sharp stones.

⁶But when he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran up to Him and kneeled before Him.

⁷Jesus *immediately recognized the condition of the man and*^a commanded the demon within him, “Come out of the man, you evil spirit!”

⁸Whereupon it gave a loud shriek and screamed thru the man, “What are You planning to do with me, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God? I plead with You, swear to God You won’t torment me!”

⁹“What is your name?” Jesus then asked.

“My name is Legion,^a” the demon replied, “because there are so many of us in this man.”

¹⁰Again and again the demons begged Jesus not to send them out of the country.

¹¹Now on a nearby hillside, a large herd of pigs was feeding,

¹²and all the demons began pleading with Him, “Send us among the pigs, and let us go into them.”

¹³Immediately Jesus gave them permission. So the evil spirits all left the man and entered the pigs. And that herd of pigs, numbering about 2,000, ran madly down the steep bank and into the

lake, and drowned.

¹⁴At this the herdsmen ran into town, and told the people there, and also in the country, what had happened. So the people rushed out to see for themselves what had actually taken place.

¹⁵When they came to Jesus and saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons sitting there, now in his right mind and dressed, they were frightened.

¹⁶Then those who had been eye-witnesses told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man, and about the pigs.

¹⁷Upon hearing all this, the people began to urge Jesus to leave the area.

¹⁸When He got into the boat to leave, the man who had been freed from the demons begged Him, “Let me go with You!”

¹⁹But Jesus wouldn’t let him. He said, “Go home to your family and friends, and tell them about the great things the Lord has done for you, and how He took pity on you.”

²⁰So the man left and began telling people thru-out Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him. And they were all amazed.

A Dead Girl and a Sick Woman

²¹When Jesus had again crossed by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around Him. So He stayed by the lake for awhile.

²²Then Jairus, one of the officials of the local synagogue, came looking for Him. When he found Him, he fell to his knees right in front of Him.

²³“My little girl is at the brink of death! Please come and lay Your hands on her,” he earnestly pleaded with Him, “so that she may be healed, and she will live.”

²⁴So Jesus went with him. And a large crowd followed, pressing in close.

²⁵In that crowd was a woman who had suffered a severe bleeding problem for 12 years.

²⁶She had suffered a great deal thru many treatments under various doctors, and had spent all she had. Still she was no better, but rather had grown worse.

²⁷When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind Him in the crowd and merely touched His prayer shawl,^a

²⁸because she had kept saying to herself, “If I can

people for several hours. But now, without any preparation—taking no food or extra clothing—they started across the lake, taking Him *just as He was*.

5:3a The tombs were usually dug into the walls of

caves, and therefore, afforded some shelter.

5:7a Implied.

5:9a A legion in the Roman army consisted of a total of 6,000 soldiers.

just touch His clothes, I'll get well."

²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped, and she sensed in her body that she was healed.

³⁰ Aware at once that power had gone out of Him, Jesus turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched My clothes?"

³¹ "With all these people pressing in on You," His followers protested, "are You really asking, 'Who touched Me?'"

³² But when He kept looking around to see who had done this, the woman became frightened.

³³ And trembling, knowing what had happened to her, she came and fell to her knees before Him and told Him the whole truth.

³⁴ "Daughter," Jesus said to her, "your faith in Me has made you well. Go in peace, and be completely healed of your illness."

³⁵ While He was still speaking, some men came from the home of Jairus, and said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

³⁶ But when Jesus heard the report, He immediately said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid! Just keep on believing."

³⁷ Then He permitted no one to follow Him any farther except Peter, James, and James' brother John.

³⁸ When He came to the home of Jairus, He found the whole place in an uproar, full of weeping and loud wailing.

³⁹ When He went inside, He asked the people, "Why are you weeping and carrying on like this? The child isn't dead; she's only sleeping."

⁴⁰ But they couldn't believe He would say such a thing at such a time, and they contemptuously laughed at Him in scorn. So He sent them all out. Then He took the child's father and mother and those who were with Him, and entered the room where the 12-year-old child was lying.

⁴¹ Then taking her by the hand, He said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is Aramaic for, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"

⁴² And immediately she got up and started walking around. Her parents were totally overwhelmed and ecstatic.

⁴³ But Jesus gave them strict orders to tell no one about this.^a Then He told them to give the girl something to eat.

Jesus is Rejected at Nazareth

6 Upon leaving there, Jesus and His followers went to Nazareth, His hometown.

² On the Sabbath, He began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard Him were utterly amazed. "Where did he get all this?" they questioned. "And what kind of wisdom is this that's been given him, that he's able to perform such great things with his hands!"

³ "Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? Don't his sisters live here with us?" And they deeply resented Him.

⁴ But Jesus told them, "A prophet is respected everywhere, except in his hometown and among his relatives and family members."

⁵ Although He wasn't able to do any great miracles there,^a He did lay His hands on a few sick people and healed them.

⁶ He was amazed at their unwillingness to believe. So He continued His teaching in the surrounding towns.

Sending Out the Twelve

⁷ Then He called the Twelve to Him, and sent them out by twos, and gave them authority and power over evil spirits.

⁸ "Don't take anything with you as you travel, except a walking stick," He told them, "no bag for provisions, no bread, no money in your wallets.

⁹ "Wear sandals, but don't take along any extra clothing.

¹⁰ "Whenever people welcome you into their home, stay there until you leave the area," He continued.

¹¹ "But whenever people refuse to offer you hospitality or listen to your message, when you leave there, shake the very dust from off your feet as a warning to them. I tell you the truth, God will show more mercy to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than to the people of that city or home.

¹² So they went out and preached that people should turn from their sin and obey God.

¹³ They also drove out many demons, and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

5:27a See notes for Matthew 9:20.

5:43a For the reason see Matthew 12:16 note.

6:5a It was not that He couldn't, but that He chose not to because of their unbelief.

6:18a Leviticus 18:6,16; 20:21.

6:20a But he did not do the one thing that was

demanded of him — to turn from his sinning. He was like those today who treat ministers kindly, but refuse to believe the Great News about Jesus and forsake their sins. And, like those who believe in Jesus as Savior, but refuse to obey Him as Lord.

6:30a An apostle is a messenger.

The Death of John the Baptizer

¹⁴ Because Jesus' name had become well known, King Herod heard about Him as well. "It's John the Baptizer, risen from the dead," Herod said. "That's why he can do all these miracles."

¹⁵ Others said, "It's Elijah!" Still others said, "He's a new prophet, but he's just like the prophets of olden times."

¹⁶ But when Herod heard these opinions, he said, "No, this is John. I had his head cut off, but now he's come back to life!"

¹⁷ Herod himself had ordered John's arrest. He'd had him tied up and thrown in jail. He did this to please Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married.

¹⁸ He had imprisoned John because John had repeatedly told him, "You have broken God's Law^a by taking your brother's wife!"

¹⁹ In fury Herodias had lashed out against him and wanted him killed, but she wasn't able to because of Herod.

²⁰ Herod continually feared John. He knew he was an upright man, totally dedicated to God, and he protected him. When Herod heard John, he did many good things^a and enjoyed listening to him.

²¹ Finally, Herodias got her chance. On his birthday, Herod gave a banquet for his high officials, chief military officials, and the leading citizens of Galilee.

²² The daughter of Herodias came in and danced for them, and Herod and his guests were so pleased that the king told the girl, "Ask me for whatever you want, and I'll give it to you."

²³ With an oath he further promised, "I'll give you whatever you ask me, up to one-half of my kingdom."

²⁴ So she went out and asked her mother, "What shall I ask for?"

"Ask him for the head of John the Baptizer," her mother replied.

²⁵ She hurried back in, went up to the king, and said, "I want you to immediately give me the head of John the Baptizer on a platter."

²⁶ The king was greatly distressed that she'd made this request, but because of his oath and because all the people there had heard him, he couldn't bring himself to refuse her.

²⁷ So he at once ordered an executioner to bring

John's head. And the man went and beheaded John in jail.

²⁸ He brought his head back on a platter and gave it to the girl, who gave it to her mother.

²⁹ When John's followers heard about it, they came and took his body away and laid it in a tomb.

Jesus Feeds More than 5,000 People

³⁰ Following their preaching tour, the apostles^a gathered around Jesus and gave Him a full report of all they had done and what they had taught the people.

³¹ "Now I want you to go with Me to a remote area and rest awhile," Jesus said. (So many people were coming and going that they didn't even have a chance to eat.)

³² So they went alone by boat to a secluded place.

³³ But many in the crowds who saw them leave figured out where they were going. So people from every town around there ran on ahead and got there before they did, and met them when they landed.

³⁴ When Jesus got out of the boat and saw the great crowd, like sheep without a shepherd, He had pity on them. So He began teaching them many things.

³⁵ Late in the day, His followers came up to Him and said, "This is a remote area, and it's getting late.

³⁶ "You'd better send the people on their way, so they can go into the surrounding countryside and towns and buy food for themselves, because they don't have anything to eat."

³⁷ "You feed them," He replied.

"Do You mean," they questioned, "that You want us to go out and buy 200 denarii^a worth of food to feed all these people?"

³⁸ "How many loaves of bread^a do you have here now?" He asked them. "Go and find out." After they had investigated, they told Him, "We have only five small loaves, and two fish."

³⁹ Jesus then told them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass.

⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.

⁴¹ Then He took the five loaves and the two fish and, looking up to Heaven, He asked God to bless them. Then He broke the loaves and kept giving them to His followers to give to the people. He also

6:37a A denarius was a day's wages for a laboring man. Multiply 200 by a day's wage today for a working man and you get quite a sum. But even that amount would provide only *a tiny portion* of

food (John 6:7) for 5,000 men, besides women and children. Matthew 14:21.

6:38a A loaf of bread was generally seven inches in diameter and a half to one inch thick.

divided pieces of the two fish among all of them.

⁴²And everyone in that huge crowd ate until they were completely satisfied!

⁴³Afterward they gathered up 12 full baskets of leftovers!

⁴⁴That small amount of food had fed about 5,000 men!^a

Jesus Walks on the Water

⁴⁵Right after that, Jesus ordered His followers to go ahead of Him in the boat to the other side of the lake, to Bethsaida, while He dismissed the crowd.

⁴⁶After He had sent the crowd away, He went into the hills to pray.

⁴⁷When it got dark, the boat was in the middle of the lake, while He was alone on land.

⁴⁸He saw them out there straining at the oars, because they were rowing against the wind. Shortly before morning, He went out to them, walking on the lake! And He walked as though He intended to walk right by them.

⁴⁹But when they saw Him walking on the water, they screamed in terror, thinking it was a ghost!

⁵⁰They all saw Him, and were terrified. Immediately He spoke to them, and said, “Keep up your courage, men! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

⁵¹Then He climbed up into the boat with them, and the wind stopped. His followers were amazed beyond measure at what they had just seen. They just couldn’t get over their astonishment.

⁵²Obviously, they hadn’t learned anything from the miracle of the multiplying of the loaves of bread, because their hearts were still in a hardened state.

⁵³When they finished crossing, they arrived at Gennesaret, and tied up the boat on shore.

⁵⁴As they came out of the boat, the people there immediately recognized Jesus.

⁵⁵They then ran thruout the whole region and began bringing sick people on stretchers to wherever they heard He was.

⁵⁶Wherever He went—in the towns, cities, or countryside—they kept laying the sick in the marketplaces and pleading with Him that they might at least touch the fringe of His prayer shawl.^a And all who touched Him were healed.

God’s Commands or Man’s Traditions

7 Then the Pharisees and some of the teachers of the Law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Him.

²When they saw some of His followers eating food with unclean hands—that is, hands that hadn’t been washed as Jewish tradition dictated—they found fault.

³Neither the Pharisees nor any of the other Jews will eat unless they wash their hands in a certain way, in obedience to the tradition of the elders.

⁴When they come from the marketplace they won’t eat until they wash in this way. And there are many other traditions which they continue to practice, such as the certain ways they must wash cups, pitchers, copper pots, and beds.

⁵So the Pharisees and teachers of the Law asked Jesus, “Why don’t Your followers obey the tradition of the elders? Why do they eat food with unclean^a hands?”

⁶“Isaiah certainly prophesied the truth about you hypocrites,” Jesus replied, “when he wrote that God said:

These people honor Me with words, but their hearts are far from Me.

⁷**The worship they offer Me is worthless, because what they teach as vital truths are merely rules made up by men.^a**

⁸“You pay no attention to God’s commands, but you are so careful to obey your man-made traditions—such as the ceremonial washing of pots and cups, and many other such things.”

⁹Then He added, “You even have clever ways of setting aside God’s commands, so you can follow your traditions.

¹⁰“For instance, Moses commanded, **You must honor and revere your father and mother.^a** He also said, **Anyone who speaks cruelly to his father or mother must be put to death.^b**

¹¹“But you say, ‘A man does not need to help his needy father or mother if he tells them, “Whatever help I might have been able to give you is corban,”’ (that is, it has been dedicated as a future gift to God in his will).^a

¹²“By that arrangement, you no longer allow him

6:44a Matthew 14:21 adds *besides women and children*.

6:56a See notes for Matthew 9:20.

7:5a Not properly washed ceremonially.

7:6-7a Isaiah 29:13.

7:10a Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16. This would include helping his mother and father in

their old age or when they are sick and need his help.

7:10b Exodus 21:17.

7:11a That is, whatever money or property he could have used to give help to his parents had already been dedicated as a future gift to the Temple. The Jewish teachers of that day said it was

to use any of his money or property to help his father or mother.

¹³“In this way, you cancel out the word of God by the traditions of men, which you are now even teaching others. And you treat many other commands of God in the same way.”

¹⁴Then He called the whole crowd over and said to them, “Listen to Me, everyone! This is something you must understand and keep in mind:

¹⁵“It is not what goes into your body that pollutes you, but what comes out. These are the things that poison your soul.

¹⁶“If anyone has been given ears for the purpose of hearing, let him listen!”

¹⁷When He left the crowd and went into a house, His followers asked Him to explain what He meant by that statement.

¹⁸“Do you mean that you don’t understand either?” He asked. “Don’t you realize that a person is not defiled spiritually by what he eats?

¹⁹“No food goes into his heart,^a but into his stomach, and then passes thru the digestive system, and all that cannot be used by the body is then eliminated.

²⁰“But it’s what comes out of the person that pollutes him,” He continued.

²¹“Because from within, out of people’s hearts^a come evil thoughts and decisions about adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts,

²²covetous desires, wickedness, cheating, lust, envy, slander, pride, and all foolish desires and ambitions.

²³“All these evils come from the heart.^a These are the things that make a person unclean and unfit to be with God.”

The Faith of a Syrophenician Woman

²⁴Leaving there, Jesus went to the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon. He entered a house and didn’t want anyone to know He was there. But He couldn’t keep it secret.

²⁵A woman whose little girl was possessed by an evil spirit heard He was there, and she came and fell to her knees at His feet,

²⁶begging Him to drive the demon out of her daughter. The woman was a Greek,^a born in the part of Syria known as Phoenicia.

²⁷But Jesus told her, “The children^a must first be allowed to eat until they are satisfied. It’s not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”^b

²⁸“Yes, Lord,” she replied. “But even the little dogs under the table eat the crumbs the children drop.”

²⁹“For making that admirable and compelling statement you may go now,” Jesus responded. “The demon has left your daughter.”

³⁰When she arrived home, she found that the demon had indeed left her daughter, and the girl was lying on the bed.

Jesus Heals a Man Who was Deaf and Could Hardly Talk

³¹Again He left the area of Tyre and Sidon and arrived at Lake Galilee after going thru the region of Decapolis.

³²While He was there, some people brought a man to Him who was deaf and could hardly speak. They pleaded with Jesus to put His hand on the man and heal him.

³³So Jesus took him aside, away from the crowd, and put His fingers in his ears. Then He spit, and touched the man’s tongue with the saliva.

³⁴Then with a deep sigh, He looked up to Heaven, after which He said to the man, “Effatha!” which is Aramaic for “Open up!”

³⁵Instantly the man was able to hear! His tongue was also set free, and he spoke plainly.

³⁶Jesus commanded the people to tell no one what happened.^a But the more He tried to stop them, the more widely they broadcast the news.

³⁷They were overwhelmed and utterly amazed. “He’s been effective in everything He’s tried to do!” they kept telling other people. “Just now He healed a deaf man, and also freed his tongue so he could speak!”

Jesus Feeds More than 4,000 People

8The crowd following Jesus at that time was huge. And because they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His followers and said,

²“I am deeply concerned about these people. They’ve been with Me now for three days, and have nothing to eat.

more important for a person to dedicate his property to God than to provide for the needs of his parents. See *Barnes’ Notes* on Matthew 15:5-6.

7:19,21,23a ... *the very heart center of your being, the zone of your thoughts, intellect, passions, impulses, affections, desires, all emotions,*

appetites, motives, intentions, and endeavors ...

7:26a A despised Gentile, not a Jew.

7:27a Referring to the people of Israel.

7:27b See Matthew 15:26 note.

7:36a For the reason see Matthew 12:16 note.

³“If I send them away to their homes as hungry as they are, they’ll collapse on the way, because some have come a long way.”

⁴“But how can we ever find enough food way out here in this deserted area to feed all these people?” they replied.

⁵“How many loaves of bread do you have?” He asked.

“Seven,” they replied.

⁶So He told the people to sit down on the ground. Then He took the seven small loaves and thanked God for them, after which He broke them and gave them to His followers to distribute among the people, which they did.

⁷Someone also gave Him a few small fish. After asking God to bless them, He told His followers to distribute them, too.

⁸All those people ate until they were completely satisfied! Then Jesus’ followers gathered up and filled seven large hamper baskets with the leftovers!

⁹About 4,000 men had eaten.^a Following this, Jesus sent them home.

The Yeast

¹⁰Immediately after doing so, He got into the boat with His followers and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

¹¹There the local Pharisees came to Him and began to argue. To test Him, they said, “Make a miracle happen in the sky.”

¹²Jesus sighed deeply, and then said, “Why do you people continue to demand another miraculous

sign? I tell you the truth, no such sign will be given you.”^a

¹³With that He left them, and getting back into the boat, He went to the other side of the lake.

¹⁴It so happened that His followers had forgotten to take along any bread. All they had in the boat was one loaf.

¹⁵So when Jesus warned them, “Watch out, and always be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, and the yeast of Herod,”

¹⁶they discussed the matter among themselves and concluded, “He said that because we don’t have any bread.”

¹⁷But Jesus knew how they were reasoning, so He said, “Why have you come to the conclusion that I said what I did because you have no bread? Don’t you see yet or understand? Are your hearts still hardened?”

¹⁸“You have eyes! Haven’t you seen anything? And you have ears! Haven’t you used them to listen to what’s been said? Don’t you remember anything you’ve seen and heard?”

¹⁹“When I broke the five loaves of bread for the 5,000 men, how many baskets full of fragments did you collect afterwards?”

“Twelve,” they replied.

²⁰“And when I broke the seven loaves for the 4,000, how many large hamper baskets full of fragments did you collect then?”

“Seven.”

²¹“How can it be,” He then asked them, “that even after seeing all that take place, you still don’t understand?”^a

8:9a Matthew 15:38 adds *besides women and children*.

8:12a See Matthew 16:2-4.

8:21a ... *that you don’t need to worry about having enough food to eat when you have Me with you*.

8:29a Or *the Christ*.

8:32a Peter may have said, “You must stop having such negative thoughts! With all the power You have You never need to allow anything like that to happen to You.” See Matthew 16:22.

8:34a That is *to be a Christian*. Jesus was not speaking only of those who decide to be preachers, priests, missionaries, or other Christian workers. Notice that He calls the whole crowd over to hear this message, not just the Twelve. This message is for everyone.

He was stating here in a very emphatic way, what it is that is necessary for one to be truly converted (born again)! He makes it very clear in verses 36 and 37 that this is what He is talking about. All the

words in these verses translated *life* and *soul* are translated from the same Greek word *psukáy*.

Jesus is talking about the necessity of living your present life *for Him* if you expect to have eternal life *with Him*.

You can live for Him now and joyfully look forward to happiness thruout eternity, or, live to fulfill your own desires and ambitions, with little real regard for Christ and others, and reap eternal regrets *in outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*. Matthew 8:12; 13:40-42; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30.

8:34b The word *cross* here has been greatly misunderstood by many. We hear such statements as, “I have a sick wife, but I guess that’s the cross I must bear.” Or, “I have a fatal disease, but I guess that’s the cross I must bear.” No, the *cross* of which the Lord speaks here is one which we willingly *take up*, and follow Christ. No one chooses to have a sick spouse or a fatal disease.

The cross is a symbol of death. Jesus died on His

Jesus Heals a Blind Man at Bethsaida

²² When they arrived at Bethsaida, some people brought a blind man to Jesus, and pleaded with Him to touch and heal him.

²³ So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of town. After He had spit on his eyes and had then laid His hands upon them, He asked him if he could see anything.

²⁴ He looked around, and said, “I see people, but they look like tree trunks walking around.”

²⁵ So Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes again, and then told him to open them. This time his sight was completely restored. Now he was able to see everyone clearly.

²⁶ Jesus then sent him home, telling him, “Don’t tell anyone in town what happened. In fact, don’t even go back into town.”

Peter’s Confession of the Messiah

²⁷ Then Jesus and His followers went into the towns around Caesarea Philippi. Along the way, He asked His followers, “What are the people saying about who I am?”

²⁸ “Some say You’re John the Baptizer,” they replied. “Others say You’re Elijah; and still others, that You’re one of the other prophets come back to life.”

²⁹ “But who do you say I am?” He then questioned.

“You are the Messiah^a!” Peter responded.

³⁰ Jesus then firmly ordered them to tell no one who He really was.

Jesus Predicts His Death

³¹ Then He began to tell them that He, the Son of Man, must suffer many things. He also told them

He would be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law, and that He would be killed, but that three days later He would rise from the dead and come back to life.

³² After Jesus had told them plainly what would happen, Peter took Him aside and told Him He must never allow such a thing to happen to Him.^a

³³ But after turning and looking at the rest of His followers, Jesus spoke to Peter and gave Him a very stern rebuke, saying, “You get behind Me, Satan! Because your concern is not that God’s will be done, but that your own desires may be realized!”

A Powerful Warning

³⁴ Then Jesus called the crowd of people, as well as His twelve close followers, to come to Him and listen to something very special He had to say to them. Then He said, “Whoever decides he wants to follow Me^a must no longer live for the purpose of pleasing and satisfying his own natural desires. He must take up his own cross^b and die to those selfish desires, and make it his practice to obey what I have taught and commanded.^c

³⁵ “Because if you choose to continue to satisfy your desire to live as you yourself please, you will lose your soul! But if you will make it your purpose in life to put to death your own desires, and live as I desire that you live, and live for the sake of giving the Great News to others, you will save your soul.^a

³⁶ “Because what good would it do you even if you gained all the wealth and power and all the flesh-fulfilling experiences in all the world, but then found yourself barred from Heaven and sent to your judgment in Hell?^a

³⁷ “Or look at it this way: If you suddenly found

cross. In other words, Jesus is stating that if we would be followers of His we must die to self and live to Him. He calls us to death! The old person must die, with a new person being the result — a person who no longer lives for himself but for God and the Savior. This is what Jesus meant when He said, “You must be born again, or you will never see the Kingdom of God.” John 3:1-21. See also Appendix 221, page 483.

8:34c ... *and will yet teach and command thru My apostles.* The literal Greek for the last sentence of this verse is, *He must take up his cross and follow Me.* The expanded translation here states what it really means to take up our cross and follow Jesus. See most important comments on this verse in Appendix 206, page 472.

8:35a Whoever is determined to live his life as he pleases, *will lose his soul!* He will not only in the

end lose all that he has lived for, but he will lose his place with Christ in eternity. The Lord is not speaking about rewards here. It is a matter of life or death. He is speaking of losing eternal life—the death of the soul.

But in the last part of the verse, He again explains how one may receive eternal life. It is not a matter of *simply believing the facts* that Christ is the Son of God and that He died for sinners. It is the willingness to lose and surrender ourselves and our wills to the Lord, *for His sake, and for the sake of giving the Great News to others.* See Romans 10:9-10.

A good way to test yourself as to where you really are in the eyes of God, is to search your own heart and ask yourself the question, “What place does Christ really have in my life, and how really concerned am I to *lose* myself for Christ’s sake and for

yourself in awful suffering in Hell, how much would you then be willing to give of yourself to God in order to gain His forgiveness and eternal life?^a

³⁸“If you are ashamed of Me among the sex-crazed, and other sinners of your time, ashamed to fly your colors and share with them the message of Life that I came from Heaven to earth to give lost mankind, I, the Son of Man, will also be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of My Father with the holy angels.”^a

9“I tell you the truth,” Jesus continued, “some of you standing here today will definitely not die before you see the Kingdom of God present here on earth in a display of great power.”^a

The Glory of Jesus Revealed

²Six days later, Jesus led Peter, James, and John up a high mountain, where they were alone. Then right in front of their eyes, they saw His appearance change completely!^a

³His clothes became dazzling white—like snow—whiter than anyone on earth could ever whiten them.

⁴Then Elijah and Moses appeared on the scene, and began talking with Jesus.

⁵“Teacher!” Peter exclaimed, “it’s good for us to

be here! Should we perhaps put up three shelters—one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah?”

⁶He said this because he really didn’t know what to say—they were so terrified.

⁷Just then a cloud covered them completely, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is My Son, whom I love dearly. You must keep on listening to Him.”

⁸Immediately after hearing the voice, they looked around, but no one was there, except Jesus.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus told them to tell no one what they had seen until He^a had risen from the dead.

¹⁰So they didn’t even mention the matter to anyone else. But they continued to question among themselves what He could mean about rising from the dead.

¹¹But the question they put to Him was, “Why do the teachers of the Law say that Elijah must come on the scene before You, the Messiah, will come?”

¹²“That’s true,” Jesus replied, “Elijah does come first, and will strive to get everyone ready to receive the Messiah.^a Now let Me ask you: How is it that the Scriptures also state that the Son of Man must endure great suffering and be rejected as worthless?”^b

¹³“But as for Elijah, he has already come,^a just as it was written about him, and they treated him just

the sake of others? Just how concerned *am* I? Does my life and service for Christ prove that I’m truly concerned?”

The Lord stipulates here that to be assured that we are truly born again, we must find our lives completely surrendered to the Lord, with a deep desire to please Him and be deeply concerned about telling others thruout the world the Great News about life eternal thru Christ. Notice that we are to have concern not only for the Person of Christ but *for His message of life to the world*. We are to live to please Christ, and we are to live for the purpose of getting His message to the rest of the world by any and every means possible.

If we really believe that the lost are lost, and that Hell is terrible in the extreme, we will be concerned not only that Christ is our own Savior but also concerned for others for whom Christ is concerned. He was concerned enough about them to leave Heaven and die an awful death on the cross for them. It is not enough that we are glad to receive this message and the benefits of it for ourselves. Our concern must include *the sharing of Christ’s concern for others* who have not yet heard! See Appendix 207, p 473, for an additional most important note here.

For instructions on how to speak to others about Christ and His salvation, see Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:9-10; 2 Timothy 4:2, and the notes there, and Appendices 212, p477, and 226, p 486.

8:36a This verse is one that many professing Christians quote to those who are not followers of the Lord. But the Lord is actually continuing to speak here to His followers, as well as to everyone else. He indicates that unless one is willing to obey His words concerning dying to self and living for Him and for the purpose of giving His message to the lost, he will *lose his soul*. v 35. All these verses go together. They cannot be separated.

So many are willing to accept the benefits of Christ, but they are not willing to die to self in order that they might share the benefits of Christ to the greatest extent possible with others who are still lost! Christ is not satisfied with just half of our love. He demands *all!* He will accept no less than all!

His warning in this verse is that no matter who we are, we must realize that unless we are living for Him and for the things that greatly concern Him, we are *lukewarm* and *wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*. Revelation 3:14-22.

All the so-called *freedom* we have in Christ, to do our own thing, has never been given to us by Christ.

as their evil hearts desired.”

Jesus Heals a Boy

¹⁴When Jesus came down to where His other followers were, He saw them arguing with the teachers of the Law, and a large crowd had gathered around them.

¹⁵When the people saw Jesus, they ran to greet Him, but they were all amazed at His appearance.^a

¹⁶Then Jesus asked the teachers of the Law, “What’s the argument about?”

¹⁷“Teacher,” one of the men in the crowd spoke up, “I’ve brought my son to You. He’s possessed by a demon that’s made him unable to speak.

¹⁸“Whenever it attacks him, it slams him to the ground. Then he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth. He’s gradually wasting away! So I asked Your followers to drive the demon out, but they couldn’t.”

¹⁹“Oh, you faithless people!” Jesus replied. “How long must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring the boy to Me.”

²⁰So they brought him. But as soon as the boy saw Jesus, the demon in him threw him into violent convulsions, so that he fell to the ground writhing and foaming at the mouth.

²¹“How long has he been having attacks like

this?” Jesus asked the father.

“Ever since he was a small child,” he replied.

²²“The demon has often tried to kill him by throwing him into fire and into water. If you can do anything, please have pity on us and help us!”

²³“I can help you if you will believe,” Jesus replied. “Everything is possible for the one who continues to believe.”

²⁴Immediately the father cried out in tears, “Lord, I do believe! Help me to overcome my unbelief!”

²⁵When Jesus saw that the crowd was growing rapidly, He rebuked the evil spirit. “You spirit of deafness and speechlessness,” He said, “I command you, come out of the boy and never enter him again!”

²⁶The demon responded by screaming and throwing the boy again into violent convulsions, and then it came out. The boy lay there as motionless as death, causing many to say, “He’s dead!”

²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him up, and he stood on his feet.

²⁸After Jesus had come into the house, His followers asked Him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive that demon out?”

²⁹“This kind of demon cannot be driven out,” Jesus replied, “except by prayer and fasting.”

We are free from obligation to obey the ceremonial regulations of the Law of Moses, but we are not free to disobey God and live to please ourselves. We are to consider ourselves as wholly belonging to the Lord, or else not belonging to Him at all. And if we belong wholly to the Lord, the deep, intense desire and passion of our heart will be to please Him and serve Him faithfully and effectively.

We may go our own willful way and gain whatever enjoyment, ease, pleasure, freedom, or whatever is the desire of our hearts, but the end will be to lose one’s soul, no matter how often we attend church!

8:37a In a real sense, the Lord is saying in v 37: *Or look at it this way: If you die tonight, lost, and suddenly find yourself suffering extreme, torturing pain and agony in Hell, how much will you then be urgently and desperately willing to give of yourself to God, and utterly die to all your sinning by refusing any longer to satisfy the appetites of your body and mind in a wrong way, and instead, sincerely worship, obey, serve, and take a firm stand for God, in order to get free from there and escape to Heaven?* But then it will be forever too late! These are heavy questions indeed! For their consideration, see Appendix 208, page 474. Also see Matthew 16:26 notes.

8:38a What will be the fate of those who are

ashamed of Christ and unwilling to take a stand and speak out for Him? See Appendix 209, page 474; also Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; Revelation 3:14-16; 21:8; Ezekiel 33:1-9.

9:1a Some believe Jesus referred to what would happen six days later on the Mount of Transfiguration. Others believe He referred to the coming of the Holy Spirit in great power on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47), and what followed. He could have referred to both.

9:2a Matthew 17:2 states, “His face became as brilliant as the sun!” He revealed Himself in all His marvelous glory.

9:9a Literally *the Son of Man*.

9:12a See Matthew 17:11 note.

9:12b Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12; Psalm 22:1-21; Daniel 9:25-26a; Zechariah 12:10; Luke 24:25-27,45-47.

9:13a See Luke 1:17. John the Baptizer came in the spirit of Elijah. But many believe Elijah will return in person shortly before God judges the people on earth. Malachi 4:5-6. Some believe he may be one of the two witnesses of Revelation 11:1-14.

9:15a His face evidently still retained some traces of the glory He had revealed to Peter, James, and John. The same thing happened to Moses when he talked to God on Mount Sinai. Exodus 34:29-35.

³⁰ Then they left there and traveled thru Galilee.

³¹ But Jesus didn't want anyone to know where He was, because He was teaching His followers. He was telling them, "The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men who will kill Him. But on the third day after He is killed, He will rise back to life again."

³² But they didn't understand what He was talking about, and they were afraid to ask Him.

Who Is the Greatest?

³³ When He arrived at Capernaum and was with His followers in the house, He asked them, "What was it that you men were arguing about among yourselves along the way?"

³⁴ They didn't answer, because along the road they had been arguing among themselves about which of them was the greatest.

³⁵ Then He sat down and called the Twelve to Himself and said, "Anyone who has a continual desire to be the greatest will end up being^a the least of all, and the servant of everyone else."

³⁶ Then He brought a little child into their group, and taking him up into His arms He said to them,

³⁷ "Whoever warmly welcomes one of these little children, to do for him what I would do,^a is welcoming Me. And whoever welcomes Me is welcoming not only Me, but the One who sent Me."

Whoever Is Not Against Us Is For Us

³⁸ Then John spoke up and said, "Teacher, we saw someone who's not a member of our group driving out demons in Your name, and we told him to stop, because he's not following You with us."

³⁹ "Don't stop him," Jesus replied. "Because anyone who performs a miracle in My name can't be one who will then turn right around and speak against Me.^a"

⁴⁰ "Anyone who is not against us is on our side.

⁴¹ "If anyone gives you even such a small thing as a cup of water as a favor to Me, because you belong to Me, I assure you, he will definitely be rewarded even for doing that.^a"

Frightful Judgment for Tempters

⁴² "Now back to the matter of the little child^a: Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble,^b would be better off if someone had hung a massive millstone around his neck and had thrown him into the sea.^c"

⁴³ "So if your hand is causing you to sin, cut it off! It's far better for you to gain eternal life without a hand, than to have two hands that take you to Hell, into the fire where the flames will never be quenched,

⁴⁴ where their worm^a never dies and the fire never goes out.

⁴⁵ "And if your foot is causing you to sin, cut it off! It's far better for you to gain eternal life lame, than to have two feet that take you to Hell, into the fire where the flames are never quenched,

⁴⁶ where their worm^a never dies and the fire never goes out.

⁴⁷ "And if your eye is causing you to sin, gouge it out! It's far better for you to enter the Kingdom of God with only one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fires of Hell,

⁴⁸ where their worm^a never dies and the fire never goes out.^b"

⁴⁹ "Because everyone will be seasoned with fire,^a just as every sacrifice is to be seasoned with salt.^b"

⁵⁰ "Salt serves a good purpose. But if the salt in your life and testimony has lost its pungently sharp penetrating qualities^a and healing powers, and has become insipid and useless, how will others be convinced, convicted, saved, and preserved in purity, uprightness, and self control by your influence and help? Continue to have genuine salt

9:35a This is future tense in the Greek, not imperative mood as some translate it. You should study this in connection with Matthew 18:1-5; 20:25-28; Luke 9:46-48.

9:37a Literally *in My name*.

9:39a God would not empower him to do miracles in Christ's name if he was an enemy of Christ.

9:41a "The eyes of the Lord are everywhere. So he sees every evil action, as well as the good that's being done" Proverbs 15:3. We will indeed be rewarded according to our works.

Even such a little thing as *a cup of water*, given to one *because he belongs to Christ*, will not be overlooked by the Lord.

9:42a Implied.

9:42b Or *to lose his faith in Me*.

9:42c ... *before he had a chance to do such a dastardly thing*.

9:44,46,48a *The worm of remorse*. Who can adequately imagine the awful, endless torment of this continually gnawing worm? "If only I had accepted God's forgiveness and had been truly born again, and had lived to obey and serve God instead of living as I pleased! What folly to have lived that brief life for such momentary and unsatisfactory attainments and pleasure, when such true riches and happiness were offered me for all eternity! Oh what a fool I've been! What a fool! What a fool!"

in the way you live and in the things you say.^b But at the same time, continue to live in peace with all who are true followers of Mine.”^c

Teaching About Divorce

10 Jesus then left Capernaum and went south into the region just across the Jordan River from Judea. Again people flocked to Him, and again, as always, He taught them.

²Then the Pharisees came with a question to trip Him up. “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” they asked.

³“What did Moses say about divorce?” Jesus responded.

⁴“Moses said a man needed to merely write a certificate of divorce and send her away,” they declared.

⁵“Moses gave you that law,” Jesus replied, “because you are so hard-hearted.”^a

⁶“But that’s not the way it was from the beginning when God created mankind. The record states, ‘God made man male and female.’^a

⁷For that reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife. And the two shall become so devoted to each other that they become as one person.”^a

⁸“So they are no longer two, but one.

⁹“And man has no right to separate what God has joined together.”

¹⁰When they were again in the house, His followers had further questions for Him about the subject.

¹¹“Any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her,” He replied.

¹²“And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.”^a

The Little Children and Jesus

¹³Then people began bringing little children to Jesus to have Him touch them. But His followers got upset and strongly demanded that the people not bother Jesus with little children.

¹⁴When Jesus saw this, He became very angry, and said to them, “Let the little children come to Me! Don’t hinder them! Because the Kingdom of God belongs to those who become like these little children in spirit.

¹⁵“I tell you the truth, anyone who does not receive the Kingdom of God with the unmistakable spirit of a little child^a will definitely not enter it.”

¹⁶Then He took the little children up in His arms, put His hands on each of them, and blessed them.”^a

Warning to Those Who Are Rich

¹⁷Later, as He was walking along on the road, a man came running up to Him and knelt down in front of Him and asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do in order to live forever?”

¹⁸“Why do you call Me ‘good?’” Jesus replied. “Only One Person is truly good, and that’s God—no one else.

¹⁹“You know the commands God has given: **You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not tell lies about anyone, you shall not cheat anyone in any way, and honor your mother and father.**”^a

²⁰“Teacher,” he replied, “I’ve obeyed all of these from the time I was a child.”

²¹Jesus looked at him for a moment, really loving him for his sincerity. Then He said to him, “There’s one thing still missing in your life: Go and sell everything you have, and give the proceeds to the poor. Then you will have riches and wealth in Heaven. After that, take up your cross^a and follow

Turn to Appendix 247, page 520, and read *The Amazing Story of God*, and make your decision for God NOW, before it is forever too late.

9:48b Isaiah 66:24.

9:49a There is a fire which will be for *punishment* in Hell and the lake of fire, and there is a fire for the Lord’s followers which *purifies*. See Matthew 10:34-36; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12-14. So we can choose which fire we are willing to endure.

9:49b Leviticus 2:13.

9:50a Hebrews 4:12.

9:50b Matthew 5:13; Luke 14:34-35.

9:50c ... *even if you don’t agree with them in all things.*

10:5a Many men are so hard-hearted they would kill their wives if they couldn’t divorce them.

10:6a Genesis 1:27; 5:2.

10:7a Genesis 2:24.

10:12a See Matthew 19:9 for clarification.

10:15a —*teachable, mild, humble, free from prejudice and self-will, and wanting above all else to please and obey his heavenly Father* ... Matthew 18:1-3.

10:16a Oh, how our children need God’s blessing upon them in an age when the devil is bidding so highly for them. Pray most earnestly for your children. And pray with them, and for them in their presence, and truly love them.

10:19a Exodus 20:12-16; Deuteronomy 5:16-20.

Me.”

²²The man was extremely sad when he heard that, and he went away with a heavy heart, because he was very rich.^a

²³Then Jesus turned around and said to His followers, “It is so hard for those who are rich to enter the Kingdom of God!”

²⁴His followers were astonished at that statement. But Jesus repeated it, this time saying, “Children, it is extremely difficult for those who put their trust in their wealth to enter the Kingdom of God.

²⁵“In fact, it is easier for a camel to go thru the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God.”^a

²⁶His followers were then even more astonished, saying among themselves, “Well, who then can be saved?”^a

²⁷Looking straight at them Jesus replied, “Yes, it’s impossible for people who look at riches from man’s sense of values to be saved, but not for the one who draws near to God and gladly receives his orders from Him. Because when even a rich person continues to live in close fellowship with God, everything is possible.”^a

²⁸Peter then spoke up, “Look, we’ve left everything and followed You.”

²⁹“I promise you,” Jesus replied, “anyone who has left home or brothers or sisters or father or

mother or wife or children or property for My sake, and for the sake of telling others the Great News,

³⁰will receive a hundred times more in this present life than he gave up—homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and properties. But along with all this, he will also receive persecutions—and in the age to come, everlasting life.

³¹“But many who are now thought of as being great will then have the lowest positions, and many who are now considered to be of little importance will then hold positions of great importance.”^a

Jesus Again Predicts His Death

³²Later, as they were on their way to Jerusalem, Jesus was walking ahead of His followers. They walked behind, both amazed and afraid, because Jesus had again taken the Twelve aside and described all that would happen to Him when they arrived at Jerusalem.

³³“Look,” He had said, “we are now on our way up to Jerusalem, where I, the Son of Man, will be handed over to the chief priests and teachers of the Law. They will sentence Me to death and hand Me over to the Romans to be killed.”^a

³⁴“The Romans will mock Me, flog Me, spit on Me, and kill Me, but three days later I will rise back to life again.”

10:21a What does Jesus mean by *your cross*? See Appendix 221, page 483.

10:22a He chose his possessions (the things that would give him what he wanted in *this* life) instead of Christ and eternal life and riches. Don’t envy the rich, because it is far more difficult for the rich to make the full surrender to God that is necessary to gain Heaven, than it is for the poor or for those relatively poor. Without God’s help, none of us will make it. Philippians 2:13 applies here. See Appendix 218 for a most important note on that Scripture.

10:25a We must make Jesus the Lord of our money as well as Lord in every other area of our life. To refuse to do so is to be in rebellion against Him. What Jesus is teaching here is that the more money a person has the more difficult it becomes for him to surrender that money to his Lord.

The more money people have the more dependent they become upon it. They trust in their money to get them thru any and every situation. For that reason, the rich are so in love with the wealth they have that they find it very difficult to make the full surrender of all they are and have to God, which is essential if they are to be converted to him (born again) and be saved.

10:26a See Matthew 19:25 note.

10:27a See Luke 18:27 note.

10:28-31a Matthew 19:27-30 records Jesus’ answer to Peter’s question about future positions in His Kingdom. Jesus promised him that His twelve followers who had forsaken all and had followed Him would *sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel* when He returned. Mark does not mention that here, but he does record the additional words of the Lord which give promise to every one of us who love Christ and have forsaken the world in order to follow Him.

The promise to all true Christians is that they will receive vastly more in return, even in this life, of that which has been sacrificed for Jesus’ sake. A Christian may not receive actual title to properties in this life, or beget extra children or acquire extra brothers, in a natural sense. In faithfully following the Lord, however, he will find that extra properties or material goods are his to use. He will find many persons also, who will be as *brothers, sisters, mothers, or children* to him.

The Lord states in a definite promise to His followers that they will receive back immeasurably more than they have given up for Him. They will receive *a hundred times* the amount of *brothers, children, or material things* in one form or another

The Request of James and John

³⁵ It was also during this trip that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, went to Him and said, "Teacher, will You do for us whatever we ask?"

³⁶ "And what is it that you want Me to do for you?" Jesus responded.

³⁷ "Would you let one of us sit on Your right and the other at Your left in the glory of Your Kingdom?" they replied.

³⁸ "You don't realize what you're asking," Jesus replied. "Are you able to drink the bitter mixture in the cup of sorrow that I am about to drink, and be baptized into^a the baptism of extreme suffering into which I am about to be baptized?"

³⁹ "Yes, we are," they replied.

"You will indeed drink the cup that I drink," Jesus said, "and be baptized into the baptism into which I am baptized,

⁴⁰ but I have no authority to decide who will sit on My right and on My left. Those positions will be given by God to those for whom they have been prepared."^a

⁴¹ When the other ten heard what these brothers had requested, they were thoroughly disgusted with James and John.

⁴² Calling all of them together, Jesus said, "You know how heathen rulers lord it over their subjects, and how the highest rulers lord it over those rulers.

that they have sacrificed for Him.

Accompanying these blessings, however, will be *persecutions*. Persecution is the lot of all true Christians. Anyone who honestly follows the Lord, allowing his or her light to shine for Him, and giving testimony concerning Him, must expect persecution. 2 Timothy 3:12.

But the greatest promise the Lord makes to those who have forsaken all for Him is that *in the age to come* they will receive *everlasting life*.

* * *

Most of Jesus' apostles came from the lower rungs of society. Their future position in Christ's Kingdom will be quite the opposite. The same transformation in rank will occur for those *many* who serve the Lord faithfully and zealously in lowly places today. In Christ's Kingdom they will rule! *Many* who are in prominent positions today, both in government and in the Church—even though saved—may find themselves among the least in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The mere act of serving in an obscure place today does not guarantee elevation tomorrow, of course, nor does it necessarily follow that all in high places

⁴³ "But that's not the way it's to be among you. If any of you want to be great, then you must become one who serves others.

⁴⁴ "And whoever of you wants to be first, you must be a slave to everyone else.

⁴⁵ "Because even I, the Son of Man, did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give My life as a ransom for many."

Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus

⁴⁶ Following this they arrived at Jericho. When Jesus and His followers, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside begging.

⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus from Nazareth who was passing by, he began to shout, "Jesus! Son of David!^a Have pity on me!"

⁴⁸ "Stop that! Calm down!" many in the crowd shouted at him in return. But he just kept on shouting, louder than ever, "Son of David, have pity on me!"

⁴⁹ So Jesus stopped and said, "Tell him to come here."

Then the people called out to him, "Cheer up! He's calling for you. Get up now!"

⁵⁰ So throwing his cloak aside, he got up at once and went to Jesus.

⁵¹ "What can I do for you?" Jesus asked.

"Teacher!" the blind man said, "I want to be

will be automatically lowered. The simple fact remains, however, that all true Christians will be rewarded by Christ according to their labors for Him—the wise use of their time, abilities, finances, their attitudes, and their degree of obedience to the Master in faithfully and fearlessly sharing the Great News with others—this will all be taken into consideration by our Lord. Christian, heed the obvious! Keep your eye constantly on the goal ... *on things above, not on things on earth*.

10:33a The words *priests, teachers, and Romans* assign responsibility for the crucifixion of Messiah to both Jews and Gentiles. A study of the political structure of the times will show that much was at stake for both groups, since the priesthood of Israel at this time was approved and in some cases sold by the government. So preservation of the establishment was essential to their security and control.

10:38a ... into *extreme suffering and death* ...

10:40a See Matthew 20:20-23 note.

10:47a "Son of David" a well-known and understood title of Messiah. Used 20 times in the New Testament. Still used in Judaism in reference to Messiah.

able to see!”

⁵²“Go your way,” Jesus told him. “Your faith has made you well.” And immediately he was able to see, and began hilariously following Jesus down the road.^a

Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

11 As they were approaching Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage and Bethany, just across from the Mount of Olives, and Jesus sent two of His followers on an errand.

²“Go into the village over there,” He told them. “As soon as you enter it, you’ll see a colt tied up. No one has ever sat on it, but untie it and bring it to Me.

³“If anyone asks you what you’re doing, just tell him, ‘It’s true Owner^a needs it and will send it right back.’”

⁴So they went. And sure enough, there was the colt in the street, tied near a door. So they untied it.

⁵“Hey! What are you doing there, untying that colt?” some bystanders demanded.

⁶They then told them what Jesus had said, and the men let them take it.

⁷When they brought the colt to Jesus, some of the people threw their robes on its back. Then Jesus mounted it.^a

⁸Many of the others spread out their robes on the roadway. Others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

⁹Then those who walked ahead and those who followed began loudly shouting:

“Hosanna!^a

God bless the One who comes in the name of the Lord!^b

¹⁰“God bless the Kingdom of our father David, that now comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heavens!”

¹¹When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, He went directly into the Temple area and looked around and observed all that was going on. But since it was already late in the day, He went out to Bethany with His twelve followers.

The Curse on a Fig Tree

¹²The next day, as they were coming back from Bethany, Jesus was hungry.

¹³In the distance, He saw a fig tree in leaf. He went over to it to see if He might find some fruit on it. But when He reached it, He found nothing but leaves, because it wasn’t the season for figs.

¹⁴“May no one ever eat fruit from you again,” He said to the tree. And His followers were listening as He said it.

Jesus Cleans Out the Temple

¹⁵When they arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus went into the Temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers^a and the benches of those selling doves.

¹⁶Nor would He allow anyone to carry any merchandise thru the Temple courtyard.

¹⁷Then He taught them a short Bible lesson, saying, “It is written in the Scriptures that God said, **My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.^a** But you have turned it into a place for thieves to do business!^b”

¹⁸When the teachers of the Law and the chief priests heard Him say this, they began in earnest to look for a way to destroy Him, because they were truly afraid of Him, because all the people were completely captivated with amazement by His teaching.

¹⁹When evening came, He left the city.

A Lesson from the Fig Tree

²⁰The next morning, as they passed by the fig tree, they noticed that it was dried up clear down to the roots!

²¹Remembering the curse of the day before, Peter said to Jesus, “Look, Teacher! The fig tree You cursed is completely withered!”

²²In reply Jesus said to them, “Have faith in God!

²³“I tell you the absolute truth when I tell you that whoever will say to this mountain, ‘Remove yourself from here, and throw yourself into the sea!’ and doesn’t doubt in his heart, but believes

10:52a Imagine how it would be if you were blind, and then suddenly everything opened up to you in living color.

11:3a Literally *the Lord of it*.

11:7a See Matthew 21:1-11, and the notes.

11:9a Hosanna means “save now”. It later became an exclamation of praise.

11:9b Psalm 118:25-26.

11:15a It was required by Jewish law that the Temple tax of *half a shekel* be paid in Jewish coin. It was the *greed* and *fraud* rather than the practice that Jesus condemned.

11:17a Isaiah 56:7.

11:17b Jeremiah 7:11.

11:23a How will it be done? God will do it, in answer to fervent prayer and real faith in Him. See

that what he says will happen, whatever he says will indeed be done for him.^a

²⁴“For that reason I tell you: Whatever things you ask for as you pray, believe that you definitely^a are in the process of receiving them, and you most certainly^a will have them.^b

²⁵“But whenever you stand in prayer, and there think of something you are holding against someone, forgive that person, so your Father in Heaven may also forgive you your sins.

²⁶“Because if you don’t forgive others, neither will your Father in Heaven forgive you the wrongs you have done.”^a

Jesus’ Authority Questioned

²⁷Again they arrived in Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the Temple court, the chief priests, the teachers of the Law, and the elders came up to Him.

²⁸“Just what right do you think you have, to take authority into your own hands and do what you did here yesterday?” they demanded. “Who gave you authority to do such things?”

²⁹“I will also ask you a question,” Jesus replied. “If you answer Me, then I’ll tell you by whose authority I do the things I do.

³⁰“Did God order John the Baptizer to preach and baptize as he did, or was it just his own idea? Tell Me.”

³¹They talked this over among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘He was obeying God’s orders,’ he will say, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’

³²“But if we say, ‘It was all his own idea,’ this whole crowd will mob us, because they’re fully convinced that John was a prophet sent by God.”

³³So they answered, “We don’t know.”

“And neither will I tell you by whose authority I do the things I do,” Jesus replied.

Parable of the Sharecroppers

12 Then Jesus began speaking to them, using parables: “Once there was a man who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a hole for the press that pressed out the grape juice, and built a watchtower. Then he rented it out to

sharecroppers and left the area.

²“At harvest time, he sent a servant to the renters to get his share of the grapes.

³“But the renters grabbed the servant and beat him up, and sent him away with nothing.

⁴“The owner sent another servant to them. But they threw stones at him and wounded him in the head. After further insulting him, they sent him away.

⁵“They killed the next man he sent. He sent still others, but they beat some and killed others.

⁶“He still had one more person he could send. This was his only son, whom he loved dearly. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.

⁷“But when the renters saw him coming, they said, ‘Look! Here comes the heir! Come on, let’s kill him, and this vineyard will be ours.’

⁸“So they grabbed hold of him and killed him, and threw his body out of the vineyard.

⁹“What do you think the owner of the vineyard will do now? Yes, without pity or compassion, he’ll come and kill those renters, and rent the vineyard to others.

¹⁰“Haven’t you ever read the Scripture that says:

The Stone which the builders threw out as worthless has now become the Chief Cornerstone.^a

¹¹ **This was done by the Lord, and it truly is something of great importance to look into with amazement^a?”**

¹²Those Jewish leaders knew very well that Jesus had really been speaking about them when He gave that parable, and they desperately wanted to arrest Him. But they were afraid of what the crowd would do if they did, so they left Him and went their way.

Question About Taxes to Caesar

¹³But they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians^a to Him, to see if they could trick Him into saying something they could use as an excuse to have Him arrested.

¹⁴So they came to Him and said, “Teacher, we know that you always tell the truth. And you’re not concerned about what anyone will think or do.^a Nor are you swayed by the importance of anyone,

Luke 17:6 notes.

11:24a Both are indicative mood, the mood of certainty.

11:24b ... *if you have met the other conditions for answered prayer* ... See Luke 11:9-10 note.

11:26a Matthew 18:23-35.

12:10a Both the Jews, as a religious body, and the world as a whole have rejected Jesus Christ as their

Lord and Savior. But this One who was rejected by man *has now become the Chief Cornerstone* of God’s Kingdom on earth. He will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords over all the earth! Isaiah 2:1-5.

12:10-11a Psalm 118:22-23.

12:13a See 3:6 note.

but you teach all of us the truth about how God wants us to act and live. So is it right or not, according to the Laws God has given us, for us to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor? Should we pay those taxes, or shouldn't we?"

¹⁵ But Jesus knew what their hypocritical plans were. "Why are you trying to trap Me?" He demanded. "Bring Me a denarius, and let Me look at it."

¹⁶ So they brought one. "Whose picture and name are these on the coin?" He asked them.

"The Emperor's," they replied.

¹⁷ "Then give the Emperor the things that belong to him," Jesus responded, "and give God what belongs to Him." They were stunned and amazed at His answer.

The Resurrection and Marriage

¹⁸ Then some Sadducees, who say the dead won't be resurrected back to life, came to Him. They also had a question.

¹⁹ "Teacher," they said, "Moses told us in his writings that if a man dies and leaves his wife without any children, his brother should marry the widow and raise up a child for his brother.^a

²⁰ "Well, there were seven brothers. The oldest married, but he died before he had any children.

²¹ "The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no children. The same hap-

pened to the third one.

²² "All seven married her, but left no children. Finally the woman died also.

²³ "Now then, when the dead are raised back to life, whose wife will she be, since all seven were married to her?"

²⁴ "You are badly mistaken," Jesus replied, "because you don't know what the Scriptures teach about the resurrection.^a Nor do you realize how altogether powerful God is.^b

²⁵ "Because when God raises the dead back to life, no one will marry or be given in marriage. In Heaven they will all be like the angels.^a

²⁶ "In regard to the fact that the dead will indeed rise again, haven't you read about the burning bush in the book of Exodus—how God spoke to Moses there, saying, **I am the God who is worshipped by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob^a**?

²⁷ "He is not the God of people who are dead,^a but of people who are very much alive! So you Sadducees are badly mistaken!"

The Greatest Commandment

²⁸ Then one of the teachers of the Law spoke up. He had been listening to the discussion, and realized that Jesus had given the Sadducees a good answer. So he asked Jesus, "Which is the most important of all the commands of God?"

²⁹ "The most important of all the commands,"

12:14a Or you don't show favoritism to anyone.

12:19a ... to inherit his property.

12:24a Job 19:25-27; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2.

12:24b There is absolutely nothing too hard for God. Whatever He has promised, He will do. Therefore the dead definitely will be raised. Genesis 18:14a.

12:25a "Glorified mankind are like angels in these respects especially: They are immortal, no longer subject to human wants, passions, failings, or temptations. They serve God perfectly without weariness or distraction; they have no conflict between flesh and spirit, between the old nature and the new; their life is peaceful, harmonious, satisfying.

"As Saint Augustine said, 'Marriages are on account of children; children are on account of succession; succession on account of death. But in Heaven, as there is no death, neither is there any marriage.'"—*Pulpit Commentary*. In the eternal state, our entire fulfillment will no doubt be found in the Lord.

12:26a Exodus 3:6.

12:27a ... and no longer exist ...

12:29a See John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6.

12:30a Deuteronomy 6:4-5. It does seem strange that God must command us to love Him, when our hearts should just naturally overflow with love for Him because of all that He is to us, and all He has done for us, is doing for us, and promises to yet do for us. And He desires that our love be genuine, fervent, always active, and fiercely ablaze for Him. True love for God includes giving Him complete obedience. And God does not mock us with commands that we cannot obey. So let us consider just how it is that God desires that we love Him:

1. We are first of all to love Him *with our whole heart*. That means that we are to love God as we love nothing and no one else. We are to love Him with all the powers we have. It means to love Him supremely, more than all other beings and things, and with all the fervency possible. To love Him with all our heart is to fix our affections supremely on Him, more strongly than on anyone or anything else, and to be willing to give up all that we hold dear if He commands.

2. We are to love God *with all of our soul*. That means, with all of our life. We are to be willing to give up our whole life to Him, and devote it all to His service; to live to Him and to be willing to die for

Jesus replied, “is this:

Listen, O Israel: The Lord our God is Lord of all, and is the one and only God.^a

³⁰ **And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.^a**

This is indeed the most important of all the commands.

³¹ “The second most important is similar. It’s this:

You shall love others in the same way that you love yourself.^a

There is no other command more important than these.”

³² “Teacher, that was a good answer,” the man replied. “You have spoken the truth, because there is only one God—so there is no other God, only He.^a

³³ “And to love Him with our whole heart, with all our understanding, with all our soul, and with all our strength, and to love others in the same way that we love ourselves—this is far more important to God than all the large or small material offerings we may give Him.”^a

³⁴ When Jesus saw how wisely the man had answered, He said, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.” After that, no one dared to ask Him any more questions.

Whose Son Is the Messiah?

³⁵ Later on, while Jesus was teaching the people in the Temple courts, He asked them, “How is it that the teachers of the Law teach that the Messiah^a is to be a descendant of King David?

³⁶ “After all, David himself was inspired by the Holy Spirit to say:

God said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies into a footstool for Your feet.’^a

³⁷ “So David himself calls the Messiah ‘Lord’. How then can Messiah be his descendant?”^a That great crowd listened to Him with immense pleasure.

Warning About Pride

³⁸ As He continued teaching, He said, “Watch out for those teachers of the Law who like to go around in long, flowing robes, receiving honored greetings of recognition in the market places.^a

³⁹ “They want the most prominent seats in the synagogue and a place at the head table at banquets.

⁴⁰ “But these are the same men who cunningly cheat widows out of their homes and other properties, and then pretend to be so godly by making long prayers in public. Be sure of this, these men will receive far greater and more severe sentences

Him. This means a willingness to die to our own desires and plans and to live only to please Him.

3. We are to love God *with all our mind*. This means we are to apply ourselves first and foremost to know God and to know what His will is for us. We are to gladly receive His truth with submission, gratitude, and pleasure. All of our studies are to be done with God and His service in mind.

It means that we are to banish from our minds everything that would defile our souls or turn us away from concentrating on those things that are eternal. God desires that we think of Him at all times and in all situations, acknowledging Him as our Guide and Provider. God wants the communication lines between Him and us to be open at all times.

4. We are to love God *with all our strength*. This means we are to love Him with all the faculties of soul and body. We are to labor and toil for His glory (in whatever employment we believe He has led us), and to make that the great object of all our efforts. For the glory of our Maker, we are to spare neither labor nor cost, to sacrifice our time, body, and ease, for the glory of God. We are to be employed in His service with all of our wealth, talents, powers,

authority, and influence. Yes, such love is indeed total love—which we owe to our Maker, Savior and Sustainer.

Much of the above from Barnes’ Notes.

12:31a Leviticus 19:18.

12:32a 1 Corinthians 8:6.

12:33a Literally ... *than all burnt offerings and sacrifices*.

12:35a Or *the Christ*.

12:36a Psalm 110:1. This was God talking to God—God the Father talking to God the Son.

12:37a Christ was actually the Son of God, therefore David’s Lord. But He took on human form, and received His human body thru the ancestry of David. For that reason, He is called the Son of David, or, a descendant of David.

12:38a Jesus did not fault all teachers of the Law, as some versions imply, but rather those who tended towards self-exaltation, much as exists in Christian circles today. We are talking about “status” seekers. Then it was length of their robes or the flowery character of their greetings. Now it can be many other subtle things. Some won’t even attend a meeting unless they are speaking, or unless they will at least be given some recognition.

on Judgment Day than other sinners!"

The Widow's Offering

⁴¹As Jesus sat opposite the offering boxes, He watched as the people put money into them. Many who were rich put in much.

⁴²Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two tiny coins, worth less than a penny.

⁴³So Jesus called His followers to Him and said, "I tell you the truth, that poor widow put more into the offering box than anyone else.

⁴⁴"All the others put in part of their surplus, but even though she is poor, she put in everything she had—even what she was to live on!"

Signs of the End Time

13 As He was leaving the Temple, one of His followers said, "Teacher, look at these massive stones, and these beautiful buildings!"

²"Yes, look at these great buildings," Jesus replied. "But not one of these stones will be left upon another. They will all be torn down."

³Later, as He sat on the Mount of Olives across from the Temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately,

⁴"When will all these things take place? And what will happen to alert us that they are about to happen?"^a

⁵In answering them, Jesus said, "Be very careful that you don't allow anyone to fool you.

⁶"Because many will come claiming to be Me, saying 'I am the Christ.' And many will be fooled.

⁷"And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, don't be alarmed. All of these events must take place, but they won't mean that the end has come.

⁸"*Because when the end is actually approaching,*^a nation will rise up against nation,^b and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines and other troubles.^c But all of these will be only the beginning of the birth pangs.^d

⁹"You will need to be constantly on your guard, because those who oppose you will arrest you and take you to court. And because of your stand and testimony for Me, you will be beaten in the synagogues, and you will be summoned to stand before governors and kings so you can tell them the Great News.^a

¹⁰"But in spite of all the persecution from those who oppose and hate you and your message, your main, burning concern,^a must still be to tell the Great and Marvelous News to people everywhere, in all nations!

¹¹"And when they arrest you and bring you to court, don't worry and make careful plans beforehand about what you will say in your defense, or meditate about how you will answer their charges.^a Just say what comes to you as you are being tried. They won't be your words; they will be

13:3-4a Christ gave the prophecy recorded in Luke 21:5-36 to all who were standing near Him outside the Temple, immediately after He had prophesied about the destruction of the Temple. Afterward, Christ left the Temple. On His way to Bethany, at the top of *the Mount of Olives*, He sat down.

It is at this time and place that *Peter, James, John, and Andrew* approached him *privately*. They had heard His prophecy about the destruction of the Temple (which was fulfilled in A.D. 70). As they walked up the Mount of Olives they were no doubt deeply concerned about this impending destruction (Luke 21:20-24), but they were also concerned about what Christ had said about the end of the age. So they now asked Him when these end time things would happen, and what would alert them.

In front of the Temple (Luke 21:7), their question was about the timing of the destruction of the Temple. They had also asked what sign would indicate that the destruction was about to take place, and Christ had told them what the situation would be in Israel when the destruction was about to occur. On

the Mount of Olives, however, according to Matthew 24:3, they asked Him about the other matters of which He had spoken, about His second coming and the end of the age.

At this location, according to Mark, they asked Him, *Just when will all these things take place?—the other things you just told us about. And what will happen to alert us that these things—not the things concerning the stones of the Temple, but all the other statements—what will happen to alert us that these things are about to take place?* They were clearly asking about His second coming and about the end of the world, because now in His answer, the Lord no longer speaks about the destruction of the Temple.

A definite distinction can be made between the two separate discourses of Jesus. One takes place in front of the Temple and the other on the Mount of Olives. See Matthew 24 notes regarding Christ's answers to His followers' questions at this time.

13:8a Implied.

13:8b Some translate this, *race will rise up against race*. The word nation is translated from the Greek word *ethnos*, from which we get the word

words given you by the Holy Spirit.

¹² “A man will even betray his own brother to death. A father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.^a

¹³ “Everyone will hate you because of your bold stand for Me. But the one who endures the persecutions that come and remains faithful to Me to the end of life will be saved.

A Warning to People in Israel

¹⁴ “But when you see the abominable thing, that represents the one who has caused so much devastation, standing where it has no business being, about which the prophet Daniel wrote,^a (let whoever reads Daniel give diligence to understand what he is saying), then those who are in Judea must flee to the hills.

¹⁵ “Anyone who is out on his roof deck when he hears the news^a must not go down into the house for any reason. If he’s elsewhere outside, he must not return to take anything out of the house.^b

¹⁶ “The person who is in the field must not go back to the house or anywhere else even to get his clothes.^a

¹⁷ “This will be a frightful and difficult time for those who are expecting babies or already have nursing babies.

¹⁸ “Pray that your flight will not be in the winter.

ethnic, pertaining to or characteristic of a people, especially a speech or culture group. Many of the wars today are indeed between different cultures.

13:8c In Matthew 24 the word *pestilence* is used in place of the word *troubles*. It could be that the Lord mentioned both words. The word *troubles* is translated from the Greek word *tarache*, which means *agitations, disturbances, resistance to lawful authority*.

13:8d ... *that will evidently first bring about the rebirth of Israel and ultimately the Kingdom of God on earth*. See Matthew 24:8 note.

13:9a See Matthew 24:9, and the note.

13:10a This phrase, from the Greek word *proton*, is ordinarily translated *first* in this verse. But the true meaning is *first in importance, chief, principal, most important*.

13:11a But do earnestly pray!

13:12a ... *because of their hatred for the truth* ... They will love their sin more than all else.

13:14a This all relates to the image of the Antichrist which will evidently be erected in front of the new Temple in Jerusalem, in place of the altar of sacrifice, which Antichrist will destroy (Daniel 11:31; 12:11) to make room for it. See Daniel 8:9-

¹⁹ “Because in those last days, there will be appalling trouble and persecution—far greater than at any other time since the creation of the world, until now. There will never again be anything like it.

²⁰ “If the Lord hadn’t shortened that terrible time, no one would be left alive on earth. But for the sake of His chosen ones, God has set a limit to those days.^a

²¹ “During that time, if anyone says to you, ‘Look, the Christ^a is over here!’ or, ‘Look, He’s over there!’ don’t believe it.^b

²² “Because false christs and false prophets will rise up with such amazing ability to do wonders and miracles^a that it will be convincing enough to deceive even God’s chosen ones, if that were possible.

²³ “So be on your guard. Always remember that I have forewarned you about all that’s ahead.

²⁴ “And during the days immediately after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not shine.^a

²⁵ The stars will not give their light from the heavens,^a and the powers controlling the heavenly bodies will be violently disturbed and shaken.^b

²⁶ “It’s after all these happenings, that the people on earth will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory!

²⁷ “That’s when He will send out His angels to

14; 9:27; 11:45; 12:1,7; Revelation 13:1-18; 14:9-11; 20:4-6. See also Matthew 24:15 note.

13:15a ... *that the altar in front of the Temple has been destroyed and removed, and the image of the Antichrist now stands in its place* ...

13:15b Value only your life, or you will not escape! Trust God for everything you will need. This all applies to those living in Israel at the time Antichrist betrays them.

13:16a See Matthew 24:16-18 note for escape instructions.

13:19-20a See Matthew 24:21-22 note.

13:21a Or *the Messiah*.

13:21b See Matthew 24:27 note.

13:22a They will have power from Satan. Revelation 13:2,4-5,12,14-15.

13:24a Isaiah 13:10; Revelation 6:12.

13:25a Greek *ekpípto* can mean *fail to give light* or *fail to be seen*, or refer to meteorites crashing into the earth in horrendous judgment. See Isaiah 13:10; Joel 3:15

13:25b ... *so that the planets will stray from their courses*. Be sure to read the prophecy in Isaiah 13:9-14 regarding this. See also Joel 3:16; Hag-gai 2:6,21; Hebrews 12:26.

gather together His chosen ones from all over the earth, from the extremity of one horizon to the extremity of the other.^a

²⁸“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: When its branches become tender and shoot out new leaves, you know that summer is near.

²⁹“In the same way, when you see these things beginning to happen, realize that the end is near, right at the door.

³⁰“I tell you the truth, this generation^a will positively not pass away before all of these events have taken place.

³¹“The heavens and the earth will indeed pass away, but there’s no possibility whatever that what I say will come to nothing.

The Day and Hour Unknown

³²“But as for the day and hour when I will return with great power and glory, no one knows, not even the angels in Heaven. Even the Son doesn’t know. Only the Father knows.

³³“So continually be on your guard! You must continually watch^a and pray! Because neither do you know when the time will come.^b

³⁴“It’s like a man who went on a long trip. He left his servants in charge of his house, telling each what he wanted done. And he gave instructions to the doorkeeper to guard and watch the entrance faithfully.

³⁵“You too must continue to be on your guard, because you don’t know when the Master of the house will return—in the late evening, at midnight, just before dawn, or during the morning

hours.

³⁶“If He comes suddenly, you must not let Him find you sleeping!

³⁷“And what I say to you I say to everyone: You must continually be awake and stay vigilantly alert!”^a

Jesus at Bethany

14 By this time, the annual Passover Festival and the Feast of Unleavened Bread^a were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the Law were still looking for a way by which they could arrest Jesus in some underhanded way and kill Him.

²“But we can’t do it during the Feast, or the people might riot,” they agreed.

³Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, who at one time had leprosy. As He was reclining^a at the table, a woman came to Him with an alabaster jar containing a very expensive perfume made of pure nard. After breaking it open, she poured the perfume on His head.^b

⁴But this made some of the men there very angry, and they said among themselves, “Why this senseless waste?

⁵“That perfume could have been sold for more than a working man could earn in a year, and the money given to the poor!” And they scolded her harshly.

⁶“Leave her alone!” Jesus demanded. “Why are you giving her a bad time? That was a beautiful thing she did for Me.

13:27a Matthew 24:29-31.

13:30a This refers to the generation living when these end time events begin to take place. It will all happen in one lifetime, with the climax being the return of Christ to earth in great power and glory, to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords! Revelation 19:11-16; 20:1 to 22:21.

It’s true that the generation listening to Christ at that time did not pass away before His prediction about the destruction of the Temple had been fulfilled. Luke 21:20-24. But Christ is referring here to the last generation of this age, when He says that the generation of which He spoke would *not pass away before all of these events had taken place. All the events of which He spoke here did not come to pass before the generation to whom He spoke had passed away.* He is definitely referring to the last generation of this age, the generation which is now seeing these end time events beginning to come to pass. See Matthew 24:32-34 note.

13:33a See note for v 37.

13:33b ... *when God will take you from this life, or when Christ will come to judge the earth.*

13:37a ... *by obeying the full instructions your Master left with you.* Christ is warning His followers to continually *watch how they are living and serving.* Are you obeying and serving as He has commanded? Are you living to please Him or yourself? Are you following His instructions in His Book? To neglect to do so will mean terrible loss. See Matthew, chapter 25.

The watchman was not to watch for the master’s return, but to faithfully watch and guard the gate, to keep the household safe (in this case from false teachers, sinful practices, etc.), until the Master returns. Pastor, evangelist, Bible teacher, this especially applies to you. In a sense, it applies to every follower of Christ. We dare not be cowardly (Revelation 21:8) about demanding that the truth, and the whole truth, be preached.

14:1a ... *when no bread with yeast was eaten* ...

14:3a The custom was to recline on couches while

⁷“You will always have the poor with you, and you can help them whenever you wish. But you will not always have Me.

⁸“She did all she could. She poured perfume on My body ahead of time to prepare it for burial.

⁹“I tell you the truth, wherever the Great News is told thruout the whole world, what this woman did for Me will also be told as a memorial to her.”

¹⁰It was at this time that Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests and offered to help them arrest Jesus.

¹¹When they heard what he wanted to do, they were extremely glad, and promised him money. So from then on, he kept looking for the best time and place to hand Him over to them.

The Passover Meal

¹²On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the day the lambs for the Passover meal were being killed, His followers asked Jesus, “Where do You want us to go to prepare the Passover meal for You?”

¹³“Go into the city,” He instructed two of His followers, “and when you meet a man carrying a pitcher of water, follow him.”^a

¹⁴“Wherever he enters, say to the man of that house, ‘The Teacher sent us to ask, “Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover supper with My followers?”’

¹⁵“He will then lead you to a large upstairs room, all furnished and prepared. Get things ready for us there.”

¹⁶The two men left, and when they came into the city, they found everything just as Jesus had said they would, and they went ahead and prepared the

Passover meal.

¹⁷In the evening, Jesus came with His twelve followers.

¹⁸As they were eating at the table, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, that one of you eating here with Me will betray Me.”

¹⁹His followers were deeply distressed at that announcement, and one by one they asked Him, “You surely don’t mean me, do You?”

²⁰“It is one of the Twelve,” he answered. “It’s the one who is dipping his bread with Me in the same bowl.”^a

²¹“The Son of Man will indeed leave this life in the very way it has been prophesied He would.”^a But woe to the man who is betraying the Son of Man. It would have been better for him if he had never been born.”

The Lord’s Supper

²²As they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after thanking God for it and asking Him to bless it, He broke it and gave it to His followers. “Take this and eat it,” He said. “This pictures My body.”^a

²³Then He took the cup, and after giving thanks, He also gave that to them, and they all drank from it.

²⁴“This pictures My blood,^a which will be poured out for many,” He said. “It is My shed blood that seals and guarantees God’s New Will and Agreement with mankind.

²⁵“I tell you the truth, I will no longer drink any of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink the new wine in the Kingdom of God.”

²⁶After they had sung a hymn, they went out to

eating.

14:3b John 12:3 states that the woman poured the perfume on His feet. She no doubt did both, as John 12:3 indicates she had a large amount.

14:13a Here was another miracle. It cannot be said that Jesus set this situation up, because it was His followers who asked Him where He wanted them to prepare the Passover meal. Then He gave them instructions to go into the city where they would meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. It was not customary for men to carry water. That was a woman’s job. But the Lord knew this man would be carrying this water at this particular time, and He may have even arranged for it to happen, though not in agreement with the man.

If Jesus knew a circumstance like that, then He must know all things. Then He sees all, hears all, and knows every circumstance in every situation. This just enforces the truth that those whose hearts

are right with Him are under His care, and that even every action by the wicked is known by Him. As much as they may wish to be unseen by Him, they are seen nevertheless. And when the Books are opened at The Judgment, then everything will be revealed.

What a comfort this should all be to those whose hearts are right with the Lord, but what terror this should strike in the hearts of all who refuse Him as both their Lord and Savior.

14:20a He apparently said this privately to John, according to John 13:21-26.

14:21a Psalm 22:1-21; 41:9; Isaiah 52:14; 53; Daniel 9:25-26a; Zechariah 11:12-13; 12:10.

14:22a Meaning *this represents* or *is a picture of* or *will bring to your remembrance* My body, which is being broken and sacrificed for you.

14:24a Meaning *this represents* My blood.

14:27a Zechariah 13:7.

the Mount of Olives.

Peter's Denial Predicted

²⁷“Tonight you will all be ashamed of Me and desert Me,” Jesus then informed them, “because it has been prophesied:

I will strike down the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.^a

²⁸“But after I have risen back to life, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

²⁹Peter spoke up and said, “Even if everyone else loses faith and leaves You, I’ll never desert You!”

³⁰“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “that today, before this night is over and before the rooster crows a second time, you will have said three times that you don’t even know Me.”

³¹But Peter emphatically insisted, “Even if I must die with You, there’s no way that I would ever say I don’t know You!” And all the others said the same.

Gethsemane

³²Then they came to a place called Gethsemane, where He told His followers to sit down while He went farther on and prayed.

³³But He took Peter, James, and John along with Him, and He soon began to be deeply distressed and troubled.

³⁴“I am totally overwhelmed with sorrow,” He confided to those with Him. “It is so intense and deep that I am very close to death. Stay here and continue to keep watch.”

³⁵Then He went on a little farther and threw Himself to the ground, and prayed, asking God if it were possible that He could be delivered from the awful time of suffering and separation from His Father that was just ahead for Him.^a

³⁶“O Father! My Father!” He earnestly prayed. “Everything is possible for You. Please! Oh, please take this cup^a from Me! But I don’t want only what I want, but whatever You know must be done.”

³⁷Then He went back to His three followers, and there they lay, asleep! “Simon!” He said to Peter, “are you sleeping? Couldn’t you keep watch with Me for even one hour?”

³⁸“You must all continue to watch and pray so you won’t fall into temptation. Your spirit indeed

wants to do what’s right, but your flesh is weak!”^a

³⁹Again He left them and prayed, saying the same words.

⁴⁰But when He returned, He again found them asleep. They just couldn’t keep their eyes open, and they didn’t know what to say to Him.

⁴¹When He came back the third time He said, “Are you still sleeping? Still taking your rest? But that’s enough of that! The time has now come. Listen, the Son of Man is right now being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

⁴²“Get up now and let’s be on our way. Look, here comes My betrayer now.”

The Arrest of Jesus

⁴³And there he was! While Jesus was still speaking, there came Judas, one of the Twelve, with a great mob carrying swords and clubs. They’d been sent by the chief priests, the teachers of the Law, and by the elders.

⁴⁴Now the traitor had given this mob a signal. “The one I greet with a kiss on the cheek is the man you want,” he had said. “Arrest him, and as you lead him away, make sure he doesn’t escape.”

⁴⁵Immediately upon his arrival, he went right up to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Teacher!” Then with a great show of affection, he embraced Him, and kissed Him.^a

⁴⁶The mob then grabbed hold of Him and arrested Him.

⁴⁷But as they did so, one of Jesus’ followers standing there drew out his sword and slashed out at one of the servants of the High Priest and cut off his ear.

⁴⁸Then Jesus asked the mob, “Have you come out against Me as you would against a thief, to arrest Me with swords and clubs?”

⁴⁹“I taught in the Temple every day, and you did not arrest Me. But this is happening so that the prophecies in the Scriptures^a may be fulfilled.”

⁵⁰It was at this turn of events that all of His followers deserted Him and ran.

⁵¹There was, however, a young man following Him. He had only a linen cloth thrown around his naked body, and some of the young men in the mob grabbed hold of him.

⁵²But he left the linen cloth in their hands and ran from them naked.

14:35a ... that the temptations and awful sorrows and anguish He was experiencing might be lifted from Him, and that God might redeem mankind in some other way, so that He would not need to go thru the awful time of extreme suffer-

ing which was ahead for Him on the cross. His suffering on the cross was much more than physical. He evidently experienced total rejection by God.

14:36a ... these bitter sufferings and separation from You ...

Jesus Before the Council

⁵³The mob then led Jesus away and brought Him to the High Priest. And gathered there with the High Priest in that very early morning hour were all the chief priests, the elders, and the teachers of the Law.

⁵⁴Meanwhile, Peter had followed Jesus at a distance, right into the courtyard of the High Priest. There he sat down with the guards and warmed himself by the fire.

⁵⁵The chief priests and the entire Council kept trying to find effective witnesses who would be able to give testimony that would prove that Jesus should be put to death, but they couldn't find any.

⁵⁶Many gave false testimony against Him, but their testimonies contradicted each other.

⁵⁷Some stood up and lied about Him, saying,

⁵⁸"We heard him say, 'I will destroy this Temple made with hands, and within three days, I will build another, made without hands.'"

⁵⁹But even in this case, they couldn't agree as to what He had actually said.

⁶⁰Then the High Priest stood up and came down among the other Council members and addressed Jesus, "Don't you have anything at all to say in answer to these charges being made against you?"

⁶¹But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the High Priest addressed Him, asking, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of our praiseworthy God?"

⁶²"Yes, I am," Jesus replied. "And you will one day see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Almighty. You will also see Him coming with the clouds of Heaven."^a

⁶³At this the High Priest tore his clothes and shouted, "What further need do we have of witnesses?"

⁶⁴"You all heard his blasphemy! What is your verdict?" And they all shouted their condemnation of Him, demanding that He die.

⁶⁵Then some of them began spitting on Him. Next they blindfolded Him. Then pounding Him with their fists, they'd snarl, "Prophecy, you messiah! Who hit you that time?" Some of the soldiers also slapped Him around!

Peter Disowns Jesus

⁶⁶Peter was still in the courtyard below when one

of the servant girls of the High Priest came by.

⁶⁷When she saw Peter warming himself at the fire, she looked at him intently and said, "You were also with this Jesus from Nazareth."

⁶⁸But he denied it. "I don't even know the Man," he said. "In fact, I don't understand what you're talking about." Then he went out into the entry court—and a rooster crowed.

⁶⁹The same servant girl saw him again, and she said to those standing there, "Here's one of them." But again he denied it.

⁷⁰A short while later, those standing nearby said to Peter, "You have got to be one of his followers. You look like a Galilean, and you talk like one, too."

⁷¹At this Peter began to curse. Then he said, "I swear to God, as I told you, I don't even know the Man you're talking about!"

⁷²Just then the rooster crowed a second time. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had told him, "Before the rooster crows a second time, you will have said three times that you don't even know Me." When the terrible truth sank in, he burst into tears.

Jesus Before Pilate

15 Without further delay, in that early morning hour, the chief priests, together with the elders and the teachers of the Law—that is, the entire Jewish Council—hurriedly held a meeting and reached a decision. Then they tied Jesus up and led Him away and handed Him over to Pilate, the governor.

²"Are you the King of the Jews?" Pilate asked Him.

"Yes, what you say is true," Jesus replied.

³The chief priests then began heaping many charges against Jesus, but He didn't say a thing in His defense.

⁴So again Pilate questioned Him, "Do you have no answer for these men? What about all these charges they're bringing against you?"

⁵But still Jesus didn't say a word, and Pilate was amazed.

⁶Now it was the custom at the Feast of the Passover for the governor to release one prisoner to the people—whomever they requested.

⁷One well-known prisoner at that time was a

14:38a You may have very good intentions, but you need all the help you can receive from God. See Philipians 2:12-13.

14:45a This entire sentence is implied from the literal words *and ardently kissed Him*.

14:49a See Matthew 26:24 note.

14:62a A possible meaning is ... *with clouds of His people from Heaven*.

15:13,14a Meaning *Nail him to a cross!*

man by the name of Barabbas. He was chained in prison with several others who had committed murder during a revolt against the Romans.

⁸The crowd that had gathered there now began to shout at Pilate, asking him to release a prisoner to them as he had always done at this time of year.

⁹“Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” Pilate asked them.

¹⁰He knew very well that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him because they were jealous of Him.

¹¹But the chief priests stirred up the crowd and convinced them to ask for Barabbas instead.

¹²“What would you have me do, then, with the one you call the King of the Jews?” Pilate asked them.

¹³“Crucify^a him!” the crowd shouted.

¹⁴“But why?” Pilate demanded. “What wrong has he done?” But that only caused them to roar louder than ever, “Crucify^a him! Crucify him!”

¹⁵Pilate was a cowardly and corrupt people-pleaser, so he finally let them have Barabbas. And after he’d had the Roman soldiers severely whip Jesus,^a he handed Him over to the soldiers to be crucified.

The Soldiers Make Fun of Jesus

¹⁶The soldiers then led Him into the barracks within the courtyard and called the whole garrison together.

¹⁷There they put a purple^a robe on Him. After twisting some branches with long sharp thorns into a crown, they put that on His head.

¹⁸Saluting Him in mockery, they followed that up by contemptuously shouting, “Hail! King of the Jews!”

¹⁹Again and again they hammered Him on the head with a slender pole,^a and kept spitting on Him. Then they would kneel and bow down in front of Him in mock worship.

²⁰After finally losing interest in insulting Him further, they took off the purple robe and put His own robe back on Him. Then they led Him out to crucify Him.

Jesus Nailed to the Cross

²¹On the way, they met a man from Cyrene, in

Libya, named Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus. He was on his way into town from the country, and they forced him to carry Jesus’ cross.

²²They brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha, which means, The Place That Looks Like a Skull.

²³There they offered Him a drink of wine that had a drug called myrrh^a mixed in it, but He refused to drink it.

²⁴After they crucified Him, the soldiers divided His clothing among themselves by throwing dice, to decide which piece each would get.

²⁵It was 9 o’clock in the morning when they nailed Him to the cross.

²⁶Then they nailed a sign above His head, stating the charge against Him, which read:

THE KING OF THE JEWS.^a

²⁷They also crucified two thieves with Him, one on His right, the other on His left.

²⁸So the Scripture was fulfilled that says,

He was treated as though He were a common criminal.^a

²⁹Many of those passing by kept hurling vicious insults at Him, shaking their heads and shouting, “So you’re the one who would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days!

³⁰“*If you’re so great,^a save yourself and come down from the cross!*”

³¹The chief priests, together with the teachers of the Law, also mocked Him, saying among themselves, “He saved others, but he can’t save himself.”

³²“So you’re the Messiah, the King of Israel,” they shouted at Him. “Come down now from the cross, so we can see a real miracle, and we’ll believe.” Even the two thieves who were crucified with Him hurled insults at Him.

The Death of Jesus

³³Then at noon, the whole country became enveloped in darkness, which lasted until three in the afternoon.

³⁴At 3 o’clock, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi! Eloi! Lama Sabachthani?” which means, **My God! My God! Why have You abandoned Me?^a**

³⁵When some of the people standing there heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling for Elijah.”

³⁶One of the men then ran and filled a sponge

15:15a See John 19:1 note.

15:17a Purple was the color of royalty. It was apparently used here in mockery.

15:19a ... *painfully pounding the long thorns ever deeper into His skull* ...

15:23a This was a drug given to stupefy the sens-

es, to make the pain more endurable. But Jesus was unwilling to blunt the pain of dying for us.

15:26a John 19:19-20 records that the sign was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

15:28a Isaiah 53:12.

15:30a Implied.

with vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Him to drink. "Leave him alone now," he then said. "Let's see if Elijah really will come and take him down."

³⁷ Following this, Jesus again cried out with a loud voice, and then breathed His last.

³⁸ Immediately following that, a most dramatic thing happened: The great curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom!^a

³⁹ When the captain of the soldiers, who was standing there in front of Jesus, heard how He cried out and then immediately died, he said, "Without question, this Man really was the Son of God!"

⁴⁰ Some women were also watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of the younger James and of Joses, and Salome.

⁴¹ These and many other women who were followers of Jesus were there. They had helped Him while He was in Galilee, and had traveled with Him to Jerusalem.

Jesus Is Buried

⁴² It was already evening.^a And since preparations were being made for the Sabbath,^b

⁴³ Joseph from Arimathea took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. A prominent member of the Jewish Council, Joseph was himself looking forward to the day when God would establish His Kingdom on earth.

⁴⁴ Amazed that Jesus had died so soon, Pilate sent for the Roman captain and asked him if Jesus was indeed already dead.

⁴⁵ When the captain confirmed that He was, Pilate gave Joseph permission to take the body.

⁴⁶ So Joseph bought some fine linen cloth. Then He took Jesus' body down from the cross and wrapped it in the linen, and laid the body in a tomb that had been carved out of a wall of rock. Finally he rolled a huge stone to close the entrance to the tomb.

⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were watching as He was laid in the tomb.

The Resurrection

16 On Saturday evening, after the Sabbath had ended,^a Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went out and bought perfumed oils, so that they might go to the tomb and pour the perfume on Jesus' body.

² Then very early on Sunday morning, just after the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

³ On the way, their question was, "Who will roll the stone away for us from the entrance to the tomb?"

⁴ But when they looked up as they were approaching the tomb, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled away.

⁵ Upon entering the tomb, they were extremely startled when they discovered a young man there, dressed in a long, flowing white robe, sitting at their right.

⁶ "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. But He's not here, because He has risen back to life again. Look, here's the place where they laid Him.

⁷ "But go now and tell His followers, and Peter, that He is going ahead of you to Galilee, just as He told you.^a You'll see Him there."

⁸ Those women got out of that tomb in a hurry, and ran. Trembling and amazed, they didn't say anything to anyone because they were too frightened to talk.

Jesus Makes Several Appearances

⁹ It was early on Sunday morning that Jesus came back to life, and the first person He appeared to was Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had driven seven demons.

¹⁰ She immediately went and told those who had been with Him, who were still mourning and weeping.

¹¹ When they heard her say that Jesus was alive and that she had even seen Him, they didn't believe it.

¹² Later that day, Jesus disguised His appearance and talked to two of His followers while they were

15:34a Psalm 22:1-21 and all of Isaiah 53, prophesy Christ's crucifixion.

15:38a Matthew 27:51 records that a great earthquake also took place at this moment. Regarding the *great curtain*, see Luke 23:45 note.

15:42a Evening began at 3 o'clock, and the new day began at sundown. So the body had to be buried before sundown, the beginning of the Sab-

bath.

15:42b The Jews prepared all food and did all other necessary work the day before every Sabbath. See Matthew 28:1 note.

16:1a ... *at sundown* ...

16:7a Mark 14:28.

16:12a See Luke 24:13-35 for a full account.

walking in the country.^a

¹³When they finally realized who had been with them, they rushed back and told the others what had happened, but no one believed them either.

¹⁴After these men had reported, however, Jesus suddenly appeared to the Eleven as they were at the table eating. He scolded them for their lack of faith and for their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen Him after He had risen back to life.

¹⁵Then He told them, "I want you to go to everyone in the whole world and tell them the Great News.^a

¹⁶"Those who believe^a and are baptized will be saved, but those who refuse to believe will be condemned.

¹⁷"And these miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: By using the authority of My name, they will drive out demons. They will speak

in new languages.

¹⁸"Even if they pick up a serpent^a or drink any poison,^a they will definitely not be harmed. They will place their hands on the sick, and they will be healed."

Jesus Ascends to Heaven

¹⁹After the Lord had spoken these words to them, He was taken up into Heaven, where He sat down at the right hand of God.

²⁰After this His followers went out and preached everywhere. And the Lord was continually working with them, proving by miracles that what they preached was true. So be it!

16:15a See Matthew 28:18-20 notes, and Appendixes 212, page 477, and 226, page 486.

16:16a What does it mean to *believe*? See Galatians 3:11; Luke 14:26-33; John 3:36; Acts 16:31, and

the notes there.

16:18a ... *accidentally or are forced to* ...

T

hen Jesus said, "Whoever wants to follow Me must no longer live for the purpose of pleasing and satisfying his own natural desires. He must take up his cross and die to those selfish desires, and make it his practice to obey what I have taught and commanded.

³⁵"Because if you choose to continue to satisfy your desire to live as you yourself please, you will lose your soul! But if you will make it your purpose in life to put to death your own desires, and live as I desire that you live, and live for the sake of giving the Great News to others, you will save your soul.

³⁶"Because what good would it do you even if you gained all the wealth and power and all the flesh-fulfilling experiences in all the world, but then found yourself barred from Heaven and sent to your judgment in Hell?

³⁷"Or look at it this way: If you suddenly found yourself in awful suffering in Hell, how much would you then be willing to give of yourself to God in order to gain His forgiveness and eternal life?

³⁸"If you are ashamed of Me among the sex-crazed, sinful people of your time, ashamed to fly your colors and share with others the message of Life that I came from Heaven to earth to give lost mankind, I, the Son of Man, will also be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of My Father with the holy angels."

—Mark 8:34-38

THE GREAT NEWS

as reported by

Luke

Luke's Reason for Writing This Report

Most Honorable Theophilus:

You know that many have undertaken the task of writing a report about the astounding events that have taken place here.

²Those who wrote these reports for us had been eyewitnesses of these events from the very beginning, and were responsible guardians of the message.

³However, it occurred to me that because I also have been accurately acquainted with the details of the facts from the very beginning, it would be good for me to send an orderly report to you,

⁴so that you might know with certainty that the events you were told about did indeed take place.

John the Baptizer Is Born

⁵During the time that Herod was king of Judea, there was a certain priest by the name of Zachariah, who belonged to the Abijah division of priests. His wife, also a descendant of Aaron,^a was named Elizabeth.

⁶God was pleased with both of them, because they fully obeyed all that He had commanded them, and most carefully obeyed His instructions about religious rites and duties.

⁷But they had no children, because Elizabeth hadn't been able to give birth to any, and now they were both quite old.

⁸But it so happened that while Zachariah was serving as priest before God, when it was his group's turn to serve,

⁹he drew the assignment by lot^a (which was the way the priests decided what work each of them would do) to burn incense on the altar inside the Temple of the Lord.

¹⁰When the time came for him to burn the incense, there was a large crowd of people outside praying.

¹¹But as Zachariah went inside and approached the altar of incense, he was suddenly aware that an angel of the Lord was standing at the right side of

the altar.

¹²When Zachariah saw him, he was startled, then terrified.

¹³But then the angel spoke to him and said, "Don't be afraid, Zachariah, because God has heard your earnest pleading in prayer. Your wife Elizabeth will give birth to a son for you, and you are to name him John.

¹⁴"He will be a source of extreme joy and happiness to you, and many others will rejoice with you when he is born.

¹⁵"God will regard him as a very special person. And since he will be filled with the Holy Spirit from the time he is in his mother's womb, he must never drink wine or strong drink.

¹⁶"He will convince many of the people of Israel to turn from living to please themselves to living to please the Lord their God.

¹⁷"Just before the Messiah begins His ministry, John will preach in the same spirit and with the same power that Elijah did. He will soften the hearts of fathers toward their children, and will cause those who are disobedient to turn back and live in wisdom by doing what's right. In other words, he will get the people prepared and ready to welcome their Lord."

¹⁸"But how can I be sure that this will really happen?" Zachariah asked the angel. "Because both my wife and I are much too old now to have children."

¹⁹"I am Gabriel," the angel replied. "I stand in the presence of God, and it was God who sent me to tell you this great news.

²⁰"But because you have not believed the message I brought you, which will happen at the proper time, your mouth will be silenced and you will not be able to speak until what I told you about has taken place."

²¹Meanwhile, the people waiting outside for Zachariah began to wonder why he was in the Temple so long.

²²But when he finally came out, he couldn't speak to them. Then they realized he must have seen a vision in the Temple, because he kept mak-

1:5a , . . . *from whom all the priests of Israel are descendants.*

1:9a By throwing dice or drawing straws, or some

such means, after prayer had been made, asking God to decide the outcome.

ing signs to them, but he couldn't say a word.

²³When his time of service was completed, he returned home.

²⁴Soon after that his wife Elizabeth was expecting a baby, and for five months she didn't leave the house.

²⁵"Just think of what the Lord has done for me!" she exclaimed. "He has taken pity on me, and now people won't be looking down on me."^a

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to a virgin named Mary, who lived in Nazareth, a town in Galilee.

²⁷She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David.

²⁸"Greetings, highly favored one!" the angel addressed her. "The Lord is with you! You have reason to be the happiest woman on earth."

²⁹But when Mary saw him and then heard what he said, she was confused and perplexed, wondering what he could ever mean by such a greeting.

³⁰"Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel continued, "because God is greatly pleased with you.

³¹"Listen carefully! You will very soon conceive a child in your womb and give birth to a Son. You are to name Him Jesus."^a

³²"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make Him King of Israel, the same as His ancestor King David was.

³³"And He will reign over the people of Israel forever. There will never be an end to His Kingdom."^a

³⁴"How can that happen," Mary asked the angel, "since I'm a virgin?"

³⁵"The Holy Spirit will come upon you," the angel replied, "and the power of the Most High God will hover over you. For that reason, the Holy One who will be born to you will be called the Son of God.

³⁶"Even your relative Elizabeth will have a son. She is now an old woman, and everyone knows that now, because of her age, she will never have

any children. But she is now in the sixth month of her pregnancy,

³⁷because nothing is impossible for God."

³⁸"Sir," Mary replied, "I am a willing servant of the Lord. So may it all happen as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

³⁹Very soon after that Mary hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea.

⁴⁰There she entered the home of Zachariah and greeted Elizabeth.

⁴¹The moment Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the babe in her womb made a leap, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

⁴²Then with a loud voice she exclaimed, "Of all women you are the one most favored by God! What a blessing to the world that Child will be to whom you will give birth.

⁴³"But why am I so privileged that the mother of my Lord should visit me?

⁴⁴"I tell you the truth, the moment I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

⁴⁵"You are blessed by God because you believed He would do what He said He would. And God will indeed keep the promise He made to you."

Mary's Song of Praise

⁴⁶Then Mary said,

"My whole being overflows with praise to the Lord!

⁴⁷And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!^a

⁴⁸Because in spite of the low and humble position of this servant^a of the Lord, He didn't ignore me. Just think of it—from this time onward people in all generations will speak of me as the one who was so blessed and made so happy by God.

⁴⁹Because He who is the Mighty One has done such great things for me! Truly, His name is to be most highly revered!

⁵⁰From one generation to the next, He continues to be big-hearted toward those who continue to

1:25a ... *for not being able to have children.*

1:31a The name *Jesus* means *Savior*.

1:30-33a A good portion of this prophecy has already been fulfilled. The Messiah has been born of Mary. He has already been declared *great*. But not until His second coming, following the Battle of Armageddon and the judgment of fire, earthquake, and darkness upon the earth, will He assume *the throne of David* as King of the Jews. Isaiah 16:5.

Other Scripture indicates, however, that David himself will be restored as king of the Jews. Jeremi-

ah 30:9. Nevertheless, it is Christ who will reign over even David and over all nations of the earth as King of kings and Lord of lords. Isaiah 2:1-5.

His reign over the earth will last forever. Isaiah 9:6-7. The first 1,000 years, called the Millennium, will be the period during which Christ will subdue the earth. 1 Corinthians 15:22-28. His Kingdom on earth will continue beyond that, however, thruout endless eternity.

1:47a Mary was a wonderful woman, but not perfect. Even she needed a Savior.

have fear of dishonoring or displeasing Him.

⁵¹He has done such great things by His powerful might. He has scattered those who are proud, who had such lofty ideas about what they by themselves would do.

⁵²He has pulled down the mighty from their thrones and elevated and promoted those who are humble.

⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things, but those who considered themselves to be rich,^a He sent away with empty hearts.

⁵⁴He has helped His servant Israel. He has faithfully honored His promise

⁵⁵to Abraham and our other forefathers, when He told them He would be merciful to their descendants forever.”

⁵⁶Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months, and then returned home.^a

The Birth of John the Baptizer

⁵⁷When the time came for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a boy.

⁵⁸And when her neighbors and relatives heard how good the Lord had been to her, they rejoiced with her.

⁵⁹Eight days after the baby was born, they came to be present when the child was circumcised, and they wanted to name him Zachariah, after his father.

⁶⁰But his mother spoke up and said, “No, his name is to be John.”

⁶¹“But why?” they asked her. “None of your relatives have that name.”

⁶²So they made signs to the child’s father, asking him what he wanted the boy to be named.

⁶³And he made signs asking for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s amazement he wrote, “His name is John.”

⁶⁴As soon as he wrote that, he could speak again, and he began praising God.

⁶⁵All the people in that area were deeply shaken by the circumstances of John’s birth. People throughout all the hill country of Judea were talking about it.

⁶⁶Everyone who heard about it made a mental note of it, saying, “What kind of person will this child grow up to be?” because it was very evident that the hand of the Lord was upon him in a very special way.

Zachariah’s Prophecy

⁶⁷Another happening was that John’s father, Zachariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying:

⁶⁸“May the Lord God of Israel be praised! He saw our great need, and has provided a ransom for His people.

⁶⁹Thru a descendant of His servant David, He has raised up One with great power to save us.

⁷⁰From the time God created man He prophesied thru His holy prophets that He would do this.^a

⁷¹Those prophets told how we would be saved from our enemies and from the power of all who hate us.^a

⁷²God promised our forefathers that He would remember His unbreakable promise and be merciful and kind to us.

⁷³With a solemn oath He promised our father Abraham

⁷⁴that He would free us from the power of our enemies, so that we could serve Him without fear.

⁷⁵He promised He would help us to do what is completely right and pleasing in His sight all the days of our lives.^a

⁷⁶And you, my child, will be called the prophet of the Most High God. You will go on the scene ahead of the Lord to prepare the people to receive Him.

⁷⁷You will tell His people how they can receive forgiveness for their sins and be saved.

⁷⁸Because of His tender mercy, God has visited us from Heaven with the dawning of a New Day, for the purpose of giving us light and understanding.

⁷⁹We have been living in darkness and in fear of death, but now God will guide us into a life of peace and assurance!”^a

1:48a Literally *bond maid*, one in bondage to another. But a true follower of the Lord is not forced into bondage to Him. We gladly serve such a wonderful and loving Lord. It is an honor to live for Him and serve Him.

1:53a ... *believing themselves to have everything, and sensing no need* ...

1:56a It would seem likely that she stayed until Elizabeth’s baby was born.

1:70a Genesis 3:15.

1:71a Isaiah 14:1; 44:24-26; 54:7-17; Jeremiah 30:9-11; 33:14-16; Zechariah 9:9-10, etc.

1:75a Philippians 2:12-13.

1:79a God sent His Son to earth in human form in the person of Jesus Christ, that we might learn what life is all about. When we are converted from our determination to do what we want, and instead truly desire to do what God wants, He forgives our sins and gives us peace and joy and everlasting life—all because of the sacrifice Christ made in suf-

⁸⁰The child grew and became strong in his courage and determination to do only what was right and pleasing to God.^a When he grew up, he lived in the wilderness until he entered his public ministry to Israel.

The Birth of Jesus

2 It was during that time that an order went out from Caesar Augustus, the Roman Emperor, that a census was to be taken thruout all the inhabited world.

²This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

³So everyone went to register for the census, each going to the city where his family register was kept.

⁴And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem, the city of David, in Judea.

⁵Both he and Mary went there to register. Mary was engaged to him, and was expecting a baby.^a

⁶It so happened that while they were there, the time came for the baby to be born.

⁷But since there was no room for them in the inn, they went into a cattle shed. And there she gave birth to her first child, a Son. She wrapped Him in wide strips of cloth^a and laid Him in a manger.^b

The Shepherds and the Angels

⁸Out in the fields nearby were some shepherds staying with their sheep, watching over their flock thru the night.

⁹Suddenly, without warning, an angel of the Lord stood in front of them, and the whole area became most brilliantly illuminated by the Lord's glory. The shepherds were terrified.

¹⁰"Don't be afraid," the angel said. "Listen, I am bringing you Great News—news that will bring great joy! It is Great News for everyone everywhere!

¹¹"Because today in the city of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah,^a the Lord!

¹²And this is the sign by which you can know that I am telling you the truth: You will find a baby

wrapped in wide strips of cloth, lying in a manger."^a

¹³Then suddenly a massive throng of the millions of angels in Heaven joined the angel who had just spoken, all praising God and loudly proclaiming:

¹⁴"Give glory to God in the highest heavens! And may there be peace in the hearts of all people on earth who live to please God."

¹⁵When that great throng of angels had left and had gone back to Heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem, right now, and see for ourselves this great happening that the Lord has just told us about!"

¹⁶So off they went, and they did indeed find Mary and Joseph. And there was the Baby, lying in a manger.

¹⁷After they had seen Him, they went out and told people everywhere what they had been told about this Child.

¹⁸And all who heard what the shepherds reported were amazed and wondered what this could mean.

¹⁹But Mary treasured all their words, and thought about them often.

²⁰When the shepherds went back to their sheep they kept talking to each other about how great God is, and continued praising Him for everything they had just seen and heard. They had found everything just as the angel had said they would.^a

²¹When the time came to circumcise the Child, which was eight days after His birth, He was named Jesus, the name given Him by the angel even before He was conceived.

Jesus is Presented in the Temple

²²And when the days for Mary's purification had been completed, in obedience to the Law of Moses,^a Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.

²³The Law of the Lord commands:

Every firstborn baby that's a boy is to be dedicated to the Lord for His service.^a

²⁴They also went to offer the sacrifice they were instructed to make in obedience to the Law of the Lord. They were to offer at least

a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.^a

fering and dying on the cross for us.

1:80a Literally *strong in spirit*.

2:5a See Matthew 1:18-25.

2:7a This was how young babies were dressed. They were called *swaddling cloths* (to swathe, to wrap around like a bandage).

2:7b A feeding trough for animals.

2:11a The Greek word is *Christ*, but the Hebrew translation is *Messiah*, meaning *the anointed One* whom God anointed with great power and authority before the universe was created. John 17:24.

2:12a See v 20, and the note.

2:20a Every baby in Israel was wrapped in wide strips of cloth, but not even the poorest was placed

²⁵ Now at that time there was a devout, truly good man living in Jerusalem named Simeon,^a who was faithfully waiting for God to send the Messiah to save and restore Israel. And the Holy Spirit was upon him.

²⁶ The Holy Spirit had actually told him he would not die before he had seen the Messiah, whom God had promised.

²⁷ And at the same time that the parents of the Child Jesus brought Him into the Temple courts to do for Him what the Law required, the Holy Spirit led Simeon to go there too.

²⁸ When he saw the Child he took Him in his arms and thanked God, saying:

²⁹ "Lord, You have kept Your promise! Now I can leave this life in peace.

³⁰ Because with my own eyes, I have seen the One thru whom You will bring salvation,

³¹ which You have provided for all people.

³² He will be a Light to reveal Your truth to people in all nations, and He will be the glory of Your people Israel!"

³³ Joseph and Jesus' mother continued to be amazed at the things that were said about Him.

³⁴ Then Simeon pronounced God's blessing on all three of them. Then he said to Mary, Jesus' mother, "Listen, Mary, this Child is destined to bring about the fall of many in Israel. He will also cause many in Israel to rise.

³⁵ "He will be a wonder that will be spoken against, so that the deepest thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And a sword will also pierce thru your own soul."

³⁶ There was also a prophetess in Jerusalem at that time named Anna, a daughter of Phanuel, a member of the tribe of Asher. She was now 84 years old.

³⁷ She had been married for seven years, but had now been a widow ever since her husband's death. She never left the Temple, but continued to worship the Lord day and night by praying and often fasting.

³⁸ When she came to where Mary and Joseph and the Baby were, just as Simeon was talking to them, she also began praising God for sending Jesus. And she spoke about Him to everyone in Jerusalem who

was waiting to be set free.

³⁹ When they had performed all that the Law of the Lord required, they returned home to their own city of Nazareth in Galilee.^a

⁴⁰ And the Child grew and became strong in His desire and determination to live only to please God.^a He was continually being filled with wisdom, and God's blessing was upon Him.

The Boy Jesus at the Temple

⁴¹ His parents went to Jerusalem every year for the Passover Feast.

⁴² And when Jesus was 12 years old, they went up for the Feast, as usual.

⁴³ When the days of the Feast ended, they started for home. But without Joseph or His mother knowing it, Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.

⁴⁴ They thought He was somewhere in the crowd they were traveling with, so they traveled a whole day before they finally missed Him when they looked for Him among their friends and relatives.

⁴⁵ When they couldn't find Him they traveled all the way back to Jerusalem to look for Him.

⁴⁶ Not until three days later did they find Him. There He was, sitting in the Temple in the middle of a group of teachers, both listening to them and asking questions.

⁴⁷ All who heard Him were amazed at how much He knew, and His wise answers.

⁴⁸ When His parents finally found Him, they, too, were amazed. "Son, why did You do this to us?" His mother heartrendingly implored. "Your father and I have been frantically looking everywhere for You!"

⁴⁹ "Why did you need to look for Me?" He replied. "Didn't you know it would only be right that I would be here, busy in the affairs of My Father?"

⁵⁰ But they didn't understand what He was talking about.

⁵¹ Then He went with them, back home to Nazareth, and He was always obedient to them. But what He had done and said were just more things that Mary continued to treasure and wonder about.

⁵² Loved by both God and man, Jesus continued to grow in wisdom and in physical stature.

in a manger. Also, they had been told by the prophets of old and by their present religious leaders that the Christ (the Messiah) would someday come. All they had been told was now coming to pass, so they had good reason to praise God.

2:22a Forty days for a son. Leviticus 12:1-4.

2:23a Exodus 13:2,12.

2:24a Leviticus 12:8.

2:25a Note that Simeon was a common man, not a priest.

2:39a Matthew 2:1-23 reveals that before returning to Nazareth they returned to Bethlehem, then escaped to Egypt, then home to Nazareth.

2:40a Literally *strong in spirit*.

The Preaching of John the Baptizer

3 It was during the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar that John, the son of Zachariah, received a message from God while he was out in the wilderness.

²At the time, Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea; Herod was ruler of Galilee; his brother Philip, ruler of Iturea and Trachonitis; and Lysanias, ruler of Abilene. Annas and Caiaphas were the High Priests.

³After hearing from God, John went thruout the whole region of the Jordan River, proclaiming to everyone, “Turn away from your sins and be baptized, and God will forgive your sins.”

⁴He was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah the prophet, who had declared:

Listen to the one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare for the coming of the Lord! Straighten out your ways for Him!

⁵Every valley will be filled, every mountain and hill will be leveled, the crooked places will be straightened, and the rough places will be smoothed out.

⁶Then people everywhere on the earth will see the salvation that God has made available for all mankind.^a

⁷Great crowds of people were continually coming out to be baptized^a by John. “You children of snakes!” he challenged some of them.^b “Who told you that you could escape the coming judgment of God’s fierce anger?

⁸“If you expect God to forgive you, you must now live lives that will prove that you have indeed turned from your sinning! And don’t think you are safe just because you can say, ‘Godly Abraham is our forefather.’ Because God is able to take even these stones and raise up descendants for Abraham.^a

⁹“Indeed, I warn you, the axe of God’s judgment is already being employed in cutting the very roots of the trees, and every tree that is not producing good fruit is being cut down and thrown into the fire!”^a

¹⁰“Then what should we do?” the crowds imploringly asked him.

¹¹“If you have two coats,” he replied, “give one to

the person who doesn’t have any. If you have food, share it with others.”

¹²Some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?”

¹³“Don’t charge anyone more tax than the government has told you to charge,”^a he told them.

¹⁴Then some soldiers asked him, “What should we do?”

“Don’t take property or money from anyone by unlawful force,” he replied. “Also, don’t accuse anyone with wrong that you know he didn’t do. And be content with your pay.”

¹⁵The people were expecting the Messiah to appear any time now, and they were all seriously wondering whether or not John might be the Messiah.

¹⁶But John told all of them plainly, “I baptize you in water, but Someone far more powerful than I am is coming. I’m not even worthy to unloose the straps in His sandals. He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire.

¹⁷“His winnowing fork is already in His hand, and He will separate the chaff from the grain and clear His threshing floor of everything. He will bring His wheat into His barn, but He will burn the chaff with fire that can never be put out.”^a

¹⁸He also taught them many other things as he continued to preach the Great News to them.

¹⁹Now John had repeatedly scolded Herod, the ruler of Galilee, for marrying Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, and for many other evils Herod had done.

²⁰Herod then added this crime to all his former crimes; he locked John up in jail.

²¹In the course of John’s ministry of baptizing all the people who came to him, Jesus was also baptized. As He was praying,^a Heaven opened up!

²²And the Holy Spirit came down upon Him in the form of a dove. Then a voice came from Heaven, saying, “You are My Son whom I love so dearly. I have found such great delight in You.”

The Family History of Jesus

²³Jesus was about 30 years of age when He began His public ministry. He was considered to be the

3:6a Isaiah 40:3-5.

3:7a Literally *immersed*. See Matthew 3:11 note.

3:7b Matthew 3:7 records that he said this to the Pharisees and Sadducees. They merely came to look and criticize. They didn’t come with open hearts, willing to be converted and baptized. Luke 7:30.

3:8a God doesn’t have any grandchildren. Depending upon the holiness of your mother or father to gain Heaven will do you no good! You must personally become a child of God by repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior and be born again by surrendering to Jesus as your Lord (Acts 20:21), if you are to escape the

son of Joseph.

Joseph was the son of Heli;

²⁴ Heli, the son of Matthat;

Matthat, the son of Levi;

Levi, the son of Melchi;

Melchi, the son of Janna;

Janna, the son of Joseph;

²⁵ Joseph, the son of Mattathiah;

Mattathiah, the son of Amos;

Amos, the son of Nahum;

Nahum, the son of Esli;

Esli, the son of Naggai;

²⁶ Naggai, the son of Maath;

Maath, the son of Mattathiah;

Mattathiah, the son of Semei;

Semei, the son of Joseph;

Joseph, the son of Judah;

²⁷ Judah, the son of Joannas;

Joannas, the son of Rhesa;

Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel;

Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel;

Shealtiel, the son of Neri;

²⁸ Neri, the son of Melchi;

Melchi, the son of Addi;

Addi, the son of Cosam;

Cosam, the son of Elmodam;

Elmodam, the son of Er;

²⁹ Er, the son of Jose;

Jose, the son of Eliezer;

Eliezer, the son of Jorim;

Jorim, the son of Matthat;

Matthat, the son of Levi;

³⁰ Levi, the son of Simeon;

Simeon, the son of Judah;

Judah, the son of Joseph;

Joseph, the son of Jonan;

Jonan, the son of Eliakim;

³¹ Eliakim, the son of Melea;

Melea, the son of Menan;

Menan, the son of Mattathah;

Mattathah, the son of Nathan;

Nathan, the son of David;

³² David, the son of Jesse;

Jesse, the son of Obed;

Obed, the son of Boaz;

Boaz, the son of Salmon;

Salmon, the son of Nahshon;

³³ Nahshon, the son of Amminadab;

Amminadab, the son of Aram;

Aram, the son of Hezron;

Hezron, the son of Perez;

Perez, the son of Judah;

³⁴ Judah, the son of Jacob;

Jacob, the son of Isaac;

Isaac, the son of Abraham;

Abraham, the son of Terah;

Terah, the son of Nahor;

³⁵ Nahor, the son of Serug;

Serug, the son of Reu;

Reu, the son of Peleg;

Peleg, the son of Eber;

Eber, the son of Shelah;

³⁶ Shelah, the son of Cainan;

Cainan, the son of Arphaxad;

Arphaxad, the son of Shem;

Shem, the son of Noah;

Noah, the son of Lamech;

³⁷ Lamech, the son of Methuselah;

Methuselah, the son of Enoch;

Enoch, the son of Jared;

Jared, the son of Mahalalel;

Mahalalel, the son of Cainan;

³⁸ Cainan, the son of Enos;

Enos, the son of Seth;

Seth, the son of Adam; and

Adam, the son of God.

The Temptation of Jesus

4 When Jesus left the Jordan River He was full of the Holy Spirit,^a and the Spirit led Him into the wilderness, where He was tempted by the devil for 40 days.

² He ate nothing during that time, but when the 40 days came to an end, He was hungry.

³ So the devil said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread."

⁴ But Jesus replied, "The Scriptures declare,

Man will not survive on bread alone. He must also feast upon every word of God.^a"

⁵ Then the devil took Him up on a high mountain, and in a fraction of a second showed Him all the kingdoms of the world.

⁶ "I will give you all the glory and wealth of all

coming fierce anger of God. See also Matthew 3:9; Acts 20:20-21; Galatians 6:8, and the notes there.

3:9a See John 15:1-16.

3:13a Many of these tax collectors would charge more than they were instructed to charge, and keep the extra for themselves.

3:17a See Mark 9:44 note.

3:21a ... *after coming out of the water* ...

4:1a ... *after the Holy Spirit had come upon Him at His baptism* ... See John 3:34.

4:4a Deuteronomy 8:3.

these kingdoms, and make you Ruler over them,” the devil told Him, “because they have all been put under my authority, and I can give them to anyone I wish.

⁷“So if you will just kneel down and worship me, it will all be yours.”

⁸But Jesus thundered, “Get behind Me, Satan! Because the Scriptures declare,

You shall worship the Lord, your God, and He is the only One you shall serve!^a”

⁹Then the devil brought Him to Jerusalem, and had Him stand on the highest part of the Temple, and said to Him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here.

¹⁰“Because the Scriptures declare:

God will put His angels in charge of You, and order them to protect You.

¹¹**They will catch You in their hands, so that not even Your feet will be injured on the stones below.^a”**

¹²But Jesus replied, “It also says,

You shall not try to force the Lord your God into a situation where He must prove Himself.^a”

¹³When the devil had finished all of these temptations, he left Him for a while.^a

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

¹⁴Then Jesus, full of the Spirit’s power, returned to Galilee. And the news of how the Holy Spirit was working in a powerful way thru Him was the big news thruout the whole region.

¹⁵He went from synagogue to synagogue, teaching; and everyone who heard His teaching praised Him.

¹⁶When He came to Nazareth, His hometown, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath,^a as He always did, and stood up to read the Scriptures.^b

¹⁷He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and read from the place where it is written:

¹⁸**The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me. He has given Me this special anointing for the purpose of announcing the Great News to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to those who are enslaved in any way, to give sight to the blind, and to restore liberty to those who are crushed down.**

¹⁹**He has sent Me to proclaim that the time to preach and to accept this Great News is NOW.^a**

²⁰Then He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. Everyone in the synagogue was now looking at Him most intently.

²¹Then He began to speak to them, saying, “This Scripture has come true today, even while you were listening.”

²²Everyone continued listening carefully. They were amazed at all He said and how eloquently He said it. “But, isn’t this Joseph’s son?” they then said.

²³Then Jesus said to them, “You will most certainly quote to Me the proverb, ‘Doctor, heal yourself,’ by which you will mean, ‘We heard about the miraculous things you did in Capernaum. Let’s see now what you can do here in your hometown.’”

²⁴“But I must remind you,” He added, “that no prophet is welcomed in his hometown.

²⁵“During the time of Elijah, when the heavens were closed up tight and it didn’t rain for three-and-a-half years, there was famine everywhere.

²⁶“There were many widows in Israel at that time, but God didn’t send Elijah to help any of them. Instead, he was sent to a widow in the small town of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon.

²⁷“Also, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet, but he didn’t heal any of them. He healed only Naaman, the Syrian.”

²⁸When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were furious.

²⁹They leaped up and drove Him out of town and led Him to the top of the hill on which their town was built. Their plan was to throw Him off the cliff.

³⁰But when they got there, He just walked thru the middle of the crowd, and went on His way.

Jesus Drives out an Evil Spirit

³¹He went back to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and continued to teach the people there on the Sabbath days.

³²They were continually amazed at the way He taught, because He spoke with such confident authority.

³³One time as He was teaching in the synagogue, a man possessed by a demon screamed out as loud as he could,

³⁴“Leave us alone! What business do You have being here with us, You Jesus of Nazareth? Have

4:8a Deuteronomy 6:13.

4:11a Psalm 91:11,12.

4:12a Deuteronomy 6:16.

4:13a 1 Corinthians 10:13.

4:16a Saturday, the Jewish day of rest.

4:16b See Matthew 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6.

4:19a Isaiah 61:1,2.

You come to destroy us? I know who You are! You're the Holy One from God!"

³⁵ "Be quiet, and come out of him!" Jesus sharply commanded the demon. And after it had thrown the man down in front of everyone, it came out without doing him any harm.

³⁶ The people were all amazed, and said among themselves, "What kind of teaching is this? Why, with real authority and power He commands the demons to come out! And they always obey Him!"

³⁷ So the news about what He was doing continued to spread throughout the whole region.

Jesus Heals Many People

³⁸ When He left the synagogue He went to Simon's house. On arriving there, they found that Simon's mother-in-law was sick with a high fever, so they asked Jesus to help her.

³⁹ He went in and stood by her bed and commanded the fever to leave her, and it left! So she got right up and began to prepare a meal for them.

⁴⁰ As soon as the sun had set, everyone who had family members or friends who were sick with various diseases brought them to Him. He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them.

⁴¹ One after another, demons came out of many of them, crying out and saying, "You are the Messiah, the Son of God!" because they knew from past experience^a that He was the Messiah. But He rebuked them, and wouldn't allow them to continue speaking.^b

⁴² At daybreak Jesus left Capernaum and went to a deserted area. But the people came looking for Him, and when they found Him, they tried to keep Him from leaving them.

⁴³ But He said, "I must preach the Great News about the Kingdom of God to people in other cities, too, because that's the reason God sent Me here."

⁴⁴ So He continued to preach in synagogues all over Galilee.

Jesus Calls His First Followers

5 One day as Jesus was teaching the crowds that had gathered around Him on the shore of Lake Galilee, they pressed hard against Him to hear God's message.

² Then He saw two empty boats at the water's edge that the fishermen had left while they washed their nets.

³ He got into one of the boats, owned by Simon, and asked him to push out a little way from shore. Then He sat down and taught that great crowd from the boat.

⁴ When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Now head out for deep water and lower your nets for some fish."

⁵ "But Master," Simon objected, "we worked hard all night and didn't catch a thing. But if You say so, I will let the nets down again."

⁶ And when they did, they caught such an enormous number of fish that their nets began to break!

⁷ So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. When they got there they filled both boats so full that they were on the verge of sinking.

⁸ When Simon looked at all those fish, he fell to his knees in front of Jesus, and said, "O Sir, You must leave me, because I am a sinful man."

⁹ Simon said this because both he and all who were with him were totally overwhelmed at the great number of fish they had caught.

¹⁰ The same was true of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

"Don't be afraid," Jesus replied to Simon. "From now on you will be catching people instead of fish."

¹¹ So as soon as they got their boats to shore, they left everything and followed Him.

A Man with Leprosy Healed

¹² When Jesus came to one town, a man covered with leprosy saw Him. He came to Jesus and fell to his knees in front of Him and pleaded, "O Sir, if You want to, I know You can make me well."

¹³ Jesus reached out His hand and touched him, and said, "I do want to. Be healed!" Instantly the leprosy was gone!

¹⁴ "Don't talk to anyone about this,"^a Jesus ordered the man. "But go immediately and show the priest what's happened to you. Then as a testimony to everyone that you are healed, offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded."^b

¹⁵ But following this, the news about Him continued to spread farther and faster than ever, and huge crowds gathered to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses.

¹⁶ But instead of always staying with the crowds,

4:41a Pluperfect tense—positive, completed action in past time. They had seen Him in His Divine glory in eternity past. He is well known to all the spirit world.

4:41b Christ doesn't desire nor does He need Satan's testimony.

5:14a For the reason see Matthew 12:16 note.

5:14b Leviticus 13:1-46 and 14:1-32.

He would often slip away into wilderness areas to pray.

Jesus Heals A Paralyzed Man

¹⁷One day as He was teaching, there were Pharisees and teachers of the Law sitting in His audience. They had come from every town in Galilee and Judea, and also from Jerusalem. The power of the Lord was there, enabling Jesus to heal the sick.

¹⁸Then an amazing thing happened. Several men brought a paralyzed man to Him on a stretcher. They tried to carry him inside the house and place him in front of Jesus.

¹⁹But when they couldn't find any way to get him in, because of the crowd, they carried him up on the roof. After removing some tile they lowered the man and the stretcher down into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

²⁰When Jesus saw the determined faith these men had, He said to the man, "My friend, your sins are forgiven you."

²¹On hearing this, the teachers of the Law of Moses^a and the Pharisees began thinking to themselves, "Just who does this fellow think he is, blaspheming like that! Who can forgive sins, except God alone?"

²²But Jesus knew what they were thinking, so He asked, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts?"

²³"Which is easier to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or, 'Get up and walk'?"

²⁴"But, so you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins ..." He then said to the paralytic, "I say to you, 'Stand up, and pick up your stretcher and be on your way home!'"

²⁵Instantly, as everyone was watching, the man got up, took up his stretcher, and started for home praising God!

²⁶The people were all amazed, and they, too, praised God, and kept on praising Him. They were totally overwhelmed with awe, and kept saying to one another, "We have seen some astounding things today! Wasn't that something!"

The Calling of Levi

²⁷After that Jesus went out, and as He was walking along He noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tollbooth. "Come along and follow Me," Jesus invited him.

²⁸And he got right up and left everything, and went with Him.

²⁹Then Levi put on a lavish dinner for Jesus in his home. A large number of tax collectors and other guests were also invited to eat with them.

³⁰But the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees of that area began to complain bitterly to Jesus' followers, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with these crooked tax collectors^a and other sinners?"

³¹"Those who are well don't need a doctor," Jesus responded. "But the sick do."

³²"I haven't come to call those who consider themselves so godly that they have no need of further help. I'm here to call sinners to turn from their sinning, and to now live in obedience to God."

A Question About Fasting

³³Then they asked Him, "Why is it that John's followers and the followers of the Pharisees often fast^a and pray, but yours are always eating and drinking?"

³⁴"Would you expect the happy friends of the bridegroom to stop eating while the bridegroom is still with them?" He replied.

³⁵"But the time will come when the Bridegroom will be taken from them. They will indeed fast when that time comes."

³⁶Then He told them a parable: "No one cuts a piece of cloth from a new garment to repair an old one. If you did, you would ruin the new garment by taking the piece from it, and the new piece wouldn't match the old garment anyway."

³⁷"In the same way, no one puts new wine into old wineskins. The new wine would burst the old skins and the wine would run out, and the used skins would also be ruined."

³⁸"New wine must be put into new wineskins."

5:21a Exodus 19:1-31:18.

5:22a Their hearts (the emotional centers of their beings) were the cause of their conclusions, not merely their minds. They were jealous, and were looking for ways to discredit Him.

5:30a Tax collectors were despised in Israel, because they were Jews who collected taxes for the hated Roman government. And they were often dishonest in the amounts they collected.

5:33a To go without eating.

6:1a There were two special Sabbaths (which were extra Sabbaths) during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Leviticus 23:4-8. Read all of Leviticus 23 regarding extra Sabbaths. See also Matthew 28:1 note.

6:8a ... where everyone can see you.

6:9a ... by refusing to do the good we are capable of doing?

Then both are preserved.

³⁹“And no one who drinks old wine will immediately develop a taste for new wine. Because he keeps insisting, ‘The old is better.’”

A Question About the Sabbath

6 On the second Sabbath after the first special Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread,^a Jesus and His followers were walking by some wheat fields. His followers broke off some heads of wheat, then rubbed the husks off between their hands and ate the kernels.

²“Why are you harvesting grain?” some Pharisees challenged them. “That’s unlawful on the Sabbath!”

³“Haven’t you read what David did when he and his men were hungry?” Jesus responded.

⁴“He went right into the house of God and ate the sacred bread, which wasn’t lawful for him to eat. Only the priests were allowed to eat it, but he also gave some to his men.

⁵“Also, I, the Son of Man, am the Lord who decides what can and what cannot be done even on the Sabbath,” He concluded.

⁶On another Sabbath when Jesus went into the synagogue and was teaching, a man with a withered right hand was there.

⁷The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law kept watching Him closely, to see if He would heal this man on the Sabbath. They were so anxious to accuse Him of doing something wrong.

⁸Jesus knew what they were thinking, but in spite of that He said to the crippled man, “Stand up, and come and stand over here.”^a So he got to his feet and stood where Jesus told him.

⁹“Let Me ask you a question,” Jesus then said to these religious critics. “Is it lawful to do good deeds on the Sabbath, or are we to do evil^a? Can we take action to save life, or are we to destroy life^b?”

¹⁰After looking around at each one of them, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And when he did so, it was restored, just as full of life and strength as the other!

¹¹But the teachers and the Pharisees were furious, and began to discuss among themselves what

they should do to Jesus.

Jesus Chooses the Twelve Apostles

¹²One day during that time, He went off into the hills to pray, and He continued in prayer to God all night.

¹³When morning came, He called His followers to Him. And from among them He chose twelve, whom He called apostles.^a

¹⁴First there was Simon (whom He named Peter), and his brother Andrew; then James, John, Philip, Bartholomew,

¹⁵Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon (who was called the Zealot),

¹⁶Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who later became the traitor.

Blessings and Woes

¹⁷Then He came down from the hills with them and stood in a level area where He met with a crowd of His other followers. There was also a very large crowd of people there from Jerusalem and all over Judea, and from the seacoast area of Tyre and Sidon—all of whom had come to hear Him speak and to be healed of their diseases.

¹⁸There were also many there who were tormented by evil spirits, and they were healed.

¹⁹Everyone in that great crowd was trying to touch Him, because out from Him was coming power that was healing everyone.

²⁰Then He looked at all these people who were following Him and said:

“There is extreme happiness, both now and forever, for those of you who are poor,^a because the Kingdom of God belongs to you.^b

²¹“There is extreme happiness, both now and forever, for those of you who hunger now *with desire to please God*, because you will be completely fulfilled. There is also extreme happiness both now and forever, for those of you who weep now, because the time is coming when you will rejoice.

²²“There is also extreme happiness both now and forever for you, even when people hate you, when they exclude you from their company and speak angrily against you and curse your name, all because of the firm stand you take and the faithful

6:9b ... *by refusing to save the life we are capable of saving?*

6:13a The word *apostle* means *one who is sent*. An apostle could be called an envoy, one who is sent to accomplish a certain mission or work—an officially authorized messenger or representative.

6:20a Matthew 5:3 records that Jesus said, “... for

those who are poor in spirit ...” *realizing that their only hope is in Jesus Christ, and in living to please God thru His help*. No one inherits the Kingdom of God simply because he or she is poor.

6:20b What greater happiness can there be than knowing for sure that our future is incredibly brilliant and sure in God’s Kingdom, forever!

life you live for the Son of Man.

²³ “Always rejoice when this happens, and even leap for joy, because your reward in Heaven for being faithful will indeed be extremely great! Remember, this was also the way the prophets who lived and witnessed faithfully and boldly for God before your time were treated by the fathers of those who now mistreat you.^a

²⁴ “But woe to you who are rich now, because you are already receiving what you are living for.^a

²⁵ “Woe to you who are full now, because a day and time definitely is coming when you will experience awful hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, because the time is coming when you will hysterically weep and mourn.^a

²⁶ “Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you,^a because that’s how the fathers of those who speak well of you now treated the false prophets who gave false hope to the people of their time.

Love Your Enemies

²⁷ “But to those of you whose hearts and ears are open to what I’m saying, I have this to say: Always make a practice of being kind and considerate even toward your enemies.^a Always do good to those who hate you.

²⁸ “Continue to speak kindly to those who curse you, and even help them. And continue to pray for the ultimate happiness of those who treat you with

contempt, or threaten and mistreat you.

²⁹ “If someone hits you on the cheek, offer the other cheek to him too. If he takes your coat, don’t keep him from taking your shirt as well.

³⁰ “Make a practice of giving to everyone who asks you for something. And if someone takes something that belongs to you, don’t demand that he return it.^a

³¹ “Always treat others in exactly the same way that you want others to treat you.

³² “If you love only those who love you, why should you be praised or rewarded for doing that? Even sinners love those who love them.

³³ “If you make a practice of doing good only to those who treat you right, why should you be praised or rewarded for doing that? Even sinners do that.

³⁴ “If you lend only to those whom you are sure will pay you back, why should you be praised or rewarded for doing that? Even sinners lend to other sinners if they’re sure they’ll get back what they loaned.

³⁵ “But as for you, always be kind and considerate toward your enemies. Do good to them! Lend to them, and don’t feel sorry for yourself if they never pay you back, because then you can look forward to a great reward. You will in that way prove yourselves to be true children of the Most High God, because He is kind even to those who are ungrate-

6:20-23a See parallel passage in Matthew 5:1-12, and the notes there about these statements.

6:24, 25a It’s no sin to be rich, if your heart goes out to the spiritual and physical needs of mankind everywhere, and you work to lay up your treasure in Heaven by faithfully, sincerely and industriously using your financial and other strengths to be a blessing to both God and your fellow men. But if you seek heaven for you and yours here and now, by means of money and your various abilities, with little real regard for God and others, you will lose the eternal *Heaven* and all the indescribable rewards there that you could have gained.

To be converted to Christ means to be totally converted to Him—surrendering everything you are and everything you have or ever will have in this brief life, to be at God’s disposal for His glory and the blessing of mankind. See 14:25-35. You cannot be half born again spiritually, anymore than you can be half born physically.

Are you really converted from pleasing yourself to really pleasing God? Don’t measure yourself by others, and what they claim. Listen to Jesus! Yes, it’s time that we wake up to what Christ’s true teaching is about being converted to Him. See Luke 16:19-

31; Matthew 7:13-14; 19:16-30; Mark 10:23-27.

6:26a The people of the world, both in the church and out of it, who continue to refuse to surrender their lives in full obedience to Christ as Lord, will not speak well of you if you continue to give them Christ’s full message. 2 Timothy 3:12.

6:27a Work toward, and sincerely desire, God’s best for them. As fellow human beings they are your brothers and sisters, though alienated from you at present. Romans 12:20.

6:30a Leave the matter in the hands of the Lord. He will see that it’s returned; or He may more than make it up to you some other way.

6:37a If you have something against someone, be honest and open about it and go to that person and talk it over with him. Don’t talk about someone’s faults to others, talk to the person himself. Talking to people about the faults of others is pure, unadulterated gossip! Help that person at fault by phone, letter, or personal visit. If you write, give your name and address. Only miserable cowards send unsigned letters, or make unidentified phone calls.

6:37b ... *by God*. Galatians 6:7-10.

6:37c Matthew 6:14-15; 18:23-35.

6:38a No doubt God is the One who will see to it

ful and wicked.

³⁶“So always have pity on others, in the same way that your Father has shown pity toward you.

On Judging Others

³⁷“Never unjustly judge others in a careless and judgmental way,^a and you will not be judged.^b Always forgive others, and God will forgive you.^c

³⁸“Make it your practice to give. When you do so, you will find that others will give to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over is the way they will pour it into your lap, because the same measure you use in giving to others will be used in giving back to you.”^a

³⁹Then He gave them this parable: “Can a blind man lead another blind man? If they try that, won’t they both fall into the ditch?”^a

⁴⁰“The student doesn’t know more than his teacher, but every student will be just like his teacher after he’s fully trained.^a

⁴¹“And why do you continue to look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye, while you constantly ignore the big log in your own eye?

⁴²“Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take that speck out of your eye,’ when look, you can’t even see the big log in your own eye? You hypocrite! First remove the log from your own eye, then you’ll be able to see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

that this happens.

6:39a If a person loves to believe a certain way, in spite of the fact that his belief is contrary to the plain teaching of God’s message, beware. That person is willfully blind to the truth. Make sure that this doesn’t describe you. And make sure that you are not willfully following the teaching of a false teacher, simply because he’s such a nice person, or because you like what he teaches. Remember, the blind student of a blind teacher will receive the same condemnation from the Lord as the blind teacher. You can’t use the excuse that it was your teacher’s fault.

People will sit under the kind of teaching they want to hear. See 2 Timothy 4:3-4 note. Those who are honest, and desire the truth, no matter what the cost, will seek an honest teacher. Those who want the truth watered down or explained away will seek a false prophet who will tell them what they want to hear—and there are many false prophets today. Beware! See 2 Timothy 4:1-5, and the notes. Also Isaiah 9:13-17; Jeremiah 5:30-31.

6:40a This and the following verses are a part of the parable Jesus began in v 39. He is stating that the students of the blind Jewish leaders who oppose

A Tree and Its Fruits

⁴³“Another way of putting it is: You will never find a good tree that produces poisonous or worthless fruit, nor will you ever find a worthless tree that produces good fruit.

⁴⁴“So every tree is known by the fruit it bears. No one ever gathers figs from thorn bushes, nor grapes from bramble bushes.

⁴⁵“A good person says and does what’s good and right because of all the good thoughts, instructions, and desires that fill his heart. But an evil person says and does what’s evil and wrong because his heart is full of evil thoughts and desires. Because whatever fills a person’s heart comes out when he speaks.

The Wise and Foolish Builders

⁴⁶“And why do you people keep calling Me Lord, but still refuse to do what I tell you?

⁴⁷“Let Me tell you who the person is like who comes to Me and always listens carefully to what I tell him to do, and then makes a practice of always doing^a what I tell him:

⁴⁸“He’s like a man who built a house and dug deep in order to build his foundation on the rock. When the river flooded over and the torrent of water hit that house, it couldn’t even shake it, because it was built upon the rock.

Him will be just as blind and stumbling about the real truth as their teachers are now, after their teachers have finished teaching them. The same is true of those who are willing to constantly absorb the false, anemic, and watered-down preaching in many “Christian” churches today.

For the sake of your children, yourself, and others, do something about it! Search the Scriptures to find out if what is being preached in your church is biblical truth, or not.

6:47&49a To practice selective obedience is to practice disobedience and sin. To confess Christ with the lips, but not with the life, has always been a false confession. Only obedient faith is saving faith.

Jesus taught His followers to tell the whole world about Him and to *Teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you*. Matthew 28:20. Keeping His commandments is not optional for those who desire to enter eternal life. There is no saving faith apart from obedience.

The obedience of even the most godly Christian will be imperfect; but even though imperfect, the intent must nevertheless be real. See Hebrews 5:9.

⁴⁹“But the person who hears what I say yet does nothing about it^a is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the torrent of flood waters from the river hit that house and beat violently against it, it immediately fell apart. So the destruction of that house was total.”

The Faith of the Army Captain

7 When Jesus had finished saying all these things to the people, He went back into Capernaum.

²A Roman army captain stationed there had a servant of whom he was very fond, who was sick and very near death.

³He'd heard about Jesus, so He sent some of the leading Jews to plead with Him to come and heal his servant.

⁴When they came to Jesus they pleaded earnestly with Him, saying, “This man deserves your help.

⁵“He loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue.”

⁶So Jesus went with them. But He wasn't far from the captain's house when the captain sent some of his friends to Him with a message, “Sir, don't go to any trouble for me, because I'm not worthy even to have You enter my home.

⁷“That's why I didn't consider myself worthy to come to You. But just give the command, and my servant will be healed.

⁸“Because I also am a man under the authority of others, and I have soldiers under my authority. I say, ‘Go,’ to this one, and he goes. To another I say, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I tell my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

⁹When Jesus heard this, He was amazed at the man, and said to the crowd following Him, “I tell you, I haven't found such great faith anywhere, not even among the Jews.”

¹⁰When those who had been sent by the captain returned to the house, they found that the sick servant was already well.

A Widow's Son Brought Back to Life

¹¹The next day Jesus went to the city of Nain. Many of His followers went with Him, and also a large crowd of other people.

¹²As He approached the city gate, a funeral pro-

cession was coming out. A large crowd from the city was with the widowed mother, whose only son was the dead man being carried out.

¹³When the Lord saw her, His heart went out to her with deep tenderness, and He said to her, “Don't cry.”

¹⁴Then He went over to the open coffin^a and touched it, and those carrying it stood still. “Young man,” He said, “I say to you, rise up!”

¹⁵And the man who had been dead a moment before sat up and began to speak! Then Jesus gave him back to his mother.

¹⁶Everyone was overwhelmed with awe,^a and they praised God, saying, “A great prophet has risen up among us! God has again visited His people!”

¹⁷The news about what He had done there spread thruout all of Judea and all the surrounding territory.^a

Messengers from John the Baptizer

¹⁸When John's followers told him about all that was happening,

¹⁹he called two of his followers to him, and sent them to ask Jesus, “Are You the One we were told was coming,^a or are we to continue looking for someone else?”

²⁰When the men arrived where Jesus was, they asked Him John's question.^a

²¹Now during the short time they had been there, Jesus had cured many people of diseases, sicknesses, and evil spirits. He had also caused many who were blind to see.

²²So Jesus replied, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard. Those who were blind now see. Those who were lame are now walking. Those with dreaded skin diseases have been cured. The deaf now hear. The dead are being raised back to life, and the Great News is being preached to the poor.

²³“Happy and blessed by God is the person to whom I will not prove to be a stumbling block.”

²⁴When these men left, Jesus spoke to the crowds about John, “What kind of person were you looking for when you went out into the wilderness? Were you looking for someone like tall grass that is easily swayed this way or that by whichever way the wind is blowing?^a

7:14a The Jews wrapped their dead in linen cloths and laid them on a stretcher-type bier.

7:16a ... as they realized how near God was to them in that happening.

7:17a This happened up in Nain, Galilee. So the

news traveled thruout Israel, way down into Judea.

7:19,20a Deuteronomy 18:15,18; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 9:9.

7:24a Meaning someone who is swayed by every person's opinion or opposition. John was not one

²⁵ “What kind of man did you actually go out to see? Were you looking for someone dressed in expensive clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes and indulge in luxurious living live in expensive homes.

²⁶ “What were you really looking for? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and you found one who is far greater than a prophet.

²⁷ “Because John is the one about whom God was speaking when He said to His Son:

Listen! I will send My messenger ahead of You. He will prepare the people to receive You.^a

²⁸ “I tell you, no woman has ever given birth to a greater prophet than John the Baptizer. But even the lowest person in the Kingdom of God is greater than John is now.”

²⁹ On hearing this, all the people (including the tax collectors) agreed with Jesus that God had indeed sent John. They had earlier been baptized by him.

³⁰ But the Pharisees and the experts in the Law had refused to receive God’s message for themselves, and had refused to be baptized by John.

³¹ “To what then shall I compare the religious leaders of this generation?” the Lord continued. “What are they like?

³² “They’re like children sitting in a marketplace, whose playmates call out to them and complain,

‘We played wedding music for you on the flute, but you wouldn’t dance! We sang funeral songs, but you wouldn’t cry!’

³³ “Because when John the Baptizer came, he didn’t eat bread or drink wine, and they said, ‘He has a demon.’

³⁴ “But when the Son of Man goes among you both eating and drinking, they say, ‘Look at that man, he’s nothing but a glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and other sinners.’

³⁵ “But wise actions are always later proved to be right by the results.”

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

³⁶ One of the Pharisees then asked Jesus to have dinner with him. So He went to the Pharisee’s house and reclined^a at the table to eat.

³⁷ When a woman in that city who had lived a sin-

ful life found out that Jesus was reclining^a at the table there, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume.

³⁸ She then stood behind Him at the foot of His couch, weeping. And as her tears wet His feet she began wiping them with her hair. Then she affectionately and repeatedly kissed them, after which she poured the perfume on them.

³⁹ When the Pharisee who was Jesus’ host saw this, he thought to himself, “If this man really were a prophet of God, he would know who this woman is that’s touching him, and the kind of woman she is—a vile sinner!”

⁴⁰ So Jesus answered the man’s thoughts by saying, “Simon, I have something to say to you.”

“Yes?” he replied. “What is it, Teacher?”

⁴¹ “A moneylender loaned money to two men—500 silver coins to one and 50 to the other.

⁴² “But neither of them was able to pay him back, so he kindly canceled and forgave both debts. Tell Me now, which of them will love him the most?”

⁴³ “I suppose it would be the one whom he forgave the most,” Simon replied.

“You are right,” Jesus said.

⁴⁴ Then turning toward the woman He said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? When I entered your home, you didn’t even give Me water to wash the dust from My feet.^a But she has washed My feet with her tears and dried them with the hair of her own head.

⁴⁵ “You didn’t greet Me with a kiss of welcome, but this woman hasn’t stopped kissing My feet since I came in.

⁴⁶ “You provided no olive oil for My head, but she has bathed My feet with perfume.

⁴⁷ “Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are indeed many, are forgiven, because she has loved so deeply. But the one who is forgiven little loves little.”

⁴⁸ Then He said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven.”

⁴⁹ Some of the guests reclining at the table with Him then began to say to themselves, “Who is this who dares to think he can even forgive sins?”

⁵⁰ Then He said to the woman, “Your earnest faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

to doubt what God had told him. See Matthew 3:13-17 and John 1:29-34. John no doubt still believed that Jesus was the Messiah. But he sent his followers to question Jesus in order that *they* might be convinced.

7:27a Malachi 3:1.

7:36,37a The custom was to recline on couches

while eating, reclining on the left elbow and eating with the right hand — and the reverse, no doubt, for left handers.

7:44a Guests were ordinarily offered water and basins to wash their feet, after walking the dusty streets and roads in their sandals. They were also greeted with a kiss on each cheek.

The Parable of the Sower

8 After that, Jesus traveled about with His twelve followers, going thru city after city and town after town, preaching and telling the Great News about the Kingdom of God.

² Several women who had been cured of various diseases and demon possession were also with Him—including Mary, called Magdalene,^a from whom seven demons had been driven out;

³ Joanna, the wife of Chuza, who was Herod's palace manager; Susanna; and many others. These women used their own money to support Jesus and His followers.

⁴ On one occasion when a huge crowd was gathering around Him, and while others continued to arrive from all over the country, Jesus told them this parable:

⁵ "A farmer went out to sow his seed. And in the scattering of the seed, some fell on the hard path alongside the field. It was trampled on, and then the birds flew down and quickly ate it.

⁶ "Some fell on shallow soil covering a rock. But as soon as the sprouts came up they withered away because the thin soil couldn't hold any moisture.

⁷ "Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorn bushes grew up with the grain and choked it.

⁸ "But the seeds that fell on good soil grew and produced a crop a hundred times the amount sown."

When He had finished the parable He called out, "Let the one who has been given ears for the purpose of hearing, pay close attention to what I say!"

⁹ His followers then asked Him, "What's the meaning of that parable?"

¹⁰ "You have been given the privilege of understanding the mysteries of the Kingdom of God," He replied. "But the rest hear only the parable,

because

Although they are looking, they really aren't able to see. And although they are listening, they really aren't able to understand.^a

¹¹ "The meaning of the parable is this: The seed is God's message to mankind.

¹² "The seed that fell on the hard path alongside the field is a picture of people who hear God's message, but they allow the devil to come along and take the words from their hard hearts, so they won't really believe it and be saved.

¹³ "Those who receive the seed in the shallow soil on the rock are people who receive the message with joy when they hear it, but they don't allow the message to take deep root into their lives. They believe for awhile, but when temptations or persecutions come along, they fall away.

¹⁴ "Those who receive the seed among thorns are the people who listen to God's message, but as they go on their way, God's words in their hearts are choked by their anxious concern about their earthly problems and their interest in money and pleasure.^a So they never become mature and produce fruit.^b

¹⁵ "But those who receive the seed in good soil are the people who listen to the message, and with honest and sincere hearts obey it, and then patiently persevere in continuing to bear fruit."^a

Let Your Light Shine

¹⁶ Then He said, "No one lights a lamp and then covers it with a large container or puts it under a bed. No, he puts it on a table or stand, so that everyone coming into the room may be able to see by means of the light.

¹⁷ "Because there's nothing that is now hidden that won't be brought out where it will be clearly seen. And there's nothing that is now kept secret that won't be known and revealed.

8:2a Meaning from Magdala.

8:10a Isaiah 6:9.

8:14a This includes concerns about job, business, retirement benefits, investments, etc., more than concern about really obeying God. Romans 2:1-9; 6:16.

It also includes more time spent in sports or watching them, or in other self-pursuits, than in serving God by prayer, Bible reading, witnessing to others about their life and eternity, and in helping those who really need you.

It also includes having more concern about the boat, the car, or the home you live in, and its furnishings, than you have about laying up all the

treasure possible in your future, in Heaven—if you're really expecting, planning, and working out your own salvation (Philippians 2:12-13) to be there.

It's the love and concern for all the things of this life that will keep you from an eternity in Heaven. Where is your heart—really?

8:14b John 15:1-6 states clearly what happens to a person who doesn't bear fruit for God.

8:12-15a According to what Jesus said here: 1) Many people hear God's message, but allow their enemy (Satan) to cause them to neglect it until they've lost it, v 12, resulting in the loss of their soul. 2) Others joyfully receive the message, but

¹⁸“So you must continue to be very concerned about how you are listening to what you are hearing. Because whoever receives the truth and makes it his own, will be given more truth. But whoever doesn’t vigorously take hold of the truth, will have even what truth he thinks he has taken from him.”^a

Jesus’ Mother and Brothers

¹⁹One day His mother and brothers came to visit Him, but they couldn’t even get near Him because of the crowd.

²⁰Then someone told Him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, and wish to see You.”

²¹But His reply was, “My mother and My brothers are those who carefully listen to God’s message and obey it.”

Jesus Calms a Storm

²²Another day Jesus said to His followers, “Let’s cross over to the other side of the lake.” So they got into a boat and launched out.

²³As they got under way, He lay down for a nap. But a short while later a violent storm swept down the lake, and the boat began filling with water until they were in very great danger.

²⁴In great fear, they rushed over to Jesus and shook Him awake, saying, “Master! Master! We’re about to die!” He got up and told the wind and the waves to stop their violence. And they stopped! All became perfectly calm.

²⁵“Where is your faith?” He asked them. In fear and amazement they looked at one another, and said, “Who is this Man?^{2a} Why, He even gives orders to the wind and the water, and they obey Him!”

Man with Demons Delivered

²⁶Then they continued on to the territory of the

Gadarenes, which is directly across the lake from Galilee.

²⁷As Jesus stepped ashore, He was met by a demon-possessed man from the nearby town. This man hadn’t worn any clothes for a long time, and didn’t live in a house, but among the tombs in the burial caves.

²⁸Jesus immediately recognized the condition of the man, and commanded the demon to come out of him. When the demon recognized Jesus, the man let out a loud shriek, and then fell to his knees in front of Him and in a loud voice demanded, “What is it that You want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I plead with You, don’t torment me!”

²⁹Many times that demon had controlled the man’s actions. And although he had been bound with chains and leg irons and kept under guard at such times, he had broken the chains and irons and been driven by the demon into the wilderness.

³⁰“What’s your name?” Jesus then asked him.

“Legion,” he replied, because many demons had gone into him.

³¹Then the demons began begging Him not to send them into the Bottomless Pit.^a

³²A large herd of pigs was feeding nearby on a hillside. So they begged Him to let them go into the pigs, and He let them go.

³³So the demons went out of the man and into the pigs. But immediately that whole herd of pigs ran madly down the steep bank and into the lake, and drowned.

³⁴When the men herding the pigs saw this happen, they ran to the town and told the people there and also in the country what had happened.

³⁵And the people rushed out to see for themselves what had actually taken place. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in

they don’t allow God’s truths to take full possession of them and obey them. v 13. They make a sincere beginning, but they don’t follow thru. They too are eventually lost. 3) Others also gladly accept God’s message, but they give it only second or third place in their lives. They allow other things to be their first concern in life. v 14. According to John 15:1-6, they too are cut off from Christ and eternal life. 4) Only those who allow God to take full possession of them, and who make a practice of obeying God and serving Him, will inherit eternal life and escape God’s judgment. v 15. Those who are lukewarm toward God will just not make it. This is verified by Revelation 3:14-22 and other Scriptures.

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the everliving God. Hebrews 10:31. We are not dealing with a dead or absentee God, but with One who is alive and very alert. Romans 2:7.

For a very important extensive note on this parable of Jesus see Appendix 205, page 471. Also read Appendix 247, page 520, *The Amazing Story of God*, and there sincerely make your surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord of your life, thereby taking hold of eternal life in truth.

8:18a Matthew 13:12; Mark 4:25; Luke 19:26.

8:25a Just who is Jesus Christ? See Appendix 246, page 512, for the answer.

8:31a ... *where they would be punished.*

his right mind. That really frightened them.

³⁶Those who had seen what happened then told the others how the demon-possessed man had been healed.

³⁷Then, because of their great fear,^a that whole crowd of Gadarenes asked Jesus to leave their area. So He got into the boat and went back to Galilee.

³⁸But before He left, the man from whom the demons had gone out pleaded with Jesus to let him go with Him.

³⁹But Jesus had sent him on his way, saying, "Return to your home and tell your people about all the great things that God has done for you." So he left and went thruout the whole town, telling everyone about all the great things that Jesus had done for him.

A Sick Woman and a Dead Girl

⁴⁰When Jesus returned across the lake, there was a large crowd there to welcome Him. They had all been waiting for Him to return.

⁴¹Almost immediately an official of the synagogue, named Jairus, came and fell at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come to his home,

⁴²because his only daughter, a girl of about 12, was dying. But as Jesus went with him the crowd almost crushed Him.

⁴³And in that crowd was a woman who had suffered a severe bleeding problem for 12 years. She had spent all her money on doctors, but still hadn't found anyone who could cure her.

⁴⁴She came up behind Jesus and just touched the fringe of His prayer shawl,^a and immediately her bleeding stopped.

⁴⁵"Who touched Me?" Jesus demanded.

When everyone denied it, Peter and those with him said, "Master, with all these people pressing in on You, are You really asking, 'Who touched Me?'"

⁴⁶"But someone deliberately touched Me," Jesus replied, "because I felt power going out from Me."

⁴⁷When the woman realized she couldn't hide what she had done, she came trembling to Jesus and fell to her knees in front of Him, and in the presence of all the people told Him why she had touched Him and how she had been instantly

healed.

⁴⁸"Cheer up, My daughter," Jesus told her. "You are healed because you believed. Go in peace."

⁴⁹While He was still speaking to her, someone came from the home of Jairus, the synagogue official, and told him, "Your daughter has died. Don't bother the Teacher any further."

⁵⁰But when Jesus heard it, He told Jairus, "Don't be afraid! Just keep on believing, and she will be healed."

⁵¹When Jesus arrived at the house, He didn't allow anyone to enter with Him except Peter, James, John, and the father and mother of the girl.

⁵²The people inside the house were all wailing and beating their breasts. But Jesus said, "Don't cry, she's not dead; she's only sleeping."

⁵³They were shocked that He'd say such a thing, because they all knew she was dead. And they laughed at Him in scorn.

⁵⁴So He sent them all out. Then He went in and took the girl by the hand and called to her, "Little girl, get up!"

⁵⁵And her life returned to her body, and she immediately got up! Then Jesus ordered that she be given something to eat.

⁵⁶Her parents were ecstatically astounded and completely overwhelmed with amazement. But Jesus ordered them to tell no one what had happened.^a

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

9One day Jesus called His twelve followers together and gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases.

²Then He sent them out to tell people about the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

³"Take nothing with you for your trip, not even a walking stick or a knapsack, no money, no food, not even a change of clothes,"^a He told them.

⁴"When people welcome you into their home, stay there until you leave the area.

⁵"But when you come to people who refuse to welcome you, shake off the very dust from your feet when you leave that town or city, as a warning to them^a."

8:37a ... fear of *what else might happen to their possessions* ... They evidently valued pigs more than people.

8:44a See notes for Matthew 9:20.

8:56a For the reason see Matthew 12:16 note.

9:3a The Lord wanted them to experience how He could supply all their needs as they looked to Him while they served Him. Do not spend your life mak-

ing provision for self-support before obeying the call of God. Later (see Luke 10:4; 22:35-36) Jesus instructed His workers to bring along and use anything in their possession that could be used for their support, even a sword for defensive purposes.

9:5a ... of *God's anger and displeasure with them*.

9:8a ... as prophesied in *Malachi 4:5*.

⁶So they went on their way thru the towns, telling the Great News and healing people everywhere.

⁷Now when Herod, the ruler of Galilee, heard about all that Jesus was doing, he was perplexed, because some people were claiming that Jesus was John the Baptizer, who had come back to life.

⁸Others claimed He was Elijah who had now come back, as promised;^a and others, that one of the other prophets of long ago had come back to life.

⁹"I had John's head cut off," Herod said. "But who is this about whom I keep hearing such strange reports?" So he kept trying to see Him.

Jesus Feeds More Than 5,000 People

¹⁰When Jesus' messengers returned, they gave Him a full report of all they had done. Then He took them away privately to a deserted area that belonged to the city of Bethsaida.

¹¹But when the crowds realized where He had gone, they followed Him. He graciously received them and talked to them about the Kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

¹²Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to Him and said, "You'd better send these crowds away, so they can go into the surrounding towns and countryside and find food and a place to stay. There's nothing here in this deserted place."

¹³"You feed them," Jesus replied.

"But we don't have any food, except for five small loaves of bread and two small fish," they replied, "unless we go out and buy food for all these people."^a

¹⁴They were concerned because there were about 5,000 men there. But Jesus told His followers, "Have the people sit down in groups of about 50."

¹⁵After they did so, and all the people were seated,

¹⁶Jesus took the five loaves^a and the two fish, and looking up to Heaven He thanked God for the food and asked Him to bless it. Then He broke the bread and fish into pieces and began giving them to His followers to distribute to the people.

¹⁷All the people ate until they were fully satisfied!

And when they had gathered up the leftovers, they had 12 full baskets!

Peter's Declaration About Jesus

¹⁸One day when Jesus was alone, praying with His followers, He asked them, "Who do the people in the crowds say that I am?"

¹⁹"John the Baptizer," they replied. "But some say you're Elijah, and others, that You're one of the other old prophets who's come back to life."

²⁰"But what about you?" He asked. "Who do you say I am?"

"You are the Messiah,^a who has come to us from God!" Peter replied.

²¹Jesus then gave them strict orders not to tell this to anyone.

²²Then He said, "I, the Son of Man, must suffer in many ways. I will be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law, and then killed. But on the third day I will rise back to life again."

²³After that He said to all the people, "Whoever wants to become a follower of Mine^a must no longer live for himself. He must take up and shoulder his own cross^b each day and live for Me.

²⁴"Because if you choose to continue to satisfy your desire to live as you yourself please, you will lose your soul! But if you will make it your definite purpose in life to lose your present life for My sake, you will save your soul.^a

²⁵"Because what good would it all do you even if you gained all the wealth and power and all the flesh-fulfilling experiences in all the world, but then found yourself barred from Heaven and sent to your judgment in Hell?

²⁶"If you are ashamed of Me, ashamed to take a stand and share with others the message of Life that I came from Heaven to earth to give lost mankind, I, the Son of Man, will also be ashamed of you when I come in My glory and in the glory of My Father and of the holy angels.^a

²⁷"But I tell you the truth: Some of you standing here right now will definitely not die before you have had a glimpse of the Kingdom of God."^a

9:13a See Mark 6:37 note.

9:16a A loaf of bread was generally seven inches in diameter, and a half to one inch thick.

9:20a Or *Christ*.

9:23a See very important note on Mark 8:34 as to the full meaning of this statement.

9:23b See Mark 8:34 note and Appendix 221, page 483, for very important notes on what it really

means to take up our cross.

9:24a What does this really mean? See Mark 8:35 note, and Appendix 207, page 473.

9:26a What will be the fate of those who are ashamed of Christ and are unwilling to take a stand and speak out for Him? See Appendix 209, page 474; also Ezekiel 33:1-9; Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; Revelation 3:14-16; 21:8.

The Transfiguration

²⁸About eight days after Jesus said this, He took Peter, John, and James with Him and went up on a mountain to pray.

²⁹As He was praying, the appearance of His face changed completely,^a and His clothing became most brilliantly and dazzlingly white.

³⁰Suddenly Moses and Elijah were there talking with Him.

³¹They also appeared in glorified form, and talked with Jesus about His departure from this life, which He was soon to carry out in Jerusalem.

³²But Peter and those with him had been overcome with sleep. When they woke up they saw Him in His glory, and the two men standing with Him.

³³And as Moses and Elijah were preparing to leave, Peter spoke up and said, "Master, it's good for us to be here! Allow us to put up three shelters—one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But he was so keyed-up he really didn't know what he was saying.

³⁴And even as he was saying this, a cloud came and wrapped itself around them, which really frightened the three followers.

³⁵Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, whom I love dearly. You must keep on listening to Him."

³⁶When the voice had finished speaking, there stood Jesus, alone. But His three followers kept quiet about the entire event, not telling anyone at that time what they had seen.

Jesus Heals a Boy with an Evil Spirit

³⁷The next day when they came down from the mountain, Jesus was again met by a huge crowd.

³⁸And from the crowd a man burst out with a loud cry, "Teacher, I plead with You, please, do something for my son—my only child!

³⁹"A demon is continually attacking him, causing him to scream and go into convulsions and foam at the mouth. It hardly ever leaves him

alone, and when it does, it leaves him covered with bruises.

⁴⁰"I begged Your followers to drive it out, but they couldn't."

⁴¹"Oh, you unbelieving and perverted people!" Jesus responded. "How long must I continue with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."

⁴²Even as the father was bringing the boy to Him, the demon again threw him to the ground and into a fit. Jesus then sternly commanded the evil spirit to leave, and then He healed the boy and gave him back to his father.

⁴³All the people continued to be utterly amazed at the display of God's mighty power. And while everyone was still overwhelmed by all that Jesus had done, He said to His followers,

⁴⁴"I want you to store up in your memories with extreme care what you are hearing, because the Son of Man is about to be handed over into the grasping clutches of men."

⁴⁵But they didn't understand what He was talking about, since the meaning was deliberately kept from them so they wouldn't understand.^a And they were afraid to ask Him what He meant.

Who Will Be the Greatest

⁴⁶Then an argument erupted among the followers as to which of them would be the greatest.

⁴⁷So Jesus, knowing the thought that was uppermost in their hearts, took hold of a little child and had him stand by Him.

⁴⁸Then He said, "Whoever warmly welcomes one of these little children, to do for him what I would do,^a is welcoming Me. And whoever welcomes Me is welcoming the One who sent Me. So whichever of you is willing to do that which will be least recognized and applauded by people will be the greatest."^b

⁴⁹Then John spoke up and said, "Master, we saw someone driving out demons in Your name, and we told him to stop, because he's not following You with us."

⁵⁰"Don't stop him," Jesus replied, "because any-

9:27a See Mark 9:1 note.

9:29a Matthew 17:2 states, "His face became as brilliant as the sun!" He evidently revealed Himself here in glorified form.

9:45a It was enough that they would remember after He died and rose again that He had prophesied several times that all this would happen.

9:48a Literally *Whoever shall receive this little child in My name ...*

9:48b ... greatest in the eyes of God, and will

therefore be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew 18:4.

9:60a Dead spiritually.

9:60b This man wanted to follow Jesus, but wanted to first take care of his father until he had died. Christ wanted this man to know that following and serving Him was of far more importance than any other obligation.

9:62a It appears that this man wanted to get some advice from family and friends as to the advisability

one who is not against us is for us.”

A Samaritan Town Refuses Jesus

⁵¹As the time drew near for Him to be taken up to Heaven, He headed for Jerusalem with strong determination.

⁵²One day He sent messengers ahead to reserve rooms for His group in a town in Samaria.

⁵³But when the Samaritans learned that He was on His way to Jerusalem, they wouldn't let Him stay in their town.

⁵⁴When Jesus' two followers James and John saw this rejection of Jesus, they asked Him, “Lord, do You want us to call down fire from Heaven and burn them up, the way Elijah did?”

⁵⁵But He turned and rebuked them, saying, “You don't realize what kind of spirit has prompted you to have such a reaction!

⁵⁶“The Son of Man hasn't come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.” Then they went on to another town.

The Cost of Following Jesus

⁵⁷As they were traveling along the road, a man said to Him, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.”

⁵⁸“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests,” Jesus replied, “but the Son of Man has no home or possessions here, not even a pillow He can call His own.”

⁵⁹To another He invited, “Come along with Me.” But the man replied, “Lord, first let me go home and bury my father.”

⁶⁰But Jesus rebuked him. “Let the dead^a bury their own dead!” He emphatically declared. “But as for you, go out and tell everyone everywhere about the Kingdom of God!”^b

⁶¹Another man said, “I will follow You, Lord, but first let me go and say good-bye to my family.”

⁶²But Jesus' answer to him was, “Anyone who starts to plow, but keeps looking back, isn't fit for service in the Kingdom of God.”^a

Jesus Sends Out the 70 Men

10 After this the Lord chose 70 other men, and also sent them out by two's to go ahead of Him into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

²Before sending them out He told them, “The harvest is indeed great, but there are so few workers. So plead most earnestly with the Lord of the harvest so that He may use His great power to forcibly thrust out^a workers into His great harvest field!

³“Now be on your way. But realize that I am sending you out as lambs among wolves.

⁴“Don't bring a wallet with you to carry money, or a knapsack for food, or extra sandals.^a And don't stop along the way merely to visit with people.^b

⁵“Whenever you enter a house, first of all say, ‘May God's peace rest upon everyone in this house.’

⁶“If the man of the house is truly open to hearing from God, your message of peace with God will refresh his whole family. If he is not open, the peace meant for him will return to you.

⁷“When you are welcomed into a home, don't move around from one home to another, but stay in that one home, eating and drinking whatever they serve you, because the one who works deserves to be paid.

⁸“So when you enter a city and are welcomed, eat whatever they serve you.^a

⁹“Heal the sick there, and tell the people, ‘The Kingdom of God has come very close to you.’

¹⁰“But if you enter a city where they refuse to welcome you, go into their streets and say,

¹¹‘We are wiping off the very dust from your city that clings to us as a public testimony against you. But we want you to know that the Kingdom of God has come very close to you.’

¹²“I assure you that on Judgment Day God will be more merciful to the people of Sodom^a than to the people of that city.

¹³“Woe to you people in Chorazin! Woe to you in

ty of his leaving everything to follow Jesus. Family and friends are to have no part in deciding if one is to follow Christ. Genesis 19:1-26.

10:2a See Matthew 9:38 notes.

10:4a See 9:3 notes.

10:4b ... *Attend strictly to the business you are sent to accomplish. Don't waste your time!*

10:8a Remember, you are in a war, so don't be picky about the rations and accommodations.

When the war is over, you'll be welcomed home to banquets, a mansion, and much, much more! This could also refer to not making a fuss about being served non-kosher food.

10:12a The judgment of God upon Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:16 to 19:29) is a classic symbol of the fiery judgment that awaits all who ignore God, or who claim to know Him, but are not moved by His commands and warnings.

Bethsaida! Because if the great miracles that were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, those people of long ago would have stopped their sinning and worn sackcloth and sat in ashes to show how truly sorry they were.

¹⁴ “Those former people of Tyre and Sidon will receive lighter punishment than you will on Judgment Day!

¹⁵ “And you people of Capernaum—you have been lifted up to Heaven by what you have both seen and heard, but you will be thrown down into Hell!^a

¹⁶ “The person who makes a practice of sincerely listening to what you, My messengers, say, is actually sincerely listening to Me. But whoever continues to say ‘No’ to you is actually saying ‘No’ to Me. And the one who is saying ‘No’ to Me is actually saying ‘No’ to the One who sent Me.”

¹⁷ Later the 70 joyfully returned, saying, “Lord, even the demons obey us when we use Your name!”

¹⁸ “Yes,” Jesus replied, “I saw Satan fall from Heaven like a bolt of lightning.

¹⁹ “But listen! I am the One who gives you the authority that enables you to trample on those snakes and scorpions! And I give you authority over all the power that the enemy^a has. You won’t be hurt in any way when you use that authority.

²⁰ “But you must stop finding your delight in the fact that the evil spirits obey you; instead, let your joy be in the fact that your names have been written down in Heaven among those who will be welcomed there.”

²¹ At the same time, the Holy Spirit filled Jesus with joy and ecstasy, and He said, “I praise You, My Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, for hiding the truths concerning these things from those who consider themselves so wise and learned, and for revealing them instead to those who are childlike in faith and acceptance. Yes, My Father, because that’s the way You were pleased that it should be.”

²² Then turning to His followers He said to them privately, “Everything has been handed over to Me by My Father. No one has a thorough comprehen-

sion of who the Son really is—only the Father does. And no one has a thorough comprehension of who the Father is, except the Son, and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.

²³ “How fortunate and blessed are the eyes that see what you are now seeing.

²⁴ “Because I tell you, many prophets and kings of the past were eager to see what you are seeing and to hear what you are now hearing. But they were never privileged to do so.”^a

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵ One day one of the experts in the Law of Moses stepped forward to test Jesus. “Teacher, what must I do in order to live forever?” he questioned.

²⁶ “What’s written in the Scriptures?” Jesus replied. “What does it say there?”

²⁷ “The Scripture says,” he responded,

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind.^a And you must love others in the same way that you love yourself.^b

²⁸ “You are right,” Jesus replied. “Make a practice of doing what you’ve just said, and you will live forever.”

²⁹ But wanting to appear blameless, he then asked Jesus, “And just who are the ‘others’ referred to there?”

³⁰ Accepting the challenge, Jesus responded, “A man on his way down to Jericho from Jerusalem was attacked by robbers, who beat him up and robbed him of everything he had, and then left him half dead.

³¹ “A certain priest happened to be traveling down the same road, but when he saw the battered and bloodied man, he passed by on the other side.

³² “A Levite also came by. He looked at him lying there, and he also passed by on the other side.^a

³³ “But a Samaritan was also traveling down the road, and when he came by and saw the man, he was deeply touched by the man’s plight.

³⁴ “He went to him, poured olive oil and wine on his wounds, and bandaged them. Then he put him on his own donkey, brought him to an inn, and

10:15a ... because although you were in attendance at the meetings, you refused to repent and turn from your sinning, and give Me first place in your life!

Jesus had performed a great many of His miracles in the Jewish tri-cities of Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida. The people were willing to watch and listen, but most of them refused to surrender to God as their Lord and receive the Savior He had sent.

Those cities were later so thoroughly destroyed that for centuries their whereabouts were unknown. And Jesus had predicted that they would be *thrown down into Hell*.

Where are the people now who lived there and refused to obey and believe God? Where will you be?

10:19a Satan.

10:24a 1 Peter 1:10-12.

took care of him.

³⁵“The next day, before he left, he gave the innkeeper enough money to pay for the man’s room for two more days. ‘Take care of him,’ he said. ‘And if it costs more than this, I’ll pay you when I return.’”

³⁶“Now which of these three men would you say was a true friend to the victim of the robbers?”

³⁷“The one who took pity on him,” he replied.

“You go and do the same,” Jesus told him.

At the Home of Martha and Mary

³⁸As Jesus and His followers continued on their way, they came to a town where a woman named Martha welcomed them into her home.

³⁹Now she had a sister named Mary, who joined the others and sat at Jesus’ feet, listening to what He was saying.

⁴⁰But Martha was so concerned about the meal she was to serve that she came to Jesus and said, “Lord, don’t You care that my sister has left me with all the work of preparing dinner? Tell her to help me!”

⁴¹“Martha, Martha,” Jesus replied, “you are so concerned and troubled about so many things.

⁴²“But there’s only one thing that is really important. And Mary has chosen to be concerned about that which will result in the greatest good, and it will not be taken from her.”

Jesus Teaches How to Pray

11 One day, immediately after Jesus had been praying in a certain place, one of His followers said to Him, “Lord, teach us how to pray, like John taught his followers.”

²So He said to all of them, “When you pray, pray like this:

Our Father, who is in Heaven, may Your name be most highly revered.

Reign as King in every life. May Your will be done here on earth, just as it is in Heaven.

³Continue to give us the food we need for each day.

⁴And forgive us our sins in the same way that we

ourselves also forgive everyone who sins against us.

Don’t allow us to be led into temptation, but rescue us from the Evil One.”

⁵Then, teaching them more about how to pray, He said, “Suppose one of you should go to a friend’s house at midnight and say to him,

‘My friend, please lend me three loaves of bread? A friend of mine has just arrived from a long distance and I don’t have a thing to give him to eat.’

⁷“Then suppose your friend, from an upstairs window, should answer, ‘Don’t bother us at such an atrocious hour! The doors are locked, and we’re all in bed. I can’t come down and give you anything now!’

⁸“But let Me tell you, even if he wouldn’t come down and give you the bread because you’re his friend, if you persisted and kept on knocking loudly on his door, he would get out of bed and give you all you need.

⁹“The same thing happens when you really pray. You must persist and keep on asking.^a And when you do, what you ask for definitely^b will be given you. So keep on seeking,^a and you definitely^b will find what you are looking for. Keep on knocking,^a and the door will be opened for you.

¹⁰“Because everyone who keeps on asking,^a is definitely^b in the process of receiving, and the one who keeps on seeking,^a is definitely^b in the process of finding, and for the one who keeps on knocking,^a the door will be opened.

¹¹“Which of you men who are fathers would give your son a stone if he asked you for bread? Or if he should ask for a fish, would you give him a snake instead?

¹²“Or if he asked for an egg, would you give him a scorpion?

¹³“If you, then, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who persevere in asking^a Him!”

10:27a Deuteronomy 6:5. See note for Mark 12:30.

10:27b Leviticus 19:18.

10:32a Ask the Lord at the beginning of every day to help you to see and to be willing to take the time to say a cheerful, encouraging word, to make the effort to give a helping hand, or whatever is necessary, to someone you see who is hurting.

11:9-10a All are present tense in the Greek, repre-

senting present continuous action.

11:9-10b All are indicative mood, the mood of certainty. You *definitely will* receive—if you have met all the other conditions for answered prayer. Luke 17:5-6; 18:1-8; Psalm 66:18; Matthew 5:23-24; Mark 11:22-26; John 15:1-7; James 1:5-8; 5:16; 1 Peter 3:7; 1 John 5:13-15, etc.

11:13a Present tense in Greek—continuous present action—action that refuses to be denied.

Jesus and Beelzebul

¹⁴One day Jesus drove out a demon that had prevented a man from being able to speak. After the demon left the man, he had no problem speaking, which truly amazed the crowd.

¹⁵But some in the crowd said, “The only reason he’s able to drive out demons is because he’s doing it by power given him by Beelzebul,^a the ruler of the demons.”

¹⁶Others tried to make Him prove Himself by asking Him to cause something miraculous to happen in the sky.

¹⁷But He even knew what they were thinking, so He said to them, “Any nation that allows its different states to fight one another is in the process of being destroyed. And any family that allows internal squabbling won’t last.

¹⁸“So if Satan allowed part of his forces to war against his other forces, how long could his kingdom continue under such conditions? And still you say I drive out demons with Beelzebul’s help.

¹⁹“Also, if I’m driving out demons with power from Beelzebul, who empowers your own followers to drive them out? So even they will refute you and cut the ground out from under your claim.

²⁰“But if I’m driving out demons by the power of God, then surely the Kingdom of God has arrived among you.

²¹“When a strong man, fully armed, is guarding his home, his possessions are safe.

²²“But when someone stronger^a than he comes along and overpowers him, that one can then take all the armor in which he trusted, and also take anything else out of the house that he wants.

²³“Anyone who is not actively with Me is against Me. So anyone who is not gathering souls with Me is actually scattering them abroad.^a

The Return of the Evil Spirit

²⁴“When an evil spirit comes out of a person, it goes thru dry places, looking for a place to rest. But when it doesn’t find any, it says, ‘I’m going back to the house^a I left.’

²⁵“And when it returns, it finds the place all cleaned up, and everything in order.

²⁶“Then it goes out and gets seven other spirits who are more evil than itself, and they all come and live there. As a result, the person is now in worse condition than before.”^a

²⁷As Jesus said this, a woman in the crowd broke in and shouted, “How blessed and happy the woman must be who gave birth to You and nursed You!”

²⁸“Yes,” Jesus replied, “but you would be more correct in saying, ‘How blessed and happy are those who pay close attention to God’s message, and continue to guard, defend, preserve, and obey^a it.’”^b

The Demand for a Miracle

²⁹While the crowd was gathering in increasing numbers, Jesus said, “You people of today are an evil generation! You’re looking for a miraculous sign from Heaven before you’ll believe.^a But you won’t be given a sign, except the sign that will resemble what happened to the prophet Jonah.

³⁰“Because in the way that Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, in that same way the Son of Man will become a sign to the people of today.^a

³¹“The Queen of the South^a will rise up on Judgment Day with you, and she will condemn you, because she came from a great distance to listen to the wisdom of Solomon. And the truth is, One who is far greater than Solomon is here now!^b

³²“The people of Nineveh^a will also stand up on

That’s the kind of prayer God honors. See Luke 18:1-8, and John 3:15 note.

11:15a See Matthew 10:25 notes.

11:22a Jesus is the *stronger* One who can overpower Satan’s demons.

11:23a See Matthew 12:30 note, and Romans 10:9-10.

11:24a The place it calls *the house* is the person it came out of.

11:26a Even after Satan and his demons have been driven out of a person, we cannot continue to be free from those demons by our own strength. We must sincerely invite Jesus to come into our life to take full possession, and to guard and protect us. We must sincerely desire and purpose that our body,

soul and mind become His home, enabling us to live in obedience to all His will, and for His glory!

11:28a This is the full meaning of the word *phulássontes* in the Greek. If the Lord’s only thought here was obedience He would have used the word *hupakoáy*.

11:28b ... *because they are not only blessed and happy now, but will be far more so in God’s eternal Kingdom.*

11:29a They had requested this earlier, v 16.

11:30a Jonah became a sign to Nineveh because he miraculously survived inside a whale for three days and three nights. (See book of Jonah). Likewise, Jesus became a sign by dying and being buried three days and three nights, and then rising back to

Judgment Day and accuse you, because they stopped their sinning and began to obey God when Jonah preached to them.^a And the truth is, One who is far greater than Jonah is here now!^b

Let Your Light Shine!

³³“You don’t light a lamp, and then hide it or cover it with a basket. No, you put it on a table or stand, so that those who come into the room may be able to see by means of its light.

³⁴“Your eyes act as lights for your body. When your eyes are in good physical condition, your whole body is full of light. But if your eyes have gone bad and are now useless, your body is full of darkness.

³⁵“So make sure, then, that the light you claim to have within you isn’t actually darkness instead.^a

³⁶“So, if in your whole being as a person, you are fully open to receive light and truth, with no desire to continue living in darkness in any part of your life, your whole life will become full of light that you can share with others, in the same way that a brightly shining lamp gives light so that everything in a room can be seen.”

Religious Leaders Strongly Warned

³⁷When He stopped speaking, a Pharisee asked Him to eat lunch with him. So He went in and took His place at the table.

³⁸But the Pharisee was surprised when he saw that Jesus didn’t ceremonially wash His hands before eating.^a

³⁹So the Lord said to him, “Listen to Me: You Pharisees are always washing the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of all kinds of robbery and other wickedness.

⁴⁰“How foolish can you all be? Didn’t the One who made the outside make the inside as well?

⁴¹“But now, take what you have gotten dishonestly and give it to the poor. Then you will indeed be altogether clean.

⁴²“Awful trouble awaits you Pharisees! Because

even though you are very careful to give God a tenth of even all of the smallest vegetables from your garden, you have no concern about dealing in a just and honest way with others, nor do you truly love God. These last things are the things you should concentrate on being sure to do, but without stopping the good you are doing.

⁴³“Woe to you Pharisees! Because, oh, how you love the seats of honor in the synagogues, and to be recognized and greeted with honor as you walk thru the markets!

⁴⁴“Frightful trouble awaits you teachers of the Law. And the same applies to you Pharisees! You hypocrites! Because you are like graves that can’t be recognized as graves, and as people walk over them they don’t realize they are walking over dead bodies.”

⁴⁵Upon hearing this, one of the experts in the Mosaic Law challenged Jesus, saying, “Teacher, when you say that, you’re insulting us too.”

⁴⁶“Yes, woe to you also, you experts in the Law!” Jesus replied. “Because you load the people down with heavy religious requirements that almost crush them, but you won’t move even a finger to lighten those burdens.

⁴⁷“Yes, you too face frightful trouble! You honor the graves of the prophets with monuments, but it was your own fathers who killed them!

⁴⁸“In fact, by your actions^a you approve of what your fathers did—they killed the prophets; and then you build monuments in their honor.

⁴⁹“That’s why God by His superior knowledge said, ‘I will send them prophets and messengers, but they will kill some of them and persecute others.’

⁵⁰“For that reason you people living today will be held responsible for all the blood of the prophets that has been shed since the creation of the world,

⁵¹“from the killing of Abel to the killing of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the Temple. Yes, I tell you, you people of today will be punished for all of it!^a

life again.

11:31a 1 Kings 10:1-13.

11:32a Jonah 3:1-10.

11:31-32b ... and you refuse to listen and believe and obey Him.

11:35a He now applies the spiritual truth. Many have accepted *spiritual light which is false*. Such a person is in spiritual darkness! To be in the darkness of physical blindness is tragic, but spiritual blindness is far more devastating, with horrendous eternal consequences. Therefore, the reason for the

warning is to make sure that what you believe and live by is really light, not darkness.

11:38a Christ evidently purposely omitted washing His hands in order to create a situation so He could give the following instructions.

11:48a They would soon prove this statement true by killing Jesus.

11:51a *That present generation would be punished for all of it* because they would perform the final and crowning act of rebellion of rejecting God’s messengers by rejecting the Messiah and

⁵² “Woe to you experts in the Law! Because you have taken away the key that unlocks the door to knowledge about God! You yourselves wouldn’t go in, and you have kept the people out who are trying to get in.”

⁵³ When He finished saying all this, the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees began to fiercely attack Him verbally, and to fire many questions at Him to get Him to say what He thought about many things.

⁵⁴ They did their best to trip Him up, to get Him to say something they could use against Him in accusing Him.

Warnings and Encouragements

12 Meanwhile an immense crowd had formed—so large, in fact, that people were stepping on each other. Then Jesus began to speak mainly to His close followers. “Above all else,” He said, “you must be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees. I’m referring to the way they fool the people by their hypocrisy.

² “I give you this warning because nothing can now be covered up and ignored^a that won’t one day be uncovered. And there’s nothing hidden that won’t be exposed.

³ “So whatever you have said in the dark will one day be heard in broad daylight. And whatever you whisper in private in the back rooms will be shouted from the housetops.

⁴ “Now I tell you, My friends, never be afraid of people. They can kill your body, but after that, there is nothing more they can do.

⁵ “But the One you must fear is God, because after He has killed, He has power to throw you into

Hell. Believe Me, He is the One you must fear!^a

⁶ “Don’t they sell five sparrows for just two copper coins? Still, not one of them is forgotten by God.

⁷ “And God even knows the number of hairs on your head. So don’t be fearful, because you are of far more value to God than a vast number of sparrows.

⁸ “I also promise you that whoever speaks out and takes a stand for Me when with others, is one whom I, the Son of Man, will confess and claim as My own before God’s angels.

⁹ “But whoever ignores or disowns Me when with others^a will be disowned by Me before God’s angels.^b

¹⁰ “However, anyone who speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven,^a but whoever speaks with abusive language against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

¹¹ “When they bring you before the rulers of the synagogues and other authorities, don’t worry about how you will answer or what you will say in your defense.

¹² “Because the Holy Spirit will give you the words to use when it’s time for you to speak.”

The Parable of the Rich Fool

¹³ Then someone in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the property with me that our father left us when he died.”

¹⁴ “Man, who appointed Me to be a judge or a referee to decide such matters?” Jesus replied.

¹⁵ Then He said to the crowd, “Watch out and guard yourselves against being greedy and grasping, always wanting more. Because a person’s

clamoring for His death. The awful slaughter and destruction of Jerusalem took place less than 40 years later, in A.D. 70. The Romans killed over one million Jews, burned the city, and drove almost 100,000 Jews into slavery.

12:2a Your greatest concern in your church should be that the truth, and the whole truth, is being taught, preached, and lived. Erroneous teaching will pervade like yeast, and will soon be accepted as truth thruout the whole church, unless detected and removed! See Matthew 16:6-12. Unless you expose the false teaching, you too will be held accountable for it by God.

12:5a People can do very little to harm us, really. They have no power to injure the soul, the immortal part of us, unless we allow them to seduce us to sin. The body is of little consequence in comparison with the soul. The death of the body is a very unimportant thing when compared with eternal

death. So Jesus is encouraging His listeners not to be alarmed at the prospect of even being killed for the stand they take for Him. But they are to truly fear God, who can destroy both soul and body in Hell.

This passage proves that the bodies of the wicked will also be raised. They have sinned with their bodies, and they will be given bodies in which they must be punished in Hell, where there will be no escape. What a frightful thought!

* * *

We shouldn’t fear people, but we definitely should fear displeasing God. To be fearful of the condemnation of God is not being cowardly. It is being sensible and wise, because when God inflicts penalty there is no one who can deliver you out of His hand.

God wants to be your friend. He wants to forgive all your sin. He wants to live within you and help you to live a life that is honorable and worthy of

happiness, contentment, safety, and length of life does not depend on obtaining a great amount of wealth.”

¹⁶Then He told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich farmer produced an immense harvest.

¹⁷“What shall I do?” he thought. “I don’t have room to store all my crops!

¹⁸“I know what I’ll do,” he said. “I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I’ll have plenty of room to store all my grain and other goods.

¹⁹“Then I’ll say to myself, ‘Man, you’ve got it made! You can retire now! You have enough stored up to last for many years. You can take it easy and just eat, drink, and enjoy the pleasures and other good things of life.’”

²⁰“But God said to him, ‘You fool! Tonight you will die. Who then will get all these things you have piled up for yourself?’

²¹“That’s how foolish God considers anyone who continues to store up wealth for himself in this brief life, but has little or no interest in really loving, obeying, and serving God, and thereby laying up wealth in Heaven.”^a

Never Worry!

²²Then He said to His followers, “This is why I tell you not to worry about your needs in this life, about the food you will need to stay alive or about the clothing you will need for your body.

²³“You already have the miracle of life. Isn’t life itself a far greater wonder than food? And what a miracle the body is,^a much more so than the clothing you put on it.

²⁴“Look at the crows. They don’t plant or har-

vest. They don’t have storerooms or barns in which to store their food, but still God feeds them. Just think how much more God treasures you than the birds!

²⁵“And which of you by worry and anxious care can add 18 inches^a to your height?^b

²⁶“If you can’t do anything about that which is really of little importance, why are you so anxious about the rest?

²⁷“Think for a moment about the lilies, how beautifully they grow. They don’t feverishly work to make clothes for themselves, and yet, I tell you that even Solomon, with all the wealth and power he had, was never able to dress himself as handsomely as one of these.

²⁸“Now then, if God provides such beautiful clothes for the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown on the fire tomorrow, can’t He be trusted to provide clothing for you? O you of little faith!

²⁹“And stop worrying about whether you’ll have enough to eat and drink. You must not be anxious at all about these matters.

³⁰“Those are the things that people who don’t know God are always so concerned about. But your Father in Heaven knows all about your continual need for all of them.

³¹“Your main concern must be to continually seek^a the Kingdom of God.^b Then all these material things will also be given you.

³²“So don’t have any fears, little flock,^a because your Father is taking great pleasure in giving you the Kingdom.

³³“Sell what you own and give the money to those who are in need. If you do that you will be

being accepted into His presence. You have only one life to lose and one soul that needs to be saved.

It is insanity to sacrifice the salvation of your soul in order that you may enjoy the pleasures of some particular sin for a brief and uncertain time. *Seek the Lord while He may be found! Call upon Him while He is near!* Isaiah 55:6-7.

12:9a ... *by the way he speaks and acts and by his unwillingness to speak out and take a stand for Me* ...

12:8-9b See Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10 notes, and Appendix 209, page 474.

12:10a ... *if you ask Him to forgive you.* And if you now speak for Him instead of against Him.

12:21a What will be the fate of people like this rich man? Why? Is it possible to be rich or poor in Heaven? Will there be degrees of happiness even in Heaven? See Appendix 210, page 475, and Luke 16:8-9, and the comments there.

12:23a If God gave us the miracle of life and a miraculous body, can’t we trust Him to somehow supply our necessary food and clothing?

12:25a Literally *a cubit* — between 18 and 22 inches.

12:25b See Matthew 6:27 note.

12:31a This is present indicative in the Greek text, meaning positive, continuous concern and action.

12:31b To *continually seek God’s Kingdom* means to continually endeavor to please God in all we think, say, and do, in order to be positively assured of His forgiveness and eternal life with Him in His glory. 2 Peter 1:10. This means that we make pleasing God the object of our supreme choice and pursuit. See Matthew 6:33 note.

12:32a But do make sure that you are included in His *little flock*. Again, 2 Peter 1:10.

12:35a Always live in obedience to your Lord, and

putting your money in purses that will never get old and worn out. You'll have investments in Heaven that will never fail, where no thief or swindler of any kind can steal them, where no moths can destroy them.

³⁴ "Because where your treasure is, that's where your heart will be also.

Faithful and Unfaithful Servants

³⁵ "Always be ready for action, with your lamps burning.^a

³⁶ "Be like servants who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding, always ready to open the door immediately when he returns and knocks.

³⁷ "Those servants will be happy indeed if their master finds them awake and alert when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will put on a servant's jacket and have them sit down at the table, and will then proceed to serve them.

³⁸ "Whether he comes before midnight or long after midnight, they will be happy indeed if he finds them faithfully waiting for him.^a

³⁹ "Also consider this: If the man of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would have been ready for him and wouldn't have allowed his house to be broken into.^a

⁴⁰ "You, too, must always be ready, because the Son of Man will come at a time when you are least expecting Him."^a

serve and witness for Him in the same way you would if you knew He would take you in death today.

12:35-38a What wonderful blessings, rewards and riches await those who are faithful to their Lord! Christ here likens His second coming to the *return* of a master of an eastern household from a *wedding* banquet. The *servants* are pictured as having bound their flowing robes around their thighs and waists in order to accomplish with greater speed and efficiency the work that needs to be done before the master returns. They will faithfully see to it that the lamps are kept burning, trimming the wicks of the oil lamps periodically thru the night, making sure that the brightest flame possible greets the master on his arrival home.

Just such activity should typify the attitude and labor of Jesus' servants. They should prepare themselves properly for the work that must be done before the Master arrives, and must carry out that work with speed and efficiency, so that nothing is left undone. Every Christian has a very special job to do! A Christian should have little interest in serving himself by spending much time, thought, and effort in storing up earthly treasures, instead of faithfully serving his Master. Our hearts must be fixed on treasure that will never lose its value!

The Lord will be greatly pleased with those who are diligent in His service, busy with the work of His Kingdom, yet constantly awaiting His return. The *blessing* He promises such servants is beyond human understanding. That He plans to bring them to His own level and count them as friends rather than servants following that Great Day is beyond comprehension. He will *serve them* as He would a fellow-friend.

The promise to faithful Christians is that they will be *heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ*. Romans 8:16-19. Elsewhere the Lord promises, *I no longer call you servants ... but friends*. John

15:14-15. In Revelation 3:21 He reveals even greater details of the future. *To the one who conquers Satan and the temptations of the world, I will give the right to sit with Me on My throne*. What riches!!

The Church has never known the exact hour of the Lord's return. The first watch was from 6 o'clock in the evening to 9 o'clock. It was unlikely that He would return so early, but there was always the possibility. And of course many would return from a wedding *before midnight*, between 9 o'clock and midnight.

But now it is certainly long after midnight. Still the Master has not returned. His return, however, is much more imminent now than it was in the early hours. He must be arriving soon. Likewise, we never know the day nor the hour when we may be taken in death. Keep the lamp burning brightly in your soul, and be busy about the tasks of supplying *food in due season* to those who need your witness, counsel, and direction.

12:39a Imagine the preparations you would make and the precautions you would take if you *knew* that a *thief* was planning to break into your home at a certain hour of the night. You would have lights on thruout the house. No doubt, special police would be hired for that night to guard your property. "If men will take such care of their houses, oh, let us be thus wise for our souls," states the great commentator, Matthew Henry.

The *thief* who planned to come to your home at a certain hour of the night might not follow thru with his plans. It is an absolute certainty, however, that Jesus Christ will follow thru. He is coming! And every sign points to His coming very soon. Let us be ready in spirit, ready to move with Him at a moment's notice, and actively engaged in His work as we wait.

12:40a This is in the present tense. It is happening every day. You may not be here for another sun-

⁴¹Peter then asked Him, “Does this parable apply only to us, or to everyone?”

⁴²In response, the Lord continued, saying, “Where is the man with good sense who can be trusted? That’s the man the master will appoint as manager, and put in charge of his household to regularly give everyone in the house the proper portion of nourishing food they need.

⁴³“That servant will be a happy man indeed if he is found faithfully doing so when his master returns.

⁴⁴“Because I tell you the truth, his master will then put him in charge of everything he owns.^a

⁴⁵“But suppose that servant says to himself, ‘It will be a long time before my master returns,’ and

then begins to beat the servants in his care, both men and women, and spends his time eating and drinking and getting drunk.

⁴⁶“The master of that servant will return on a day when he’s not expecting him, and at the time of day he wouldn’t expect him. He will most severely punish him^a and sentence him to share the punishment of all who have been unfaithful and disobedient.^b

⁴⁷“The servant who knows what his master wants him to do, but doesn’t get ready to obey him, will be severely punished.

⁴⁸“But the servant who didn’t know what his master wanted, and did things for which he deserved punishment will be given lighter punish-

rise. God may take you from this life before another tomorrow.

This also applies to the end of the age, when Christ will suddenly take His own to be with Himself. Matthew 24:29-51.

12:41-44a Peter wants to know if the Lord is speaking to the apostles only or to all Christians. Jesus’ words were directed to the apostles, but they are certainly directed, as well, to those who would later stand in their place. Each and every follower of Jesus is given the responsibility of taking our Lord’s message into his part of the world and beyond. After giving similar warnings and challenges, as recorded in Mark 13:37, the Lord said, *And what I say to you, I say to everyone: You must continually be awake and vigilantly alert!*

It is altogether wrong for a person to excuse his failure to witness for the Lord or to teach His word or to preach it, by using the plea that he has never been called by the Lord to do so. The Lord called every Christian to witness for Him when He gave the great commission. Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15. All of us are already called—the only question is, where would my Lord have me serve Him? The place to begin is right where you are. **The helmsman cannot guide the ship until it’s under way!**

There are souls for whom we are responsible to *give the proper portion of nourishing food they need*. Because the day of reckoning is rapidly approaching, it will be the part of wisdom for each one of us to be found faithful, as ministers in our own homes, in our communities, and to the ends of the earth. The Lord promises blessings of great worth to those who have been found *faithful*.

It is to such *faithful servants* that the Lord has given the promise that *He will then put them in charge of everything He owns*. Let us realize that we cannot take these promises for ourselves unless we have met the conditions!

12:46a Literally *will cut him in two*.

12:45-46b These verses serve as a warning to any person who doubts the need to be especially faithful in the Lord’s service while he is young or while Jesus’ coming seems distant. Our Lord warns that *The master of that servant will return on a day when he’s not expecting him, and at the time of day he wouldn’t expect him*. He will then most severely punish him and sentence him to share *the punishment of all who have been unfaithful and disobedient*.

You may say that this is not the way your church believes. Well, it’s the way the Lord believes. And it’s the Lord who will be the Judge in that Great Day—not the hierarchy of one church or another.

The Lord warns here about disunity, bickering, arguing, etc., between His servants. To beat your fellow-servants with words is more damaging than beating with rods. He also warns His servants who become more interested in *eating and drinking* and in the pleasures of life than they are in serving Him.

These verses are a warning to all preachers, but let us realize that in a lesser or larger degree we are all ministers of God’s message. We have all been called to minister that precious Word of Life. If this Word of Truth is necessary for our salvation, it is necessary for the salvation of our neighbor, our friend, and the stranger we encounter in the marketplace or elsewhere. The Lord has solemnly warned thru the prophet Ezekiel, *When I say to the wicked, “You will surely die!” and you don’t give him any warning, you don’t speak out to warn him about the results of the sinful way in which he is living, in order to save his life, that sinful man will die in his sins; but I will hold you responsible for the death of his soul!* Ezekiel 3:18.

12:47-48a According as we have received, we are

ment. Much will be required of the one who has been given much in the way of instruction and warning. And much more will be required of the one who was entrusted with great responsibility.^a

Expect and Prepare for Trouble

⁴⁹“The effect of My having come will be to cause fire to break out on the earth. And what greater wish could I have than that it had already begun to burn!^a

⁵⁰“But I have a most fearful baptism to undergo,^a and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!

⁵¹“Don’t get the idea that I’ve come to bring peace to the earth. That’s not the way it is at all. Instead, My coming will bring division.^a

⁵²“From now on, where there are five in one family, they will many times be divided in their loyalty, three of them living for Me and two living to please themselves—or the other way around.

⁵³“The division will pit fathers against their sons and sons against their fathers; mothers will oppose their daughters and daughters oppose their mothers; mothers-in-law will clash with their daughters-in-law and daughters-in-law with their mothers-in-law.”^a

Wake up to What Time it is!

⁵⁴Then He said to the crowd, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, ‘It’s going to rain,’ and rain it does.

⁵⁵“And when you feel the south wind blowing, you say, ‘It’ll be a hot one today,’ and it is.

⁵⁶“You hypocrites! You can predict the kind of weather ahead from the wind and sky, but how is it that you can’t determine the period of time in

which you are living?

⁵⁷“Yes, and why don’t you yourselves take the initiative to judge from what you have both seen and heard, and make a right decision?^a

⁵⁸“When you are taken to court by one who is suing you, make every effort to settle with him before you get there. If he drags you before the judge, the judge may turn you over to the jailer, who in turn will lock you up.

⁵⁹“I assure you, you won’t get out of there until you have paid the last penny you owe.”^a

Turn from Your Sinning or Die!

13 Some who were there at that time told Jesus about some rebellious Galileans whom Pilate had killed, and had then mixed their blood with the sacrifices they were offering at the Temple.

²“Do you think that proves that those Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans,” Jesus replied, “just because of what happened to them?

³“Not at all! But unless you turn from your rebellion, and have a genuine change of heart and obey God, you too will all perish in a similar horrendous way.”^a

⁴“Or do you think those 18 people who died when the tower of Siloam fell on them were worse sinners than all others living in Jerusalem?

⁵“Not at all! But unless you turn from your rebellion, and have a genuine change of heart and obey God, you too will all perish in a similar horrendous way.”^a

⁶To make His point clear He told them this parable: “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. He kept looking for fruit on it, but never found any.

expected to share. According to the ability and opportunity God has given to each one of us, in that measure He will require faithful performance. There are those who have little knowledge of God’s will. Many of these could have gained knowledge if they had been diligent in study. Therefore they are not excused, but they will be given lighter punishment.

Even the heathen know about God, thru *the things God has made*. And because they have not worshiped the Creator as God, they are guilty. Even though they have little knowledge, they will be punished for ignoring what little knowledge they do have. See Romans 1:18-20.

But to those who have had greater opportunities and have greater capacities of mind than others—having more knowledge and opportunity to learn, more acquaintance and more interchange of

thought with others about the Scriptures—to them *much is given*, and their accounting will be accordingly.

Therefore let us be diligent, for we do not know when our Lord will call us by death, or in the great Rapture of His saints. We have today; let us make it count for Christ to the utmost!

12:49,51a The result of Jesus’ coming has been conflict for many lives. But the conflicts must be allowed to rage, if they must, in order that the Great News may go into all the world. Jesus knew there would be much opposition, but He desires the good that is being accomplished in many hearts in spite of the opposition. This is war—war against evil! So share the message no matter how fierce the opposition. Paul said he preached in order that *some* might be saved. 1 Corinthians 9:22.

12:50a ... *a baptism of rejection by both Jews*

⁷“So finally he said to his gardener, ‘Look, for three years now I’ve been coming here looking for fruit on this fig tree, and I’ve never found any yet. Why continue to waste ground space on it? Cut it down!’”

⁸“But the gardener said, ‘Sir, I urge you to leave it here for one more year. I’ll dig around it and fertilize it well.

⁹‘If it then bears fruit, fine. If not, then you should cut it down.’”^a”

Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman

¹⁰One Sabbath Jesus was teaching in a synagogue.

¹¹A woman was there who had been crippled by an evil spirit for 18 years. She was so bent over that she couldn’t straighten up at all.

¹²When Jesus saw her He called her to Him. “Woman,” He said, “you are now set free from your affliction.”

¹³As He said this He placed His hands on her, and immediately she stood up straight and began praising God!

¹⁴But the president of the synagogue was so angry that Jesus had healed someone on the Sabbath that he shouted to the crowd, “There are six days in a week when we can work! So come and be healed on one of those days, but not on the Sabbath!”

¹⁵“You hypocrite!” Jesus countered. “Don’t each of you untie your ox or donkey from the stall on the Sabbath and lead it out to drink?

¹⁶“And look, here’s a daughter of Abraham who has suffered in bondage under Satan for 18 long years. Shouldn’t this woman be set free from this bondage as soon as possible, even if it’s the Sab-

bath?”

¹⁷All who had opposed Him were ashamed of themselves after He pointed out how foolish they had been. But all the rest of the people were rejoicing over all the marvelous things He was doing.

Parables of the Mustard Seed and Yeast

¹⁸Then He said, “What is the Kingdom of God like? What can I compare it with?

¹⁹“It’s like what happens when someone plants a tiny mustard seed in a garden. That little seed grows and becomes a large tree, so large that the birds of the air roost in its branches.”^a

²⁰“What can I compare the Kingdom of God with?” He again asked.

²¹“It’s like what happens when a woman mixes yeast into a very large bowl of flour. She works it into every part of the dough, until the whole batch is completely saturated and transformed by it.

The Narrow Gate Leading to Heaven

²²Then He continued on His way thru the cities and towns, teaching the people as He journeyed toward Jerusalem.

²³In one place a man asked Him, “Sir, are only a few people in the process of being saved?”^a

²⁴“You must use extreme effort,” Jesus replied, “in order to gain entrance thru the narrow gate.”^a Because I tell you, many will try to enter,^b but will not succeed.

²⁵“When the Master of the house finally gets up and locks the door, it won’t do you any good to stand on the outside knocking and calling out, ‘Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!’ Because His answer will be, ‘I don’t know you or where you are

and Gentiles, and physical pain and suffering and abandonment by God at His trial and on the cross, ...

12:51-53a Christ did not come for the purpose of causing division, but this is one of the effects of His coming. Those who have no desire to believe Him often strongly oppose those who do believe. Their wickedness is the reason this happens.

12:57a ... *and announce that the Messiah has indeed come!*

12:59a See Matthew 5:25-26 notes.

13:3-5a Less than 40 years later, in A.D. 70, the inhabitants of Jerusalem were slaughtered by the Romans, and almost 100,000 led away captive. Christ could have been referring to this, and also to the great Judgment Day coming for all mankind.

13:9a This was an illustration of Israel and her unwillingness to bear fruit for her Lord. They were

given almost 40 more years of grace after they had crucified Christ. Then God turned them over to the Roman army in A.D. 70. This is also a lesson for those who refuse to bear fruit for God today. See John 15:1-8.

13:19a See Matthew 13:31 and Mark 4:32 notes.

13:23a This was a very serious question asked of our Lord. We will do well to consider very seriously our Lord’s reply. It has to do with our future—either to be welcomed into Heaven by Christ or to be driven away from His presence into Hell. This is present tense, representing continuous action, not action that is fully completed in past time.

13:24a ... *that leads to everlasting life.* See Matthew 7:13 note, and Appendix 200A, page 465.

13:24b ... *without exerting thoughtful and extreme effort on their part* ... Matthew 25:1-13.

13:24-25a No easy believism is taught by Jesus in

from.²⁸

²⁶“Then you will begin to plead and say, ‘But Lord, we ate and drank with You! You even taught in our streets!’

²⁷“But He will reply, ‘I tell you, I don’t know you, or where you are from. Get out of My presence, all of you who have continued in the practice of living in sin and disobedience to Me!’²⁸

²⁸“There will then be uncontrollable weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets inside the Kingdom of God, while you yourselves are being driven away.²⁹

²⁹“People will come from the east and from the west, from the north and the south, and will take their places at the Feast in the Kingdom of God.³⁰

these verses, nor did He ever teach that. Notice what He says is necessary for salvation.

The words *extreme effort* have been translated from the Greek word *agoneezesthe*, which means *to struggle, to compete for a prize, to contend with an enemy, to endeavor to accomplish something, to fight, to labor fervently, to strive*. Arndt and Gingrich translate these beginning words in Luke 13:24, *You must strain every nerve to enter . . .*

The easiest part of becoming a Christian is believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died for our sins on the cross. The hard part is to truly repent of our sins, and turn from them and obey the Lord. This is the born-again part of the Christian experience. And the Lord has stated, “Unless you are born again, you will never see or experience the Kingdom of God.” John 3:3.

Even in our English dictionary, the word *strive* means, *to try hard, to work hard, to strive for self-control, to strive to succeed, to struggle with, to fight against*. Living the Christian life is a battle! And only the overcomers will enter into the Lord’s Kingdom. Revelation 2:26-28.

The sad state of affairs today is that many preachers, even in so-called “evangelical” churches, give the people only what they want to hear. Their messages are worthless! They are afraid to use the word of God as a sword, cutting at the heart of the sins of the people. Such deceitful preaching will surely receive frightful judgment by God.

An appalling and horrible thing is being committed in this nation: The preachers are preaching lies, the priests have taken power into their own hands, and My people love it this way. But what will you do when the end comes? Jeremiah 5:30-31. Many churches today are filled with “believers” who are not converted, and are therefore not saved, not born again. They want watered-down messages

Jesus’ Sorrow for Jerusalem

³⁰“In fact, there are some who are now considered to be of little or no importance, who will then be given the highest positions. And some who are now considered great, will then be considered of no importance at all.”

³¹That same day some Pharisees came to Him and said, “You’d better leave here and go somewhere else, because Herod wants you killed.”

³²“You go and tell that fox,” Jesus replied, “Look, today and tomorrow I am driving out demons and healing people. On the third day I will finish My work.”

³³“But I must continue traveling today and tomorrow and the next day, because it’s unthinkable

that will not convict them, and a great many of the preachers today are submitting to their wishes. 2 Timothy 4:1-4.

Our Lord admonished and warned in His sermon on the mount, as recorded in Matthew 7:13-14, *You must find and enter the narrow gate in order to get onto the road that leads to eternal life! The gate that leads to Hell and destruction is wide, and the road leading there is broad, and most everyone is traveling that easy road. The reason so many travel the broad road is because of the narrowness of the gate one must enter to get onto the road that leads to life, and because the road that leads to life is also narrow and difficult. So there are few who are looking for it with enough diligence to find it.* The way to eternal life is by both faith and repentance! One without the other leads only to Hell.

When the apostle Paul was reminding the Ephesian elders of his manner of preaching and teaching among them, he stated, *My earnest and emphatic message was always the same: ‘You must both turn from your sinning and obey God, and believe in our Lord Jesus as your Savior the Messiah.’* Acts 20:21. James, our Lord’s half brother, in James 1:22 states, *You must make it your practice to obey what God is telling you, and not just listen to Him. If all you do is listen, you’re just fooling yourselves.*

So many are looking forward to the joys of eternity in Heaven, who will not be there. Therefore allow us to give you further help and warning from the great commentator, *Matthew Henry*, as he comments concerning these words of our Lord. He states:

“All who will be saved must ‘enter in at the narrow gate.’ They must undergo a change of the whole man, so that it amounts to no less than being

able that a prophet should be put to death anywhere but in Jerusalem.

³⁴“O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! You people who repeatedly kill the prophets and stone the messengers God sent to you. How often I have wanted to gather your people together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you wouldn’t let Me.

³⁵“Look! Your Temple is now being left to you utterly abandoned by God.^a And I tell you the truth when I tell you: There will be no way whatever by which you will then be able to see Me until the time comes when you will say, ‘God bless Him who is coming in the name of the Lord!’”^b

Jesus in a Pharisee’s Home

14 One Sabbath when Jesus went to eat in the home of a leader of the Pharisees, He was being watched very closely,

²because there was a man there who was suffer-

ing from dropsy.

³So Jesus asked the Pharisees and the experts in the Law, “Does our Law allow a person to be healed on the Sabbath?”

⁴But there was no reply. So He took hold of the man and healed him, and then sent him on his way.

⁵Then He asked them, “If your donkey or ox fell into a pit, which of you men wouldn’t immediately pull it out, even if it happened on a Sabbath?”

⁶They couldn’t reply to that.

⁷When He noticed how some of the guests were choosing the places of highest honor, He gave them this advice:

⁸“When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, don’t take the best place, because the host may have invited someone he esteems more highly than you.

⁹“Think how embarrassing it would be if the

born again, and must submit to a strict discipline ... It is a hard matter to get to Heaven, and a point that will not be gained without a great deal of care and pains, of difficulty and diligence. We must strive with God in prayer, wrestle as Jacob, striving against sin and Satan ... Think how many take ‘some things’ for salvation and yet perish because they do not take ‘enough’ ... They ‘seek’ but they do not ‘strive.’

“Note, the reason why many come short of obtaining God’s grace and glory is because they rest in a ‘lazy seeking’ ... Their desires are cold, and their endeavors feeble, and there is no strength of steadiness in their resolutions; and therefore they ‘come short,’ and lose the prize, because they do not press forward.

“Notice what an ‘assurance’ they had of ‘admission’ ... There they stand and *knock*—*knock* as if they had authority. They *knock* as though they belonged to the house, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us,’ for we think we have a right to enter; take us in among the ‘saved ones,’ for ‘we joined ourselves to them.’ Note, that many are ruined by an ill-grounded hope of Heaven, which they never distrusted or called in question, and therefore conclude that their state is good because they never doubted it. They call Christ ‘Lord’ as if they were His servants.”

13:26-27a Quoting here again from *Matthew Henry*: “What grounds have they for this confidence ...? They had been ‘Christ’s guests’ ... Hypocrites under the disguise of their external profession, they receive the Lord’s supper, and in it partake of the children’s bread, as if they were children. They had been ‘Christ’s hearers,’ had received instructions from Him, and were well acquainted with His doctrine and law. But to these who do not

have a true heart-conversion to the Lord He will say, ‘I tell you, I don’t know you, nor where you are from. Get out of My presence, all of you who have continued in the practice of living in disobedience to Me!’”

13:28a Be sure to read Appendix 200A, page 465, in regard to this entire statement by Christ.

13:28-29a And again, from *Matthew Henry*: “How terrible their punishment will be! ‘There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,’ the utmost degree of grief and indignation. And that which is the cause of it, and contributes to it, is the sight of the happiness of those who are saved. ‘You will see the patriarchs and prophets in the Kingdom of God, while you yourselves are being driven away.’

“This He was saying to those who were sinners in the Old Testament age. And in the same way, New Testament-age sinners will be ‘driven away’ from the Kingdom of God. It intimates that they will presume that they will surely be admitted, but they will be ‘driven away’ in shame, after being informed that they have no part nor inheritance there ...

“By what Christ said, it appears that ‘only a few will be saved’ of those whom we think will surely be there ... Those who will ‘sit down in the Kingdom of God’ will be those who have taken great pains to get there.”

13:35a See Matthew 23:36 note.

13:35b The Jewish leaders rejected Christ, and *they will not see Him again until* after the Great Tribulation, until after the renovation of the earth and all the resultant judgments upon them. They *will not see Him again until* He appears in the skies in all His glory, coming as King of kings and Lord of lords. Zechariah 12:10-14; Matthew 24:30.

14:14a Who does not desire to receive rewards in

host, who had invited both of you, should say to you, ‘Will you please give this man your place?’ Humiliated, you would then have to take a place at the back of the room.

¹⁰“So when you are invited anywhere, take the least desirable place. Then the host who invited you may say, ‘Friend, take this better place.’ That would cause you to be highly regarded by those at the table with you.

¹¹“Because everyone who seeks honor for himself will be brought down, but the one who humbles himself will be honored.”

¹²Then He said to the host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, don’t invite only your friends, your family, relatives, or your rich neighbors. If you do, they will invite you back and you will be repaid.

¹³“But when you prepare a fine dinner, also invite the poor, the disabled, the lame, and the blind, and you will be repaid richly in return.

¹⁴“They won’t be able to repay you, but you will be repaid by the Lord when you rise back to life again with all others who are in right standing with God.”^a

The Parable of the Great Dinner

¹⁵When one of the men at the table with Him heard this, he said, “Those who will sit down to eat in the Kingdom of God will surely be happy.”

¹⁶Jesus responded, saying, “There was a man who prepared a great dinner to which he invited many guests.

¹⁷“When it was time for the dinner, he sent his servant out to tell those invited, ‘Come now, everything is ready.’

¹⁸“But every one of them began to make excuses. ‘I just bought some land,’ the first one said, ‘and it’s important that I go out and look at it. So I ask that you please excuse me.’

¹⁹‘I’ve just bought five pair of oxen,’ another

said, ‘and I need to try them out. So I must ask you to excuse me.’

²⁰“Still another said, ‘I’ve just gotten married, so I can’t come.’^a

²¹“So the servant returned and told his master all this. The master was furious and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the city, and bring in the poor, the disabled, the lame, and the blind.’

²²“When he returned he said, ‘Sir, I did as you told me, but there is still room for more.’

²³“The master then told him, ‘Go out into the country roads and lanes and compel everyone you see there to come in, so that my house will be full.

²⁴“Because I tell you, none of those who were first invited will get even a small taste of my dinner!”

The Cost of Being a Follower of the Lord

²⁵Great crowds continued to follow Him. So He turned to them and said,

²⁶“Anyone who wants to follow Me must be so thoroughly devoted to Me that he puts My interests, My concerns, and My desires far above his interest in pleasing even his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, or sisters—and yes, even above pleasing himself—otherwise he is no follower of Mine!^a

²⁷“And whoever does not persevere in carrying his own cross^a and does not live for the same purpose for which I have lived, cannot be a follower of Mine!^b

²⁸“So count the cost! If any of you decided to put up a building, wouldn’t you first sit down and figure out the cost, and then see if you could raise enough money to finish it?

²⁹“Otherwise, if you laid the foundation but couldn’t finish, you would be the laughingstock of everyone who saw the unfinished building.

³⁰“People would say, ‘Look, there’s the man who started to put up that building, and then found he

Heaven? In these verses Jesus states the means by which some of those rewards may be gained. Aim not at being paid with your own coin. How much better to be paid with the coin of the realm to which the Christian is going. How much better to have invested on this earth in that which will bring great dividends in the life to come.

14:20a Are your excuses for not accepting the Lord’s invitation just as foolish as these?

14:26a Jesus is talking here about being a Christian, about being truly converted—about being born again!

Jesus doesn’t have two standards, one for preach-

ers, priests, missionaries, and other Christian workers, and another for church members. He demands total commitment on the part of everyone who desires to follow Him and gain eternal life! Count the cost, Jesus warned, and be sure you intend to finish. See Mark 8:34-38, and the notes there.

14:27a A cross is not sickness, suffering, trials, disappointment, or adversity of any other kind. A cross is an instrument of death! Christ demands that if you desire to follow Him (be a Christian) you must follow Him in death—that is, you must willingly die to all selfish desires and ambitions, and live and work for the furtherance of His Kingdom

couldn't finish it.'

³¹“Or suppose an enemy army is approaching—what king would be so foolish as to not first sit down and figure out if he can defeat the invading army of 20,000 with his army of 10,000?

³²“If he decides he can't, won't he send a delegation to meet the invaders while they are still a long way off and ask about the conditions for peace?

³³“And the conditions for being a follower of Mine are that you must make a continual practice of surrendering all that you are and have, and be at My disposal.^a Otherwise you are no follower of Mine!

³⁴“Salt is very useful. But if the saltiness of your life and testimony has lost its pungently sharp penetrating qualities and healing powers, and has become insipid and useless, how will others be convinced, convicted, saved, and preserved in purity, uprightness, and self control by your influence and help?

³⁵“Salt that has lost its saltiness is utterly worthless. It can't be allowed on good soil or even on the manure pile. It must be thrown out as garbage.^a If you have been given ears for the purpose of hearing, then think seriously about what you have just heard!”

The Lost Sheep

15 All the tax collectors and other known sinners were continually gathering around to listen to Him,

²causing the Pharisees and teachers of the Law to mutter in complaint, “This man is glad to have sinners as His audience. He even eats with them!”

³So Jesus told them this parable:

⁴“If any of you men had 100 sheep, and one of them got lost, wouldn't you leave the 99 in the pasture and continue to look for the lost sheep until you found it?

⁵“And when you found it, wouldn't you carry it back on your shoulders, rejoicing?

⁶“When you got home you would call your friends and neighbors together and say, ‘You must celebrate with me, because I found the sheep that was lost!’

⁷“And I tell you, the same will be true in Heaven. There will be more rejoicing there over one sinner who turns from his sinning and begins living to please God, than over the 99 persons who are already living for God, and don't need to turn from sin.

The Lost Coin

⁸“Or think of the woman who has ten silver coins. If she should lose one, wouldn't she light a lamp and sweep the house and keep looking diligently until she found it?

⁹“And when she found it, she would call her friends and neighbors together and say, ‘You must celebrate with me, because I found the coin I had lost!’

¹⁰“And I tell you, the angels of God rejoice in Heaven in the same way when even one sinner turns from his sinning and begins to live for God.”

The Lost Son

¹¹Then He said, “There was once a man who had two sons.

¹²“One day the younger son said to his father, ‘Father, I want you to give me my share of what I will inherit from your estate *now*.’ So the man divided what he owned between them.

¹³“A few days later this younger son turned all of his part of the estate into cash, and headed for a distant province. There he squandered his entire inheritance, living it up in sin.

¹⁴“When he had spent everything, a severe famine hit the area where he was, and he was having a hard time even getting enough to eat.

¹⁵“Finally he arranged with a farmer for a place to stay in exchange for feeding the man's pigs.

¹⁶“He was so hungry that he was tempted to eat

and glory, and your future glory. Romans 5:2; 8:18; 1 Corinthians 15:43. See Appendix 221, page 483.

14:27b Christ died for you. He now demands that you die to yourself for His sake and for the sake of all others who need life. He asks for your affection—unto death. Are we worthy of His love and sacrifice for ourselves, if we give Him and our fellow humans anything less? Matthew 10:38.

“The cross is heavy, and hard to carry; but unless we do carry it we are not His.”—*J. Willcock, in The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary.*

14:33a The conditions of peace granted by a king

to a lesser king who didn't dare meet him in battle was always *total submission*. The lesser king became his vassal, paying tribute, with himself and all his possessions subject to the command of his lord. And Christ imposes the same conditions on all who seek His forgiveness and eternal life, and all else that is His to give. See 16:9 note in reference to the teaching of this verse.

14:35a Matthew 5:13-16; Mark 9:49-50. Certainly this is a fearful warning. Again consider Romans 10:9-10.

15:24a Are you the prodigal who has left God?

the pods he was feeding the pigs, because no one gave him anything to eat.

¹⁷“When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘Even my father’s many hired servants have more food than they can eat, and here I am, starving to death!’

¹⁸‘I’m going to leave this place and go back to my father. I’ll tell him, “Father, I have sinned against God and against you.”

¹⁹‘I’m no longer fit to be called your son. Give me a job as one of your hired men.’”

²⁰“So he got up and went back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and his heart went out to him. And he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and fervently kissed him.

²¹“Then the son blurted out, ‘Father, I have sinned against God and against you, and I’m no longer fit to be called your son.’

²²“But his father said to the servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet.

²³“Then bring the calf we’ve been fattening up, and kill it. We’ll have a great banquet and celebrate!

²⁴“Because this son of mine was dead, but now he’s alive again! He was lost, but now he’s been found! And the joyful celebration began.”^a

²⁵“Meanwhile, the older son was out in a field. When he came in and got closer to the house he heard the sound of music and dancing.

²⁶“So he called one of the servants and said, ‘What’s going on here? What’s this all about?’

²⁷“Your brother has just come back home,’ the servant answered. ‘And because he’s returned safe and sound, your father has killed the calf we’ve been fattening up.’

²⁸“That made the older son furious, and he wouldn’t go into the house. So his father came out and pleaded with him to come in and join the celebration.

²⁹“Look, I’ve been serving you all these years!’ he angrily replied. ‘I’ve never refused to obey you at any time! Still, you never gave me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends.

³⁰“But the moment this son of yours who squandered your estate with whores returns, you honor him and celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’

³¹“My son,’ the father reasoned, ‘you are always right here with me. And everything I have is yours

Maybe you have never been truly converted to God, or maybe you have backslidden and fallen back into sin. You have disgraced your God. But be assured that God has been watching all the time, and has been waiting for you to come back to Him.

Many have felt they couldn’t be happy as a Christian. They believe they will miss something if they aren’t out there in the world enjoying the pleasures of sin. But there’s a price to pay for disobedience: emptiness, disgust with one’s self, and the constant conviction by God’s Holy Spirit that you’re in the wrong. Have you told God, your Father (though maybe not in actual words), that you want your fun now; that you aren’t willing to wait for His time, in His Heaven, forever?

But it’s amazing how fast life goes by, and how soon the strength of youth is spent. Are you really willing to forfeit the billions of trillions of endless years of happiness with God, in exchange for the unfulfilling pleasures of this brief and uncertain life—and then Hell?

There may be pleasure in sin, and indeed there can be, but there is no true joy there. Joy comes when you have returned to God, your Father, and have confessed your sin and asked His forgiveness. Then you will have the joyful assurance that you will be with Him forever. You will find true joy only when you are truly right with God, and are feasting

on His message and obeying His commands.

16:9a Jesus teaches here that we are to make proper use of our riches. And our riches include everything we are and have—money, time, talents, physical strength, ability to think and reason, ability to speak, and whatever else God has given us or causes to come our way. People who live only for this life are often very concerned about preparing for their brief future, while many who claim to love God are very negligent about making preparations for their eternal future.

You cannot take it with you, that’s true, but you can—according to what Jesus says here, and according to what He says in many other places—make sure of your greatest happiness possible in Heaven by the way you invest whatever riches you possess, for your future good. Also, the way we invest our riches indicates where our heart really is.

If we are doing the same as the people of the world, seeking to use our riches for our own benefit, here and now, we prove ourselves to be merely people of the world. Then our time is brief, and our judgment is sure.

So it’s very important that we obey the first commandment of the Lord, which is *to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength*. That means we are to love the Lord our God with all we

to do with as you please.

³² ‘But it’s only right that we should celebrate and be glad, because your brother was dead, but now he’s alive again! He was lost, but now he’s been found!’”

The Dishonest Manager

16 One day Jesus said to His followers, “There was once a rich man who was told that his business manager was squandering his money.

² “So he called him in and said, ‘What’s this I hear about you? Get all the accounts in order and give me a full report, because if what I hear is true, you’re fired!’

³ “The manager thought to himself, ‘What can I do now? I’ve lost my job! I can’t do any physical work, and I’d be ashamed to beg.

⁴ ‘I know what I’ll do, so that when I lose my job here, I’ll have friends who will take me in.’

⁵ “So one by one he called in the people who were in debt to his employer. ‘How much do you owe my boss?’ he asked the first one.

⁶ ‘800 gallons of olive oil,’ he replied.

‘Yes, here’s your contract. Tear it up and sit down here quickly,’ the manager said, ‘and write

up and sign a new contract for 400.’

⁷ “To the next one he said, ‘And how much do you owe?’

‘1,000 bushels of wheat,’ he replied.

‘Tear up your bill,’ he told him, ‘and write up a new one here for 800.’

⁸ “His employer had to admit that this crooked manager certainly knew how to make plans that might improve his own future. Ironically, those who live only for this life prepare more effectively for their brief and uncertain future here, than those who have seen the light regarding eternal life.

⁹ “So I challenge you: Make eternal friends for yourselves in Heaven by means of the eternal investments you can make with the right use of the untrustworthy and precarious riches of this world. Then, when you die, they will be there to welcome you into your everlasting home in Heaven.^a

¹⁰ “A person who is faithful in the smallest matters can also be trusted with large responsibilities. And one who is dishonest in small deals will also be dishonest in big deals.

¹¹ “So if you have not been faithful in your handling of the untrustworthy, precarious riches of

have and with all we can do. And we show that love by helping others and by bringing the message of the Great News to others. We also show that love by investing what we are and what we have in full obedience to the Lord. By doing so we are laying up treasure for ourselves in Heaven.

Nothing you do for yourself will benefit you in the hereafter. It’s only what you do for others and for the Lord that will be yours forever.

Jesus called the riches of this world *untrustworthy and precarious*; and that’s what they are. All the various riches you have can cause you to rely on them and make them your god. A wrong use of your riches can injure you and those you love.

Yes, wealth is precarious, because there is no assurance that any of the riches you have will be yours tomorrow. You can lose your money, your health, even your talents. But as you use them now in the best and wisest way possible for God’s glory, you can be assured that you are investing them for eternity. In other words, by serving God and others with what you are and have, you are also wisely preparing for your own future.

Some believe the *they* in v 9 means that Jesus, the angels, and others in Heaven will be there to welcome you into your everlasting home. Yes, that’s true, but this implies that the riches of this life that you sent on ahead will also be there to welcome

you. Jesus commanded you to *Lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven*. Matthew 6:19-21. So if they are being laid up there, they will be there to welcome you. In other words, they will be there credited to your account.

Jesus definitely taught that there will be degrees of glory and happiness in Heaven and in His eternal Kingdom. Some will be rulers over many cities, others over just a few cities. In fact, He even informs us thru the Apostle Paul that some will be there *as one barely escaping thru the flames*. They barely make it. That causes us to be truly concerned about those who are likely not to make it.

So our great concern for ourselves and others should be to make sure that we are truly converted to the will of God, and that we are making this life count in the greatest way possible for our future with Him.

Don’t be satisfied with barely making it to Heaven. With that attitude, you very likely won’t even be there. Our desire should be to receive *an abundant entrance* into His Kingdom. You have one life to live, one life to invest, so make the most of it! Life is brief, and we will all soon be standing before our God to give an accounting of what we have done with the time and the strengths He has entrusted to us. See Matthew 6:19-21; 25:35,40; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 6:10-11; Revelation 14:13.

16:12a ... *because the whole world, and every-*

this world that God has entrusted to you, how can He possibly entrust you with the true riches, which are eternal?

¹² “If you have not been faithful in your handling of that which doesn’t even belong to you,^a how could God possibly be wise and righteous in giving you that which would be your very own?^b

¹³ “No servant can serve two masters, because either he will hate one and love the other, or he will serve one with zeal and have little or no time for the other. You cannot serve both God and money!”

Some Additional Sayings of Jesus

¹⁴ But the Pharisees had great love for money. So when they heard Him say all this about money, they ridiculed Him with a passion.

¹⁵ “You men are clever at convincing the crowd that whatever you do is right,” Jesus replied. “But God knows exactly how you are thinking and reasoning in your hearts. And be sure of this: Many of the things that people believe are so noble about you are detestable in God’s understanding of the true situation!

The Rich Man and Lazarus

¹⁶ “The teachings written in the books of the Law and in the books of the prophets guided you until John the Baptizer appeared on the scene. But since then, the Great News about how one may enter the Kingdom of God has been more clearly preached. And great throngs are now earnestly and forcefully pressing their way into it.^a

¹⁷ “But in regard to the Law, it would be easier for both Heaven and earth to disappear than for the most insignificant part of the moral requirements of God’s laws to be set aside.

¹⁸ “For instance, whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else is guilty of committing adultery. And whoever marries a person who has been

divorced is committing adultery.^a

¹⁹ “There was once a rich man,” Jesus continued, “who dressed himself in the finest and most expensive clothes. He lived a life of luxury in brilliant and merry festivity every day.

²⁰ “Someone used to lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, at his front gate.

²¹ “And the dogs would come and lick his sores. His only desire was to be fed the scraps of food left by the rich man.

²² “Finally the poor man died and was carried by the angels to be with Abraham in Paradise.

²³ “The rich man also died and was buried. But he found himself in Hell, being frightfully tormented.^a When he looked up, he saw Abraham way off in the distance, and Lazarus was with him!

²⁴ “So he cried out, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me, and send Lazarus here so that he might at least dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I’m in terrible pain and torment in these flames!’

²⁵ “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember, that in your lifetime you had all the good things, while Lazarus received the bad. But now, he is continually experiencing joy and abundance, while you are continually being tormented.

²⁶ “And besides all that, between you and us, an immense chasm has been fixed in place, so that it’s impossible for anyone desiring to go from here to you to do so, and no one can go from where you are to us.’

²⁷ “The man replied, ‘Then please, father Abraham, send him to my father’s house.

²⁸ “I have five brothers. Send him to warn them so they don’t also come to this terrible place of constant, unbearable pain.’

²⁹ “They have the books of Moses and the prophets,’ Abraham replied. ‘Let them read them and be warned.’

³⁰ “No, father Abraham,’ the man pleaded, ‘they

thing in it, belongs to God ...

16:12b That which we inherit in Heaven will be permanently ours. But God cannot in wisdom and righteousness give such treasure and responsibilities to people who cannot even be trusted to use their temporary riches on earth in an honorable way.

16:16a See Matthew 11:12; Luke 13:24.

16:18a See Matthew 19:9 for clarification.

16:23a Matthew 13:41-42; 25:41; Revelation 14:9-11; 20:10-15.

16:31a Christ rose from the dead. But in spite of that, those who love their sin continue to turn their

backs on the evidence.

17:2a ... *so that what you say or do doesn’t become a stumbling block to someone.* See Matthew 18:6 note.

17:4a Matthew 18:21-35.

17:5a Or *messengers*.

17:6a Imperfect tense (ongoing action).

17:6b ... *with determined, persistent endurance, until the miracle it sets out to accomplish is a reality* ... See Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:19 to see what a tiny mustard seed can accomplish. It’s not the greatness of our faith that’s important, but how determinedly, tenacious-

won't pay attention or even bother to read the warnings there. But if someone were to rise from the dead and warn them, they would turn from their sinning and live for God!"

³¹ "If they won't listen to Moses and the prophets," Abraham replied, "neither will they listen and be persuaded to change even if someone came back from the dead to warn them."^a

Sin, Faith, and Duty

17 Then He said to His followers, "There will always be people causing others to sin, but woe to the one who is the cause of their sin.

² "It would have been far better for that person if he had been thrown into the sea with a massive millstone tied around his neck, than that he should cause even one of these little ones to stumble.

"So you must always be on your guard."^a

³ "If your brother sins against you, face him with the wrong he has done. If he says he is sorry and will stop his wrongdoing, forgive him.

⁴ "Even if he sins against you seven times in one day, and each time comes to you and says, 'I'm sorry; I won't do it again,' you are to forgive him."^a

⁵ The apostles^a at one time asked the Lord, "Help us to have more faith."

⁶ "If you would continue to exercise^a whatever faith you have, in the same determined, persistent way that a tiny mustard seed goes to work,"^b the Lord replied, "you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

⁷ "Which of you would say to your servant who had just come in from plowing or looking after the sheep, 'Come on in, sit down and eat'?

⁸ "No! Wouldn't you instead say to him, 'Wash up now and put on an apron and prepare my supper, and wait on me while I eat and drink. After

I've finished eating and drinking, then you can eat and drink'?

⁹ "Would you thank that servant for obeying orders and doing the things you told him to do? I don't think so.

¹⁰ "You should have the same attitude. When you have done all you were told to do, you should say, 'We're not worthy of any praise. We did only our duty.'"

Ten Healed of Leprosy

¹¹ As Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem He went thru the middle of both Samaria and Galilee.

¹² As He was entering one of the towns along the way, ten men who were lepers met Him. They didn't come close, but called to Him from a long way off.

¹³ "Jesus! Master! Have pity on us!" they cried out.

¹⁴ When Jesus saw them He called out to them, "Be on your way, and show yourselves to the priest."^a And as they went, they were healed!

¹⁵ When one of them saw that he was healed, he hurried back to Jesus, loudly shouting praises to God.

¹⁶ Then he threw himself face down at Jesus' feet, and gratefully and profusely thanked Him. And he wasn't even a Jew! He was a despised Samaritan.

¹⁷ "Weren't there ten who were healed?" Jesus questioned. "Where are the other nine?

¹⁸ "Were none except this foreigner grateful enough to return and praise God?"

¹⁹ Then He said to the man, "Stand up now and be on your way. Your faith has made you well."

The Coming of the Kingdom of God

²⁰ When the Pharisees asked Him when the Kingdom of God would come, He told them, "The Kingdom of God doesn't come at the present time^a in a way that you can see it with your eyes.

²¹ "People won't say, 'Look! Here it is!' or 'See, it's

ly, and persistently we use whatever faith we have. Nor is Christ saying here ... *faith as small as a mustard seed*. The word *small* is not in the Greek text, but has been added here in some translations.

The word commonly translated *as* here is translated from the Greek word *ous*. "It's a comparative particle, indicating the manner in which something proceeds." — *Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich*.

True, a mustard seed doesn't have faith per se, but our faith must go into action and persevere in prayer with *the kind of persevering action* a mustard seed takes. So notice how the tiny mustard seed proceeds with relentless perseverance, once it

is planted in good soil, and is faithfully watered and fertilized. That's the kind of determined, persistent faith we are to exercise. See Luke 11:5-13 and 18:1-8 for illustrations Jesus gave as to how we are to be determined and persistent in the use of our faith, until what we are asking God for is granted.

Someone has said: Perseverance in prayer is the earnest, intense, believing prayer you engage in after you are exhausted after earnest, intense, believing prayer—until the answer comes. True!

17:14a Leviticus 13 and 14.

17:20a Present indicative.

17:21a In every heart (the heart-center of the

over there!’ because actually, the Kingdom of God is within you.”^a

²² Then He said to His followers, “The time will come when you will wish you could see the Son of Man here with you on earth for even one day. But that won’t happen.

²³ “People will even tell you, ‘Look! He’s over here!’ or ‘Look! He’s over there!’ Don’t make a move to follow them or have anything to do with them.

²⁴ “Because when the Son of Man comes to earth to reign, He will be as visible for all to clearly see as lightning is when it flashes in one part of the heavens and then continues in spectacular brilliance across the whole sky.”^a

²⁵ “However, He must first endure extreme suffering and be rejected by the people of this genera-

tion.

²⁶ “Things will be the same on earth during the days when the Son of Man is preparing to return to earth as they were in Noah’s day.

²⁷ “Even during the days just before the flood, people were eating and drinking as usual. Men were marrying wives, and people were giving their daughters in marriage. They were living as usual even on the very day that Noah and his family entered the big ship he had built. Then the flood came and destroyed every one of them.”^a

²⁸ “It will also be the same as it was when Lot lived in Sodom. They were eating and drinking as usual. They were buying and selling, planting and building.

²⁹ “But the very day that Lot left Sodom, fire and brimstone rained down from the sky and destroyed

emotions, the governing center of the will) there is a throne. Someone is seated upon that throne, governing and directing the thoughts and actions of that life. The rightful Ruler is God, your Creator. But every person has ignored the rightful Ruler, and has usurped the throne for himself. It is the Kingdom within you, belonging to God, that Christ is speaking of here.

There is also an external Kingdom of God, but Christ knew that the Kingdom you need to be concerned about first is the Kingdom within you, as to who is reigning there.

Until you have surrendered the throne of your heart to God, you are not converted. You are still a rebel—reigning where Christ and God should reign—until you make Him the Lord of your life and obey Him in all things. And remember, selective obedience is also rebellion. If Christ is to be the King, He must be obeyed in all things at all times. God will help you accomplish this. See Philippians 2:12-13 and I John 1:5-2:6 notes.

But later, maybe very soon now, God will establish His temporal Kingdom on earth, with His Son, Jesus Christ, reigning as King. Isaiah 40:5; Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14; Zechariah 14:16-21; Matthew 24:29-30; Revelation 1:7-8.

17:22-24a Christ’s followers no doubt did not place as much importance upon His presence with them as they should have. But here the Lord tells them that *the time will come* when they will wish they could have Him with them again for even a single day. Their wish, however, will not be granted.

Instead, false Christs would appear. Certain deceivers and the deceived would claim that Christ was in a certain place or another. Jesus instructs His followers not to believe any such declarations, then or ever.

When Christ comes to earth the second time, His coming will be with such glory and power that the whole world will see Him and know that He has come. Having ascended victoriously into the heavens after His resurrection, He will come again, as promised, and every eye on earth will see Him. Revelation 1:7.

* * *

It is a fact that a number of false Christs sought recognition during the early years of the early Church. According to Matthew 24:23-27 and Mark 13:21-22, many more will claim to be Christ during the last 3 1/2 years of this age, just before Christ returns to rule the earth. See Matthew 24:23-31 for a more complete explanation by Christ.

17:27a See Genesis 6:5 to 8:22.

17:29a See Genesis 18:16 to 19:28.

17:26-30a Life went on as usual during the days of Noah, *even on the very day that Noah and his family entered the big ship he had built*. The same was true in the days of Lot. Life went on as usual in Sodom and Gomorrah — *They were eating and drinking as usual. They were buying and selling, planting and building. But the very day that Lot left Sodom, fire and brimstone rained down from the sky and destroyed every one of them*. Jesus seems to be emphasizing the fact that only the watchful, waiting Christians will recognize the times and realize that the Lord’s coming is near. Sleepy “Christians” and all non-Christians will have no such discernment, and will live as if everything will continue as it has in the past.

God *destroyed* the earth in Noah’s day because of the monstrous wickedness of that generation. It was for that same reason that He later *destroyed* Sodom and Gomorrah. Many claim that one of the signs of the end of the age is the increased wickedness to be seen in the world today. This point is a

every one of them.^a

³⁰“The same usual things will be happening up to the time when the Son of Man is revealed.”^a

³¹“If you are on your roof deck when the warning is sounded,^a and your valuables are inside the house, you must not go down into the house to save anything! The same applies if you are out in the field; you must not go back to the house for anything!

³²“Remember what happened to Lot’s wife when she looked back!

³³“Whoever^a insists at this time on saving what he has gained in life, will lose his life! But whoever, without hesitation, abandons his possessions and runs, will save his life.”^b

³⁴“Two people will be sleeping in the same bed that night. One will be carried off and the other

left.”^a

³⁵“Two women will be grinding grain together. One will be carried off and the other left.”^a

³⁶“Two men will be working together in the field. One will be carried off and the other left.”^a

³⁷“Where will all this happen, Lord?” His followers asked Him.

“You’ll always find vultures gathered together,” Jesus replied, “wherever there’s a body about to die.”^a

The Need for Persistence When Praying

18 One day Jesus told them a parable to teach them that they should always persevere in their praying, and never give up.

²“In a certain city,” He said, “there was a judge who had no fear of God and no desire to help any-

very valid one. The Lord’s point seems to be, however, simply, that life will continue as usual here on the earth until sudden, horrendous destruction overtakes mankind, exactly as was the case in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot.

It is likely that Christ is describing events that will take place in Jerusalem during the days just before Antichrist blows up the altar of sacrifice—removing it and placing in its stead his own image to be worshiped. This will be the beginning of the Great Tribulation. As pointed out in Appendix 245, Antichrist will enter Jerusalem (no doubt peaceably, on some pretext) 110 days before he somehow blows up the altar of sacrifice. Daniel 8:11-12; 9:27.

* * *

The non-Christian Jews will have no idea that Antichrist plans to stop the animal sacrifices, which they have reinstituted, and in their place demand that his image be erected and worshiped. Only those who heed the Lord’s warning to flee immediately from Israel when Antichrist commits this *abomination and devastation* (Matthew 24:15-21) will save their lives.

Just as Lot was saved when he left Sodom before it rained fire and brimstone from Heaven and destroyed all (Genesis 18:1 to 19:26), even so will the obedient in Jerusalem find a similar salvation.

Noah and his family were also saved by entering the ark just before the flood came. Genesis 6-8. Obviously, Jesus mentioned both Noah and Lot because of the similarity of their experience to that which is ahead for the Jewish nation and the world.

The Lord will be *revealed* at that time as He stands upon the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4), causing it to divide north and south, thereby making a way of escape for the Jews in Jerusalem to flee into Jordan.

* * *

But Christ could also be speaking here of the attitude of most people even *Immediately after the tribulation of those days* ... (Matthew 24:29), immediately after the great Battle of Armageddon. Most people will very likely continue to go about life as usual. They still won’t realize they have only days left (45 days—Daniel 12:11-12), during which the momentous happenings predicted in Matthew 24:29-31 will be taking place—and then to face Jesus Christ as their Judge. Matthew 25:31-46. And that day is fast approaching. *Prepare to meet your God!*

17:31a Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14.

17:33a Whoever *looks back to the material things of this life* and insists ...

17:33b See Matthew 24:16-18 note for escape instructions for people in Israel.

17:31-37a The *day* of which the Lord speaks is very likely the day in which the Antichrist will turn against the Jews in Jerusalem. Daniel 8:11-12. When the Antichrist blows up the altar of sacrifice and causes his own image to *stand* in its place (Matthew 24:15), the Jews in Israel who know and believe Jesus’ words are to flee to the mountains, not attempting to rescue even one material possession. Mark 13:14-19. Their flight must be immediate and with great speed. In v 33 they are warned that anyone seeking to *preserve* any material things at this time will *lose* his life.

Only those who are willing to sacrifice all material things and flee immediately will be saved. They are to trust God totally for their future.

The three groups of *two* undoubtedly refer to persons who are together when the news is broadcast that the Antichrist has destroyed the altar of sacrifice and has caused his own image to *stand* in the Holy Place. Some in their beds will simply turn over and go back to sleep. Some in the fields, instead of

one.

³“But a widow kept coming to him, continually begging for justice against someone who had wronged her.

⁴“He totally ignored her for a long time. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I have no fear of God and no interest in pleasing anyone,

⁵‘still, because of the way this woman keeps pestering me, I’ll see that she gets justice. Otherwise, her continual pleading will drive me crazy.’

⁶“Think about what that ungodly judge said,” the Lord continued.

⁷“And won’t God grant justice to His own people when they continue to cry day and night to Him? Won’t He patiently listen to them, instead of ignoring them?

⁸“I tell you, He will indeed see that they get justice, and with great speed. The real question is, when the Son of Man returns, will He find that kind of persevering faith among His followers on earth?”^a

A Pharisee and a Tax Collector Pray

⁹He also told the following parable to some people who were so sure that they themselves were upright, but looked down on everyone else:

¹⁰“Once two men went up to the Temple to pray—one, a Pharisee, the other, a despised tax collector.

¹¹“The Pharisee stood there and began praying about himself, like this: ‘God, I thank You that I’m not like other men—greedy, deceitful and unjust, unfaithful in their marriages, or even like that detestable tax collector over there.

¹²‘I go without eating two days a week, and I give You one tenth of all my income.’

¹³“But the tax collector stood apart from the others, and didn’t think he was good enough to even

lift his eyes to Heaven as he prayed. He was so sorry for what he had done that he just kept beating upon his chest and saying, ‘O God, have pity on me! I’ve been such a terrible sinner!’

¹⁴“I tell you that this man, not the Pharisee, went back to his home in right standing with God. Because everyone who thinks highly of himself will be brought down, and everyone who truly humbles himself before God will be lifted up.”

Jesus Blesses Little Children

¹⁵Some people even brought their babies to Jesus so He could touch and bless them. But when His followers saw this, they scolded the people for bothering Him with babies.

¹⁶But Jesus called the parents and their children over to Him and said, “Let the little children come to Me, and don’t hold them back. Because only those who become like these little children^a will gain entrance into the Kingdom of God.

¹⁷“I tell you the truth, that anyone who refuses to now humbly accept the rule of the Kingdom of God in his heart and life like a little child^a will definitely not be allowed to enter it.”

The Rich Ruler

¹⁸A certain ruler^a once asked Him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to receive everlasting life?”

¹⁹“Why do you call Me ‘good?’” Jesus replied. “There’s only One who is truly good, and that’s God.

²⁰“You know the commandments God has given: ‘Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not tell lies about anyone. Honor your father and mother.’”

²¹“I’ve obeyed all of these from the time I was a child,” the man replied.

taking immediate flight, will continue working or return to their homes to rescue some item.

The warning remains clear: **Only those who flee immediately will be saved!** The others will be either slain or carried off and enslaved by the Antichrist. Zechariah 13:8-9.

* * *

Some believe that vss 34-36 speak of the Rapture of the Church. But inasmuch as this passage is linked closely to the previous verses in which the Lord instructs the Jews to flee from Jerusalem and all Israel when the Antichrist destroys the altar of sacrifice and sets up his *abominable* image to be worshiped (Matthew 24:15-21), it must refer to that situation instead of the Rapture. The very context in which these verses are situated, following the

Lord’s warning to flee, shows that they have nothing to do with the Rapture.

Jesus’ answer to His followers, concerning the question of *where* they would be *carried*, appears to indicate that the entire nation of Israel will be the stage. The vultures of the Antichrist will be everywhere, ready to pounce on their victims. See Matthew 24:15-28; Mark 13:14-23.

18:8a This section of Scripture has at least a twofold purpose. It first shows the power of persevering prayer, and secondly shows how God wants to answer such prayer preceding the coming of Christ, especially on the part of those who will be under the awful persecution from their adversary, the Antichrist and his followers.

In v 7 He states that *He will patiently listen to*

²² Upon hearing his reply, Jesus told him, "You are still failing God in one area of your life. Sell everything you have and give the money to the poor, and you will be rich in Heaven.^a Then come along with Me."

²³ But when he heard that, his heart sank, because he was very rich.

²⁴ When Jesus saw how sad he became, He said to those standing there as the man left, "It is so difficult for those with money to enter the Kingdom of God!

²⁵ "In fact, it's easier for a camel to squeeze thru the eye of a needle than for a rich person to gain entrance into the Kingdom of God."^a

²⁶ Those who heard Him were stunned, and exclaimed, "Well, who then can be saved?"^a

²⁷ "Things that are impossible for men to do are possible with God's help,"^a Jesus replied.

²⁸ Then Peter spoke up, "Look, we left everything we had and followed You."

²⁹ "I assure you I'm telling you the truth," Jesus replied, "when I tell you that there is no one who has left home or parents or brothers or wife or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God,

³⁰ who will not be repaid many times over in this present life, and will receive everlasting life in the age to come."^a

Jesus Again Predicts His Death

³¹ Then He took the Twelve aside and said to them, "Listen now, we are on our way up to Jerusalem, and all the things that the prophets wrote about the Son of Man will take place when we get there."^a

³² "Because He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and they will mock Him, insult Him, spit on Him, flog Him, and kill Him.

them. It has been a long time since Christ was here, and many have suffered and died for Him during that time. But then in v 8 He states that *they will get justice, and with great speed.* Therefore, when the time for judgment comes He will make a quick work of it.

We do well to always bear in mind this promise of the Lord to answer persevering prayer. And especially we do well to bear this in mind as the persecutions of the enemy worsen in the days of the end. On effective prayer, see also 11:1-13; 17:5-6, and the notes — also Matthew 7:7-11.

18:16a ... *humble in heart, and willing to learn and obey* ...

18:17a ... *teachable, mild, humble, wanting to please his parents, and free from prejudice* ... See Matthew 18:1-3 note. Christ was not referring to

³³ "But three days later, He will rise back to life again."

³⁴ But they didn't understand a thing He said. In fact, God had hidden the meaning from them, so that's the reason they didn't know what He was talking about.^a

A Blind Beggar is Healed

³⁵ As He was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting beside the road begging.

³⁶ When he heard the great crowd going by, he asked those near him what was going on.

³⁷ "Jesus from Nazareth is passing by," they told him.

³⁸ Upon hearing that, he shouted, "Jesus! Son of David! Have pity on me!"

³⁹ "Stop that! Calm down!" the people at the head of the procession scolded him, but he only shouted louder than ever, "Son of David! Have pity on me!"

⁴⁰ So Jesus stopped and asked someone to bring the man to Him.

⁴¹ When he came near, Jesus asked him, "What is it that you want Me to do for you?"

"Lord," he said, "I want to be able to see."

⁴² "Receive your sight!" Jesus responded. "Your faith has made you well."

⁴³ And immediately he could see! So he too joined the crowd and followed Jesus, praising and thanking God. When all the people saw what had happened, they too praised God.

The Conversion of Zacchaeus

19 Then Jesus went on into Jericho. ² As He was walking thru it, a very rich man named Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, heard He was there.

spoiled brats.

18:18a Evidently a ruler or official of the synagogue.

18:22a See 16:1-9, and the note.

18:25a See Mark 10:22,25 notes.

18:26a See Matthew 19:25 note.

18:27a Jesus is not against riches that are gained in an honorable way, but He points out the extreme danger of making riches one's god, and of using them for self-satisfying purposes instead of under God's approval and supervision. See Mark 10:27.

18:29-30a See Mark 10:28-31 note.

18:31a Psalm 22:1-21; 41:9; Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:1-12; Daniel 9:25-26; Zechariah 11:12-13; 12:10.

18:34a It was enough that they would remember after He died and rose again that He had prophesied several times that all this would happen.

³ So he went out to the street to get a look at Him, but he wasn't able to because of the crowd. He was too short to look over them.

⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to get a look from there, because Jesus would be passing by that way.

⁵ When Jesus came to the tree, He looked up and saw him. "Zacchaeus," He said, "hurry and come down, because I must stay at your house today."

⁶ So he hurried and came right down. He was very happy to receive Jesus as his guest.

⁷ But when the people saw Jesus go with this man they all began to grumble, saying, "He's gone to be the guest of a man who's a sinner!"^a

⁸ *Later that day*^a Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Sir! I here and now give half of my possessions to the poor. If I have cheated anyone out of anything, I will pay him back four times as much as I took."^b

⁹ Jesus responded by saying, "Today salvation has come to this house, because you have shown that you are also now a true son of Abraham.

¹⁰ "The reason the Son of Man has come to this world is to seek out and to save those who are lost."

Parable of the Ten Gold Coins

¹¹ While the people were thinking over what He had just said, He told them another parable in order to correct the idea many had that because He was approaching Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God would now immediately appear on the scene. So He said:

¹² "A certain nobleman went to a distant country where he was to be crowned king, after which he would return.

¹³ "Before leaving he called ten of his servants and gave each of them one mina.^a 'Put this money to work,' he told them, 'and see how much profit you can make with it while I'm gone.'

¹⁴ "But some of the citizens of his country had a growing hatred for him, and sent a delegation to the emperor to say, 'We absolutely refuse to have this man as our king!'

¹⁵ "He returned however as king, and sent for the ten servants to whom he had given the money, to find out how much profit each had made.

¹⁶ "The first servant said, 'Sir, your mina has produced ten minas,'

¹⁷ 'Well done!' the king replied. 'You are a good servant! Because you've been faithful in this very small matter, I am appointing you as governor over ten cities.'

¹⁸ "The second servant came and reported, 'Sir, your mina has produced five minas.'

¹⁹ "The king praised him as well, saying, 'You will govern five cities.'

²⁰ "Another came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina, which I kept hidden safely in a handkerchief.

²¹ 'I am in constant fear of you, because you are a hard man. You take what doesn't belong to you, and harvest what you didn't sow.'

²² 'You worthless, wicked servant!' the king reprimanded him, 'I will judge you by the very words you have spoken. So you know, do you, that I am a hard man, taking what doesn't belong to me, and harvesting what I didn't sow?

²³ 'Why then didn't you at least put my money in the bank, so that upon my return I could have collected it with interest?'

²⁴ "Then he said to his guards, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who gained ten minas.'

²⁵ 'But, sir,' they objected, 'he already has ten minas!'

²⁶ 'Yes, and I'm telling you,' the king replied, 'that everyone who has will be given more. But as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken from him.'^a

19:7a In v 10 Jesus explains why He went with Zacchaeus.

19:8a Implied.

19:8b These words were no doubt spoken at the dinner table after Christ had spoken to Zacchaeus for some time, and he had come to realize he must turn from his former life and live to please God if he were to gain eternal life. His willingness to make more than a full restitution shows that he had a true conversion to Jesus as his Lord, Savior, and Messiah.

19:13a A mina was worth about four months' wages of a laboring man.

19:26a Matthew 13:12; Mark 4:25; Luke 8:18.

19:27a The Lord's *enemies* will be judged at both the judgment of the nations upon His return to earth (Matthew 25:31-46) and also following the Millennium, when all the ungodly dead are raised for final judgment. Revelation 20:5a, 11-15.

19:30a The colt and the donkey were viewed as a Messianic sign based on Zechariah 9:9, which reads: *Tell the people of Jerusalem, "Look, your King is coming to you! He is humble, riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the offspring of a beast of burden."* On these animals, Jesus rode into the city on Palm Sunday as a public declaration of His Messi-

²⁷ ‘But now, bring here those enemies of mine who refused to have me as their king, and execute them here in front of me.’”^a

The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

²⁸ When Jesus finished the parable, He went on ahead of the rest, continuing on His way up to Jerusalem.

²⁹ As He was approaching Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His followers on a mission.

³⁰ “Go into the town up ahead,” He told them. “As you enter the town you’ll find a colt tied up. No one has ever ridden that colt, but untie it and bring it here.”^a

³¹ “If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying that colt?’ just say, ‘Because its true Owner^a needs it.’”

³² So the two men went into the town, and found everything just as Jesus had said.

³³ But as they were untying the colt, the owners called out to them, “Hey! What are you doing there, untying that colt?”

³⁴ “Its true Owner^a needs it,” they replied.

³⁵ Then they brought it to Jesus, threw their robes on its back and helped Jesus get on it.

³⁶ And as He rode along, others repeatedly spread their robes on the road.

³⁷ Then, as He descended from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem, that whole crowd following Him began to joyfully and loudly shout praises to God for the great miracles they had seen.

³⁸ “God bless the King who comes in the name of the Lord!”^a they were shouting.

“There is peace in Heaven, and glory in the presence of God in the highest Heaven!”

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees then called out to Him from the crowd that was watching, “Teacher, tell your followers to stop shouting such nonsense!”^a

⁴⁰ “I tell you the truth,” Jesus responded, “if these

people were to keep silent, the very stones would immediately cry out and say exactly what these people are saying.”^a

Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem

⁴¹ As He came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it.”^a

⁴² “If only you had known,” He lamented, “at least you, the people of Jerusalem—if only you had known the wonderful peace that could be yours in this Day that was promised you and belongs to you. But now the precious truth is hidden from you!”

⁴³ “Because of this, the time will come upon you when your enemies will pile up earth against your walls and surround you and close in on you on every side.

⁴⁴ “They will so completely destroy both you and the people within your walls that not even one stone will be left upon another, because you did not recognize your God when He came to save you!”^a

Jesus at the Temple

⁴⁵ When He arrived in the city, He went into the Temple area and began to drive out those who were buying and selling there.

⁴⁶ “It is written in the Scriptures that God has said,” He protested emphatically, **My house is to be a house of prayer,^a** but you have turned it into **a place for thieves to do business^b!**”

⁴⁷ He taught every day in the Temple area. And all during that time, the chief priests, the teachers of the Law, and the leaders among the people were trying to find a way to destroy Him.

⁴⁸ But they were unable to do anything, because all the people were listening so very carefully to everything He said.”^a

ahship. See Matthew 21:1-11 and notes.

19:31,34a Literally *the Lord of it*.

19:38a Psalm 118:26.

19:39a And they may have added, as many feel today when God is praised, “*Such shouting is embarrassing to everyone!*”

19:40a This was a very special time for God to be praised, just before the great and costly sacrifice for our sins. God’s great love for us is worthy of our loudest and most exuberant praise. Let us indeed praise Him now in our day!

19:41a He was overcome with compassion as He viewed the guilty city that he knew would soon

receive one of the most awesome bloodbaths of history, and be left in ruins.

19:44a This prophecy was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Romans burned and leveled Jerusalem, and took almost 100,000 prisoners to Rome as slaves.

19:46a Isaiah 56:7.

19:46b Jeremiah 7:11.

19:48a This implies that great numbers of Jews did receive Jesus. Historians claim that as many as a million Jews were followers of Jesus in the first century.

20:16a He here again prophesied the killing,

Jewish Leaders Question Jesus' Authority

20 One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the Temple courts and telling them the Great News, the chief priests and the teachers of the Law, together with the elders, confronted Him.

²“Tell us,” they demanded, “by whose authority did you do the things you’ve been doing in the Temple area recently? Just who do you think gave you such authority?”

³“First give Me an answer to a question I have for you,” He replied.

⁴“Where did John get his authority to baptize people—from God, or was it just his own idea?”

⁵They talked it over among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘He received it from God,’ He will say, ‘Why, then, didn’t you believe him?’

⁶“But if we say, ‘It was just his own idea,’ this whole mob will stone us to death, because they’re all convinced that John was a prophet.”

⁷So they said, “We don’t know where he got his authority.”

⁸“And neither will I tell you who gave Me the right to do what I do,” He responded.

The Parable of the Sharecroppers

⁹Then He told the people this parable: “There was once a man who planted a vineyard. He rented it out to sharecroppers, and then left the area for a long time.

¹⁰“At harvest time he sent one of his men to the renters to pick up his share of the fruit from the vineyard. But they beat him up and sent him away without a thing.

¹¹“So he sent another man. But they treated him shamefully too, beating him up and sending him away empty-handed.

¹²“He sent a third one. They wounded this one too, and threw him out.

¹³“What shall I do?” the owner of the vineyard wondered. ‘I know,’ he said. ‘I’ll send my son, whom I love so dearly. Maybe they’ll show some respect when they see it’s my son I’m now sending.’

¹⁴“But when the renters saw him coming they went into a huddle and said, ‘Look! Here comes the heir. Let’s kill him, and we’ll get this vineyard for

ourselves.’

¹⁵“So they dragged him out of the vineyard and killed him. Now what do you suppose the owner of the vineyard will do to those men?

¹⁶“I’ll tell you what he’ll do! He’ll come and utterly destroy those renters and rent the vineyard to others.”^a

When the people heard this, they said, “May such a thing never happen!”

¹⁷But firmly fixing His eyes on them He said, “What does the Scripture mean then that says:

The Stone that the builders threw out as worthless has become the Chief Cornerstone^a?

¹⁸“Everyone who falls on that Stone will be broken, but on whomever It falls, It will grind him to powder!”^a

Paying Taxes to Caesar Questioned

¹⁹Knowing very well that Jesus had spoken that parable against them, the chief priests and teachers of the Law wanted desperately to arrest Him at once, but they were afraid of what the crowd would do if they did.

²⁰So after watching Him closely, they sent spies to Him who pretended to be friendly. But they were actually trying to get Him to say something they could report to the governor, so the governor would arrest Him.

²¹“Teacher,” they said, “we know you always speak the truth, and you teach what’s true. You’re not trying to gain the favor of anyone; but you teach God’s truth as it really is.

²²“So would you tell us: Is it right, according to the Laws God has given us, for us Jews to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor? Or should we refuse to pay them?”

²³But He saw thru the underhanded way they were trying to trap Him, so He said, “Why are you testing Me? Show Me the coin you use to pay the tax.”

²⁴When they handed Him the coin, He said, “Whose picture and name are on here?”

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

²⁵“In that case,” He said, “give Caesar what belongs to him, and give to God what belongs to God.”

²⁶So they didn’t get Him to say anything they

sacking, and burning of Jerusalem by the Romans, which took place in A.D. 70. He no doubt also referred to His then giving His vineyard to the Gentiles, “until the times of the Gentiles comes to an end.” Luke 21:24.

20:17a Psalm 118:22.

20:18a See Matthew 21:44 note.

20:28a ... *to inherit his property.*

20:36a ... *who never die or need to be replaced by others.*

20:37a Exodus 3:6,15.

20:38a Or *Everyone who ever lived is still alive*

could use against Him, and they were stunned by His answer. It completely silenced them.

The Question about Marriage in Heaven

²⁷Then some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection back to life after death, came to Him with a question.

²⁸“Teacher,” they said, “Moses wrote this law for us: ‘If a man dies and leaves a wife but no children, his brother must marry the widow, and raise up a child for his brother.’^a”

²⁹“Once there were seven brothers. The oldest married a wife, but he died without any children.

³⁰“The second married the widow, and he too died childless.

³¹“Then the third married her. In fact, all seven married her, and all died childless.

³²“Finally the woman died too.

³³“Now the question is: Whose wife will she be when those seven brothers are resurrected? After all, each of them was married to her.”

³⁴“The people of this age marry and are given in marriage,” Jesus replied.

³⁵“But those whom God considers worthy to live in the age to come, and are resurrected from the dead, will neither marry nor be given in marriage.

³⁶“Nothing will cause them to die anymore, so they will be immortal like the angels.^a After God raises them back to life, they will all be children of God.

³⁷“Even in the report Moses gave about the burning bush, it is clear that God was revealing that the dead will come back to life, when He told Moses that He’s the **One who is worshiped as God by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.**^a

³⁸“He’s not the God of people who are dead, but of those who are very much alive. And God speaks of all people as being alive somewhere.”^a

³⁹Some of the teachers of the Law then spoke up and agreed, “Teacher, that was a good answer.”

⁴⁰After that no one dared to ask Him any more questions.

Whose Son is the Messiah?

⁴¹Then Jesus asked them a question, “How can the Scripture be true that says that the Messiah is to be a descendant of King David?

⁴²“Because in the Book of Psalms, David himself said:

God said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand

⁴³**until I put Your enemies under Your feet as a footstool for Your feet.’^a**

⁴⁴“So David calls the Messiah his ‘Lord’. How can He then be his descendant?”^a

⁴⁵Then while all the people were listening, He said to His followers,

⁴⁶“Be on your guard so you don’t become like the teachers of the Law. They love to walk around in long, flowing robes, and be honorably greeted in the markets. They want the prominent seats in the synagogues and a place at the head table at banquets.

⁴⁷“Yet these are the same men who cheat widows out of their homes and other properties, and then pretend to be so godly by making long prayers. But be sure of this, those men will receive greater and more severe sentences on Judgment Day than other sinners!”

The Widow’s Offering

21 As Jesus was later sitting down, He watched as the rich were putting their gifts into the offering box.

²Then He also saw a very poor widow dropping in two tiny brass coins.

³“I tell you the truth,” He said, “that poor widow put in more than all the others.

⁴“Everyone else put in gifts from their surplus, but even though she is poor she put in everything she had—even what she was to live on!”

Signs of the End of the Age

⁵Then some of His followers remarked about the grandeur of the Temple, how beautifully adorned it was with beautiful stones and various gifts that had been dedicated to God.

⁶“As for all the beautiful things you see here,” Jesus replied, “the time will come when not one stone will be left upon another. They will all be torn down.”

⁷“Teacher!” they exclaimed, “when will all that happen? And what signal will there be that it’s about to happen?”^a

⁸“You must always be on your guard,” He

somewhere, and must give an account of himself before God on Judgment Day.

20:43a Psalm 110:1

20:44a See Matthew 22:45 note.

21:5-7a This prophecy was uttered just outside the Temple as Jesus and His followers were leaving.

Though this is similar in many parts to our Lord’s prophecy in the 24th chapter of Matthew, and Mark 13, it is also quite different. This was given in or near the Temple area, while the prophecy in Matthew and Mark was given on the Mount of Olives, after they had left the Temple.

replied, “so that no one deceives you. Because many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ, and the time is near.’^a Have nothing to do with them.

⁹“And don’t be afraid when you hear of wars and revolutions, because these events must take place first. But that doesn’t mean that the end will come immediately.”

¹⁰Then He said to them, “*As the end approaches*,^a many nations will rise up against many other nations, and kingdoms against kingdoms.

¹¹“And there will be great earthquakes, famines, and disease epidemics in various places. There will also be terrifying sights and incredible happenings threatening from the heavens.^a

¹²“But before all these end-time events happen, they will arrest you and treat you brutally with

contempt. You will be dragged into synagogues^a and thrown into jails. And you will be brought before kings and rulers because of the stand you will take for Me.

¹³“But this will all turn out to be your opportunity to tell them the Great News.

¹⁴“So when you are arrested, make up your minds not to worry or even think about what you will say in your defense.

¹⁵“Because I will work thru your mind and mouth, and give you such words of wisdom that none of your enemies will be able to successfully prove you wrong or contradict what you say.^a

¹⁶“But you will be betrayed by even your own parents, brothers, relatives, and friends and turned over to those who want your mouth closed. They will even send some of you to your death.^a

It appears that they immediately asked Him, “Teacher, when will all this happen?”, etc. They were asking about His statement that the Temple would be utterly destroyed. But He does more than answer their question. In vss 9-11 and 25-28 He tells them about events concerning the end of the age and of His coming *with power and great glory*.

As Christ’s followers were walking up the Mount of Olives, some of them were evidently in deep thought about His remarks about the end of the age and of His second coming, because according to Mark 13, four of them, Peter, James, John, and Andrew, privately came to Him on the Mount of Olives. They did not at that time ask for a sign as to when the Temple would be destroyed. He had already answered that question. Their question on the Mount of Olives, as recorded in Matthew 24 and Mark 13, concerned the end of the age and the second coming of the Lord.

But here now, as they stand in front of the Temple, they are concerned about His prophecy in regard to the Temple’s destruction.

21:8a ... the time is near *for me to reign as King of kings*. The prophecy in this verse is to have a double fulfillment. This fact is very apparent from Matthew 24:4-5, 23-24. A few men arose in the days prior to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, claiming to be *Christ*. But *many* are now appearing in these end time days making that claim. It is not apparent from this verse in Luke to which time Jesus was referring, or if He referred to both in the one statement.

21:10a Implied.

21:9-11a In these three verses Jesus goes into the matter of the end of the age, before we come to v 12 in which He begins to tell them about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (A.D. 70),

and of events immediately preceding that destruction. In v 9 Jesus emphasizes that they were not to allow themselves to be shaken by every war and commotion, taking them as signs of the end of the age. These wars are natural occurrences between sinful men and nations.

But then in vss 10-11 He gives them signs that He does want them to be concerned about. He lists several signs that are to occur in the end time, indicating that when all of these signs are in evidence at one time, the great day of His appearing in power and glory is close at hand. The signs are as follows: *Nations will rise against nations, and kingdoms against kingdoms. And there will be earthquakes, famines, and disease epidemics in various places.*

In addition to these signs, which are also mentioned in Matthew 24 and Mark 13, He states that further signs of His coming will be *terrifying sights and incredible happenings threatening from the heavens*. See vss 25-26.

Never before in history had wars involved literally the entire world as it did in World War I and World War II. It appears quite possible that these signs of the end time began in 1914 at the beginning of World War I. This war was followed by great famines. It was followed by the great flu epidemic which took some 20 million lives. *Earthquakes* not only took their toll but have occurred with increasing frequency from that time until now. See the more extensive notes on Matthew 24:7-8.

At this writing the *terrifying sights and incredible happenings threatening from the heavens* are still future. But, there seems to be little doubt that the present day is the time of the end.

21:12a ... *for trial* ...

21:15a If you are imprisoned because of your stand for Christ, awaiting trial, spend your time

¹⁷“And as a rule, you will be hated by people everywhere because of the stand you take for Me.

¹⁸“But not even a single hair from your heads will be lost.^a

¹⁹“You will save your souls by standing firm, and patiently enduring^a whatever God allows to come your way.

²⁰“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, that will be the sign by which you will know that the city will soon be destroyed.^a

²¹“Those living in Judea must then make their escape into the hills. Those in Jerusalem must leave at the earliest opportunity, and those outside the city must not attempt to enter it.

²²“Because this will be the time of the judgment of Israel,^a in fulfillment of all that the prophets have written.^b

²³“And woe to women who are pregnant or have nursing babies at that time, because there will be frightful disaster thruout the land as its people are dreadfully punished by God!

²⁴“Great numbers will be slaughtered by the sword. Others will be led away as slaves into all nations.^a And Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles comes to an end.^b

²⁵“*And as the times of the Gentiles are coming to an end,*^a strange things will happen to the sun, moon, and stars. People in the nations on earth will be utterly confused, baffled, and panic-stricken when mammoth waves surge and roar in the oceans and giant tides violently sweep in over the land.^b

²⁶“Many will die of heart failure because of being

praising the Lord and letting Him know that you are counting on Him to be your defense attorney, as He promised.

This can also be a great opportunity to witness to fellow inmates and prison guards, as many have already done in the past. These were instructions for those living before Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, but the same applies today. See also Matthew 10:18-20; Luke 12:11-12.

21:16a Even though your defense is perfect, a corrupt government or judge may still send you to prison or death. But to be imprisoned for your stand for Christ will mean only greater rewards for you in Heaven. And to die for Christ will not only mean greater rewards, but to be ushered immediately into God's presence.

21:18a They can kill the body, but God will resurrect your body in its entirety, even all your hair.

21:19a Refer to the word *patience* in a good Bible concordance. See how much is said in the Bible about patience in regard to your salvation.

21:20-22a It is at this point that the Lord begins answering His followers' question as to how they would know when the Temple was about to be destroyed, as He had prophesied. The sign would be, *when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies*.

The Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem in A.D. 66, but because of the unrest in Rome, caused by the death of Nero, the armies left. This gave the Christians time to escape. According to Eusebius, in obedience to prophetic instructions given them at that time, the Christians fled east across the Jordan River to Pella and safety. The Romans returned in A.D. 70 and slaughtered the inhabitants of Jerusalem and burned and totally destroyed the city.

21:22b That is, all that the prophets had written about the destruction of Jerusalem. Judgment had

been threatened by almost all the prophets against the people of that city.

21:24a The Romans killed over one million Jews in A.D. 70, and carried almost 100,000 into slavery.

21:24b The times of the Gentiles will not end until Antichrist is defeated at Armageddon. Regarding Armageddon see Isaiah 25:6-7; 66:15-18; Jeremiah 25:30-33; Joel 3:9-16; Zephaniah 3:8; Zechariah 14:12-15; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8; Revelation 14:17-20; 19:11-21. There is yet much distress and chaos ahead for Israel.

21:25a Implied.

21:25b There are many signs of the end time which are yet to come. We can expect *signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars*. And we can expect that the last part of this verse will also be fulfilled literally. Expect to see great *tides* in the sea. Such tides will bring great destruction on land.

Consider Isaiah 13:13-14 in relation to this time, where the Lord says, *Therefore, in the day when I reveal My fierce wrath and burning anger, I will cause the natural forces controlling the planets to violently tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its orbit and run about in space like a deer escaping the hunters, and wander about like a sheep without a shepherd.*

* * *

If the earth moves out of orbit, think of the tides that would result. The reason for the tidal waves could be that the earth might swing nearer the sun. The gravity of our massive sun would play havoc with the oceans on earth. It would even pull the earth's crust, causing great earthquakes. Perhaps it's at this time that the fourth vial of Revelation 16:8-9 will occur, when people on earth will be scorched with great heat. See also Malachi 4:1.

21:26a ... and will no longer keep those bodies

terror-stricken, resulting from the frightful things that are happening to the earth, and as they wonder what will happen next. Because the natural forces in the heavens controlling the planets will be violently shaken.^a

²⁷“And it is during the time of this great chaos that the Son of Man will be seen coming to earth in a cloud, with power and great glory.”^a

²⁸“But even when the end-time happenings are just beginning to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because all of this will mean that the time of the fulfillment of your redemption is near.”^a

²⁹Then He told them another parable. “Look at the fig tree and all the other trees,” He said.

³⁰“When you look at those trees and see them beginning to sprout leaves, you know very well

that summer is almost here.

³¹“In the same way, when you see these things happening you can know that the Kingdom of God is soon to be established on earth.”^a

³²“I tell you the solemn truth, this generation will positively not pass away before all of these things have taken place.”^a

³³“Heaven and earth will indeed pass away, but there’s no possibility whatever that what I say will come to nothing.”^a

³⁴“So you must always be on your guard. Don’t allow yourselves at any time to indulge in harmful and illicit practices—getting drunk, for instance, or even getting so burdened down and depressed by the cares of this life, that the Great Day suddenly overtakes you when you are least expecting

in their courses. Be sure to read the prophecy in Isaiah 13:9-14 regarding this. See also Joel 3:16; Haggai 2:6,21; Hebrews 12:26. Many people on earth will be literally scared to death. And it will be something to be scared about when our stable earth careens in its wild plunge out of orbit. From the last sentence of this verse we realize that the other planets will be freed from their fixed courses as well.

Certainly, with the world gone crazy in its humanity and also in its physical state, there will be much cause for terror-stricken fear, resulting in *many dying of heart failure.*

21:27a The Lord will make His appearance to the world following this extended chaos and the great judgments of fire, earthquakes, great hailstones, meteorites, and darkness that will follow the Battle of Armageddon. Matthew 24:29; 2 Peter 3:10-12; Revelation 6:12; 16:21. The last verses of the book of Daniel indicate that this last judgment may continue for some 45 days following Armageddon.

Then, in the midst of the darkness covering the earth at that time, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the Messiah expected by Israel will appear, shining in *power and great glory* in the heavens as He approaches the earth.

21:28a As we have stated, in the Matthew 24:6-8 note, we believe that *these things began* to happen with the beginning of World War I in 1914. If this is the case, we are already far along in the days of the end time. The coming of the Lord is indeed drawing near!

21:29-31a Many have taught that *the fig tree* here refers to the Jews. But notice that Jesus also adds the phrase *and all the other trees.* Jesus is simply pointing out the fact that when the trees of the field and forest begin shooting forth leaves, it is obvious that summer is close at hand. Likewise, Christ wants us to know that when we *see these things*

happening, we are to *know that the Kingdom of God is soon to be established on earth.*

21:32a The *generation* Christ is speaking of here must refer to the generation living at the time when these signs begin to appear. The generation living at the time of Christ did not see *all of these things take place.* If this interpretation is true, the generation born in 1914 will not pass away before all is fulfilled. The end is surely close at hand. See notes on Matthew 24:32-34; Mark 13:30.

21:33a Christ gives His solemn promise that His words will absolutely *not come to nothing.* What He has stated in these prophecies will absolutely come to pass, without fail. We can count on it. The devil can count on it, and all other enemies of God can count on it. Many of these prophecies are coming to pass even now!

21:34-35a Here’s a warning to which every Christian must pay constant and earnest heed. We need, with the Apostle Peter, to *be most diligent to make our calling and election to salvation and eternal life with God a sure thing!* 2 Peter 1:10. We need to admonish one another as Christians, and we need to awaken and warn the world of the awful fate that is fast closing in on them *with the suddenness and unexpectedness of the springing of a trap.* See 1 Thessalonians 5:3 and the notes.

Don’t count on getting ready to meet God at the time of your choosing. Your last day in this life could be today! “Prepare to meet your God!” Amos 4:12; Hebrews 3:7-11.

21:36a See Mark 13:33-37; 14:38, and notes.

21:36b Passive voice, in which the subject (you) receives the action. This has nothing to do with your physical position as you stand before the Lord. It has to do with your standing, your status or condition, as you appear before *the Son of Man.*

21:36c Some claim that this verse definitely refers to the Rapture of the Church *before* the Tribulation.

it.

³⁵ “Because the end will come upon everyone living upon the face of the entire earth with the suddenness and unexpectedness of the springing of a trap.^a

³⁶ “So you must constantly watch how you live,^a and continually pray that you will have the moral strength to escape being overwhelmed by all the temptations and judgments of the end times, and that you will be one who will stand acquitted^b in the presence of the Son of Man.”^c

³⁷ Every day Jesus taught in the Temple courts, and when evening came, He would go out to the hill called the Mount of Olives and spend the night there.

³⁸ Then early in the morning, all the people would return to the Temple courts to listen to Him.

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

22 The time was now very near for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover.^a

² And the chief priests and teachers of the Law were still looking for a way to kill Jesus, because they were really afraid of the way the people were taking hold of every word He said.

³ Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve.

⁴ He then went to the chief priests and captains of the Temple guard, and talked with them about how he could betray Jesus to them.

⁵ Delighted with his plan, they agreed to give him money.

⁶ So he promised them he would indeed turn Jesus over to them, and began looking for a time

But notice that the Lord has made absolutely no mention of the Great Tribulation of the last days in this entire discourse. In vss 12-19 He gave prophecy regarding the persecution of the early Church. This has already been fulfilled. We are now living in the days of the persecution of the latter-day Church, though most of us have not yet been affected by it.

Vss 20-24 prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the tribulation and the enslavement of the Jews at that time. Those who were awake and obeyed the Lord's instructions escaped that tribulation, but not because the Lord raptured them out of it.

Christ was giving warning here to His followers to make sure they didn't allow themselves to be caught up in all the sinfulness and subtle temptations of the last days, nor to be shaken by the judgments that would result. In the two verses just previous to v 36, Christ had given warning about the need for being awake and alert to withstand the temptations of Satan in this time.

The Apostle Paul gave similar warning, stating that in the last days some Christians will *abandon their faith in Christ and attentively listen to lying spirits, to teachings that actually come from demons*. 1 Timothy 4:1-2. Also in 2 Timothy 3:13 Paul warned that *evil men, many of them pretending to be Christians, will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived*.

And we are warned in Daniel 8:23 that the latter days will see sin permeating the earth to its fullest extent. It was of these times and temptations of which Christ warned here, challenging His hearers to *watch* their lives most carefully so that they

might continue to please Him and enter eternal life with Him.

Then consider the discourse given later on the Mount of Olives, as recorded in Matthew 24:12-13, *Because people will be sinning everywhere and in every way, multiplied times worse than ever before, even many of My followers will grow cold in their love for Me. But those who remain faithful to Me to the end of life will be saved*. Christ was vitally concerned, and is still concerned today, that our love for Him does not cool, making us susceptible to the temptations and sins of this world, and thus making us recipients of His judgments.

We are warned in the book of The Revelation that only those who overcome and *conquer Satan and the temptations of the world* will inherit eternal life with Christ. This is why His warning here is so needful, that we continue to *watch* our lives and make sure that we are following the Lord in all things.

So the warning here in Luke 21:36 is that we make sure that when the time comes that we find ourselves standing in the presence of God, it will not be for judgment and eternal loss, but to be welcomed into His presence to receive riches, love, and joy forever. Therefore, this Scripture has nothing to do with Christians being raptured from the earth to escape tribulation and persecution, but to escape the judgments of God upon the ungodly at the Great White Throne judgment. Revelation 20:11-15.

22:1a The seven-day festival beginning with the Feast of Passover, during which only bread made without yeast is eaten.

22:10a See Mark 14:13 note.

and place to do so when there wouldn't be a crowd.

The Last Supper

⁷Then came the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lambs were to be killed and then eaten with bread made without yeast.

⁸So Jesus sent Peter and John to Jerusalem, and instructed them, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."

⁹"Where do You want us to prepare it?" they asked Him.

¹⁰"As soon as you enter the city," He replied, "you will meet a man carrying a jar of water.^a Follow him into the house he enters.

¹¹"Then say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher told us to ask you, "Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with My followers?"'"

¹²"He will then show you a large upstairs room, all furnished. Get things ready for us there."

¹³So they left, and found everything just as Jesus had said. And they went ahead and prepared the Passover meal.

¹⁴When it was time for the meal, Jesus reclined at the table with His twelve apostles.

¹⁵Then He said to them, "It has been with fervent desire that I have looked forward to eating this Passover with you before I suffer.

¹⁶"Because I'm telling you, I will not eat the Passover again until I eat it in the Kingdom of God, after its true meaning has been fulfilled."

¹⁷Then He took the cup, and after giving thanks to God, He said to His followers, "Take this and share it among yourselves.

¹⁸"Because I'm telling you, I will not drink again of the produce of the vineyard until the Kingdom of God comes."

¹⁹Then He took bread, and after giving thanks to God, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This pictures My body^a which is given for you. Eat it in remembrance of Me."

²⁰In the same way He picked up the cup after supper, saying, "The contents of this cup represents God's New Agreement with you, sealed and guaranteed by My blood which is being poured out for you.

²¹"But listen! The one who is in the process of betraying Me is at the table here with Me as a

friend!

²²"It's true that the Son of Man will go from this life in the very way the Scriptures have declared,^a but woe to the man by whom He is betrayed!"

²³The followers then began to ask among themselves which of them would ever do such a thing.

²⁴Then, too, there was rivalry among them, since they were concerned about which of them would be considered the greatest.

²⁵So Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over the people. And those who exercise authority over others call themselves *benefactors*.

²⁶"But that's not the way it's to be among you. The greatest among you must be as humble as if he were the youngest, and let the one who leads act as a servant.

²⁷"Because who is greater, the one who sits and is served, or the one who serves? Isn't it the one who is served by others? And still, I am among you as a servant.

²⁸"But you are those who have continued to stand by Me in My trials.

²⁹"So I will give you authority to rule as kings, just as My Father has given Me authority to rule.

³⁰"And for that reason you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

³¹Then the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Listen carefully! Satan has demanded that he be allowed to thresh all of you^a as wheat.^b

³²"But I have most earnestly prayed for you, Simon, and asked the Father to make sure that your faith doesn't fail. And when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brothers."

³³"But, Lord," Peter replied, "I'm even ready to go to jail with You! Or even die with You!"

³⁴"I tell you the truth, Peter," Jesus replied. "Before the rooster crows this morning you will have said three times that you don't even know Me."

³⁵Then He asked them, "When I sent you out to preach the Great News without money, suitcase, or extra clothing, you didn't lack anything, did you?"

"No, nothing at all," they replied.

³⁶"But now, if any of you have money, take it along," He said. "Do the same if you have a suitcase. If you don't have a sword, sell some of your clothes if necessary and buy one.^a

³⁷"Because I tell you that the Scripture about Me

22:19a Meaning *this represents* or *is a picture of* or *will bring to your remembrance* My body.

22:22a See 24:26 references.

22:31a *You* is plural, so all are included, not just Peter.

22:31b ... *to see if anything remains after he*

that says, He was condemned as a criminal,^a must take place. Because all that has been written about Me has an ultimate purpose in view.”

³⁸“Look, Lord,” His followers then said, “here are two swords.”

“That’s enough,” He replied.

Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives

³⁹Then He left, and as He had been in the habit of doing, He went out to the Mount of Olives, and His followers went with Him.

⁴⁰On reaching the place, He said to them, “You must pray now that you won’t fall into temptation.”

⁴¹Then He walked away from them about as far as a man can throw a stone, and knelt down, and prayed.

⁴²“Father!” He earnestly prayed, “if there is any possibility at all that You are willing, please take away from Me this horrendous cup of suffering! But I definitely want Your will to be done, not Mine.”

⁴³Then an angel from Heaven appeared, and strengthened Him.

⁴⁴Because He was in such awful agony, He prayed so earnestly that His sweat was like great drops of blood falling to the ground.

⁴⁵When He got up from praying and went back to His followers, He found them asleep, exhausted as a result of their deep sorrow.

⁴⁶“Why are you sleeping?” He asked them. “Get up and keep on praying, so you won’t fall into temptation!”

The Arrest of Jesus

⁴⁷But while He was still speaking, suddenly there was a crowd of people there. And Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them! He went right up to Jesus and greeted Him with a kiss on the cheek.

⁴⁸“Judas!” Jesus responded, “are you actually betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

⁴⁹When those around Him saw what was about to happen, they exclaimed, “Lord, shall we strike them down with the sword?”

⁵⁰And one of them slashed out at the servant of the High Priest and cut off his right ear.

⁵¹“That’s enough!” Jesus demanded. Then He touched the man’s ear and healed him.

⁵²Then He said to the chief priests and captains of the Temple guard and the elders who had come to arrest Him, “Have you come out to arrest Me

with swords and clubs, as if I were a thief?

⁵³“When I was with you daily in the Temple you didn’t dare to even lay a hand on Me. But this is your brief hour, when the power of darkness is being allowed to take over.”

Peter Disowns Jesus

⁵⁴Then they grabbed hold of Him and led Him away, and brought Him to the house of the High Priest. And following behind at a distance was Peter.

⁵⁵After kindling a fire in the middle of the courtyard, the soldiers and the servants of the High Priest sat down, and Peter sat down with them.

⁵⁶A servant girl saw him sitting there by the fire, and after looking intently at him she said, “This man was also with him.”

⁵⁷But he denied even knowing Him. “Woman,” he said, “I haven’t even met the man.”

⁵⁸A short while later someone else looked at him and said, “You are also one of them.”

“No, sir,” Peter replied, “I most certainly am not!”

⁵⁹About an hour later another person strongly affirmed, “This man has got to be one of those who were with him. It’s very plain that he’s a Galilean.”

⁶⁰“Listen, man!” Peter replied, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” And immediately, even while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed.

⁶¹The Lord then turned and looked at Peter. Suddenly Peter remembered what the Lord had said when He had told him, “Before the rooster crows this morning you will have said three times that you don’t even know Me.”

⁶²And Peter walked out of there weeping bitterly.

⁶³Meanwhile the men guarding Jesus began mocking and ridiculing Him, and then beating Him.

⁶⁴After blindfolding Him, they kept striking Him in the face, and demanding, “Prophecy! Who hit you that time?”

⁶⁵They also threw many other insults at Him as they abused Him with foul language.

Jesus Before the Council

⁶⁶As soon as daybreak arrived, the elders of the people, and both the chief priests and teachers of the Law, came together and led Jesus before their Council.

⁶⁷“Tell us,” they demanded, “are you the Messiah?”

has finished testing you.

22:36a See Matthew 10:10 note.

22:37a Isaiah 53:12.

22:67a They were willing only to believe what

"If I did tell you," He replied, "there's no possibility that you would believe Me."^a

⁶⁸ "If, on the other hand, I were to ask you why you are so convinced that I am not the Messiah, you wouldn't answer Me, or let Me go.

⁶⁹ "But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the Almighty God."

⁷⁰ "Are you claiming, then, that you are the Son of God?" they all then demanded.

"You are stating the truth when you say that I am," He replied.

⁷¹ "What more testimony do we need!" they then shouted. "We've all heard him say it with his own lips!"

Jesus Before Pilate and Herod

23 Then the entire Council got up and led Him off to Pilate.

² There they began to accuse Him, saying, "This man is misleading our nation! For one thing, he keeps telling the people to refuse to pay taxes to Caesar. And then he claims he's the Messiah, a King."

³ So Pilate asked Him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

"Yes, what you say is true," He replied.

⁴ Pilate then said to the chief priests and the crowd, "I don't find this man guilty of any crime."

⁵ "But, Sir!" they fiercely insisted, "he is continually stirring up the people all over Judea with his teaching! He started in Galilee, and he's been stirring up the people all the way from there to here!"

⁶ When Pilate heard about Galilee, he asked if the man were a Galilean.

⁷ And as soon as he learned that Jesus was from the region ruled by Herod, he sent Him to Herod, who happened to be in Jerusalem at the time.

⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was extremely glad, because he had been wanting to see Him for a long time. He had heard so many things about Him that he hoped he could see Him perform a miracle.

⁹ So he showered Him with many questions. But Jesus gave him no answer.

¹⁰ During all this time, the chief priests and teachers of the Law had been standing there hurling vicious charges against Him.

¹¹ Finally Herod and his soldiers began to treat

Him with contempt, and ridicule and mock Him. Last of all, in scorn they dressed Him in a royal robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.

¹² That day marked the beginning of friendship between Pilate and Herod. Before that they had been enemies.

¹³ Pilate then called the people together along with the chief priests and other Jewish leaders.

¹⁴ "You brought this man to me," he said to them, "charging him with misleading the people. I have examined him here in your presence, and I have not found him guilty of any of the charges you've made against him.

¹⁵ "No, and neither did Herod when I sent you up to him. The truth is, he has done nothing to deserve death.

¹⁶ "So I will have him severely whipped, and then let him go."

¹⁷ He said this because it was necessary to release one prisoner to the people during the Feast.

¹⁸ But the whole crowd immediately shouted, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!"

¹⁹ Now Barabbas had been thrown in jail for his part in starting a riot in the city, and for murder.

²⁰ But Pilate really wanted to release Jesus, so again he appealed to the crowd.

²¹ But they just kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

²² A third time Pilate called out to them, "Why? What wrong has he done? I haven't found any reason why he should die! I will therefore have him severely whipped and let him go!"

²³ But they kept shouting loudly and insistently, demanding that He be crucified. So the shouting mob and the chief priests finally won out.

²⁴ Pilate finally caved in and sentenced Jesus to death, even the kind of death that the mob demanded.

²⁵ Surrendering to their persistent demand, he also released Barabbas to them, the one who had been thrown in jail for starting a riot and committing murder. But he turned Jesus over to them to do with as they wished.

Jesus Is Crucified

²⁶ As they led Him away, they grabbed hold of a man from Cyrene^a named Simon. He was on his

they wanted to believe. In other words, faith is to a great extent a matter of the will being influenced by one's emotions. They were not willing to accept the truth and all of its consequences. Are you?

23:26a Cyrene was a city in the ancient province of Cyrenaica, in Libya, North Africa.

23:30a Hosea 10:8; Revelation 6:15-17.

23:31a This appears to be a proverbial expression. It's not easy to burn a green tree, but a dry one is easily kindled and burns rapidly. The meaning is: "If the Romans do this to Me, One who is innocent and blameless, what will they do later to this guilty

way into the city from the country, and they made him carry the cross and walk behind Jesus.

²⁷ A great crowd of people followed Him, including several grief-stricken women who continued to mourn and weep for Him.

²⁸ But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but begin to weep for yourselves and for your children.

²⁹ “Because the time will surely come when people will say, ‘Women who couldn’t give birth, and those who never gave birth to children or nursed them are the fortunate ones.’

³⁰ “Then is when people will say to the mountains, ‘**Fall on us!**’ and to the hills, ‘**Cover us!**’^a

³¹ “Because if they do this when the wood is green, what will they do when it’s dry?”^a

³² Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with Him to be put to death.

³³ When they arrived at the place called The Skull, they nailed Him to a cross. They also crucified the criminals, one on His right, and the other on His left.

³⁴ And while hanging there on the cross, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive these people. They don’t know what they’re doing.” Meanwhile, the soldiers threw dice to decide who would get His clothes.^a

³⁵ The people then just stood there, watching. But some were making snide remarks, being joined by the Jewish leaders. “He saved others,” they sneered, “let him save himself now if he’s really the Messiah, God’s Chosen One.”

³⁶ The soldiers kept mocking Him too, offering Him vinegar to drink!

³⁷ “If you are the King of the Jews,” they jeered, “save yourself!”

³⁸ On a board above His head were these words, written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew:

THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS

³⁹ Then one of the criminals hanging there also began shouting insults at Him, saying, “If you’re the Messiah, save yourself. And while you’re working that out, how about saving us too?”

⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him, saying,

“Don’t you even fear God? You’re in the same predicament He’s in.

⁴¹ “After what we did, we deserve what we’re getting. But this man hasn’t done anything wrong!”

⁴² Then he said to Jesus, “Sir, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.”

⁴³ “Yes, I promise you,” Jesus replied, “today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

The Death and Burial of Jesus

⁴⁴ Then at 12 noon, an amazing thing happened—the sun stopped shining, and the whole earth was enveloped in darkness until 3 o’clock in the afternoon!

⁴⁵ And then suddenly, at 3 o’clock,^a the great curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place in the Temple was torn in two!^b

⁴⁶ Then Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Father, I entrust My spirit into Your hands!” After saying this, He died.

⁴⁷ When the captain of the soldiers considered all that had happened, he glorified God, and said, “Without a doubt, this Man was innocent!”

⁴⁸ And when the whole crowd that had come to see the crucifixion saw all that had taken place, they returned to the city beating their breasts in deep sorrow and consternation.^a

⁴⁹ But all who knew Him personally, including the women who had followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching all this take place.

⁵⁰ Now there was a man named Joseph, a good, honest, and upright man from the Judean town of Arimathea, who was a member of the Jewish Council.

⁵¹ He had not agreed with the rest of the Council in their decision about Jesus, nor in what they had done. He was one who was earnestly waiting for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

⁵² This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

⁵³ After getting permission, he took the body down from the cross and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been carved out of a wall of rock. No one had ever been laid in this tomb before.

nation?” And it was fulfilled in A.D. 70. Luke 21:5-6, 20-24.

23:34a See Matthew 27:35; John 19:23-24.

23:45a ... *there was a great earthquake, and* ... See Matthew 27:51.

23:45b The great curtain separated the Holy Place in the Temple from the Most Holy Place. The Most Holy Place has usually been considered to represent

Heaven, and the tearing of the great curtain by the miraculous, Divine hand of God, indicates that the way into Heaven and into the very presence of our Holy God is now open for everyone to enter.

23:48a Even some who had jeered at Him may have now become convinced that they had just seen the Son of God crucified.

23:54a ... that would follow *the Passover*. See

⁵⁴That was the day when preparations were being made for the special Sabbath that would follow.^a

⁵⁵Now the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed the body to the tomb, so they saw where the tomb was and how the body was laid in it.

⁵⁶Then they went back to where they were staying and prepared spices and perfumes for His burial. And in obedience to God's command, they then rested on the Sabbath.

The Resurrection

24 Then very early on Sunday morning, together with several other women, they went to the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared.

²And when they got there, they found that the large stone had already been rolled away from the entrance to the tomb.

³But when they went inside, the body of Jesus was gone!

⁴They were greatly puzzled as to what had happened, when suddenly, two men in the most brilliantly gleaming clothing were standing with them.

⁵Terrified, the women bowed low and stared at the ground. The men then said to them, "Why are you looking among the dead for the One who is alive?"

⁶"He is not here. He has risen back to life! Remember what He told you when He was still in Galilee.

⁷"He said, "The Son of Man must be handed over into the hands of sinful men. He will be crucified, but on the third day He will rise to live again."

⁸Then they remembered that He had told them this.

⁹So they rushed from the tomb to tell the Eleven and all the rest about all that had happened.

¹⁰It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who came to the apostles with the report.

¹¹But the apostles didn't believe them, because the report they gave sounded like nonsense.

¹²But Peter got right up and ran to the tomb. When he got there he leaned inside and looked, but all that was there were the linen cloths. As he left he kept wondering to himself what ever could have happened!

On the Way to Emmaus

¹³Later that same day, two of Jesus' followers were on their way to Emmaus, a town about seven miles from Jerusalem.

¹⁴As they walked along, they were talking with each other about all the bewildering events of the last few days.

¹⁵And while they were discussing these things, trying to figure out just what had happened, Jesus came alongside and began walking with them.

¹⁶But God made it impossible for them to recognize Him.

¹⁷"What are you men discussing that causes you to look so sad as you walk along?" He asked them.

¹⁸One of them, named Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only visitor^a in Jerusalem who doesn't know anything about the things that have been happening there the last few days."

¹⁹"What things?" He asked them.

"The things that happened to Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was acknowledged by God and recognized by the people as being a powerful prophet, both because of what He did and what He said.

²⁰"But the chief priests and our rulers turned Him over to the Romans to be condemned to death. And they crucified Him!"

²¹"But we had been hoping that He was the One thru whom Israel would regain her freedom. But now it's been three days since He died.

²²"And not only that, but some of our women who went to the tomb early this morning, have now deeply shaken us with their report.

²³"When they didn't find His body in the tomb, they came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels who had told them that He's alive!"

²⁴"So some of our men hurried off to the tomb, and they found everything just as the women had

Matthew 28:1 note.

24:18a They likely recognized Him as a visitor to Jerusalem by His Galilean accent.

24:26a Psalm 22:1-21; 41:9; Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:1-12; Daniel 9:25-26; Zechariah 11:12-13; 12:10.

24:36a Jesus had earlier promised them the same peace He enjoyed. John 14:27; 16:33. And now, because He was alive, they could have the peace and assurance that no matter what happened, they

would live with Him forever.

24:46a See v 26 note. *It was necessary* for Him to suffer and die in fulfillment of the Scriptures, and in order to save His people from their sins. But it was also *necessary* that He rise from the dead the third day after being crucified, even if the Old Testament Scriptures make no specific mention of His rising again. It was *necessary* because it should be understood that the Son of God could not be held by

reported, but they found no trace of Him at all.”

²⁵ “Oh, how foolish you men are!” Jesus replied. “You are so slow to allow the heart-center of your emotions to lead you to believe all that the prophets have said would happen!”

²⁶ “Haven’t the prophets plainly told us that the Messiah must suffer these things,^a and that then He would enter into the brilliance and splendor of His glory?”

²⁷ And beginning with the very first books of the Bible and going thru the writings of all the prophets, He clearly pointed out to them what had been written about Himself in all the Scriptures.

²⁸ As they approached Emmaus, it became clear that Jesus planned to continue on down the road.

²⁹ But they urgently pleaded with Him. “Stay with us!” they said. “It’s late, and it will soon be dark.” So He accepted their invitation and went in with them.

³⁰ As He sat at the table with them, He took a loaf of bread in His hands and thanked God for the food. Then He broke the loaf and began giving it to them.

³¹ The instant He did that, they recognized Him—and just as instantly He vanished from their sight.

³² “So that’s why His words burned inside us as He was talking to us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us!” they agreed with each other.

³³ So they got right up and went back to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those who had come to Jerusalem with them, all gathered together.

³⁴ “It’s true!” the crowd there shouted. “The Lord has indeed risen! Peter saw Him!”

³⁵ Then the two reported all that had happened to them on the road to Emmaus, and how they had recognized Him when He broke the bread.

Jesus Appears to His Followers

³⁶ And while they were telling this, Jesus suddenly appeared, standing there among them! “Peace be with you,”^a He said.

³⁷ They were terrified! They were frightened because they thought they were seeing a ghost.

death, but also because the many prophecies telling of His glorious eternal reign as King over all the earth imply that He must be alive to do so.

The word *necessary* is not in some of the later Greek texts. But it’s in the Received Text. It belongs.

24:47a There is no forgiveness of sin apart from repentance (a turning from sin). And repentance involves the whole of life. It is concerned, not mere-

³⁸ “Why are you all so shaken up?” He asked them. “And why are you still allowing doubts to come into your minds?”

³⁹ “Look at My hands and My feet. You can certainly tell by looking at the wounds in them that this is I Myself. Handle Me and see for yourselves that I am real. A spirit doesn’t have flesh and bones, as you can clearly see that I have.”

⁴⁰ As He said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

⁴¹ And as they kept looking at Him in amazement, overjoyed—but still doubting, because it was just too good to be true—He asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?”

⁴² So they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and part of a honeycomb.

⁴³ He accepted the food and ate it as they watched.

⁴⁴ Then He said, “What happened was what I told you must happen when I was still with you. I said, ‘Everything must take place that was written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.’”

⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures that referred to Him.

⁴⁶ “This is what has been written about Me,” He said. “So it was necessary^a for the Messiah to both suffer and to rise from the dead the third day.

⁴⁷ “So it is also necessary that as My messengers you now inform people in all nations, beginning right here in Jerusalem, that they must both repent and turn from their sinning, and accept the pardon offered them by means of My suffering and death for them, if they are to live.”^a

⁴⁸ “I am sending you out as eyewitnesses of all that has happened.

⁴⁹ “And look, I will send upon you the gift that My Father has promised.^a Now then, you are to remain here in the city of Jerusalem until you are given power from Heaven.”

Jesus Ascends to Heaven

⁵⁰ After He had led them out as far as Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

⁵¹ And while He was standing there blessing them,

ly with sorrow for the past, but even more with our intention for the future. It is the abandoning of our selfish way to go God’s way in full obedience and fellowship with Him.

For further information on this see Acts 20:20-21 note.

24:49a Joel 2:28-29; Matthew 3:11; John 1:31-33; 7:37-39; 14:15-17,26; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 1 and 2; 5:32; 10:44-48; 19:1-7.

He began to rise from the earth! He was parted from them there and carried up into Heaven.

⁵² Standing there, they worshiped Him, after

which they returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

⁵³ And they were continually in the Temple, praising and thanking God.^a Amen.

24:48-53a What is said and what happened in these six verses took place about 40 days after what Christ had said in the previous verses. After v 47 Christ's followers went back to Galilee. Peter even went briefly back into the fishing business. John 21:1-25. Christ met them after an unsuccessful night of fishing. Then He told them to meet Him

later at a certain mountain. Matthew 28:16-20. It may be that here is where He told them to return to Jerusalem. It was when they returned to Jerusalem that Christ told them to now stay in Jerusalem until they received power from Heaven. See Acts 1 and 2.

“**S**o I challenge you: Make eternal friends for yourselves in Heaven by means of the eternal investments you can make with the right use of the untrustworthy and precarious riches of this world. Then, when you die, they will be there to welcome you into your everlasting home in Heaven.

—Luke 16:9

Some believe the *they* here means that Jesus, the angels, and others in Heaven will be there to welcome you into your everlasting home. Yes, that's true, but this implies that the riches of this life that you sent on ahead will also be there to welcome you. Jesus commanded you to *Lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven*. Matthew 6:19-21. So if they are being laid up there, they will be there to welcome you. In other words, they will be there credited to your account. So when you give as a servant of the Lord, you are not only giving, you are making an investment in your own greater joy in heaven with the Lord.

Jesus definitely taught that there will be degrees of glory and happiness in Heaven and in His eternal Kingdom. Some will be rulers over many cities, others over just a few cities. In fact, He even informs us thru the Apostle Paul that some will be there *as one barely escaping thru the flames*. They barely make it. That causes us to be truly concerned about those who are likely not to make it.

So our great concern for ourselves and others should be to make sure that we are truly converted to the will of God, and that we are making this life count in the greatest way possible for our future with Him.

Don't be satisfied with barely making it to Heaven. With that attitude, you very likely won't even be there. Our desire should be to receive *an abundant entrance* into His Kingdom. You have one life to live, one life to invest, so make the most of it! Life is brief, and we will all soon be standing before our God to give an accounting of what we have done with the time and the strengths He has entrusted to us. Matthew 6:19-21; 25:35-40; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 6:10-11; Revelation 14:13.

* * *

Read Jesus' full story here in Luke 16:1-13, and the additional comments for verse 9, on pages 140, 141 and 142.

THE GREAT NEWS

as reported by

JOHN

When the Word Became Human

The One called the Word^a existed before anything was made. He was with God, and He was also God.

²Besides being with God in the very beginning,^a God made everything thru Him.^b

³Of all that has been made, not a single thing was made without His being involved.^a

⁴He also had power within Himself to give life to what He created.^a And when He gave life to mankind, all their senses came alive and they had light and understanding.

⁵The Light^a is still shining in the darkness, but for the most part, those in spiritual darkness have not allowed the Light to illumine them and give them Life.

⁶At the right time, God sent a man into the world scene, whose name was John.

⁷He came to tell people the truth about the Light, so that everyone might come to believe by means of what he was able to tell them.

⁸John himself was not the Light, but he came to tell everyone about the Light.

⁹The true Light, who continues to give light to everyone, was at that time coming into the world.

¹⁰He came to the world that God had created thru Him.^a And yet, the people of the world did not recognize Him for who He really was.

¹¹He came to His own world, country, and people. But even though they were His very own, they refused to receive Him.

¹²But to all who did receive Him,^a to them He gave the capability of becoming children of God—that is, to those who are believing^b in His name.^c

¹³They did not become children of God by natural means, nor as a result of the strong craving of the flesh, nor by the planning of some human being. God Himself gave birth to them.^a

¹⁴So the Word took upon Himself a human body and assumed our human nature in its entirety, and then lived for awhile among us. And we saw His glory—a glory so utterly resplendent that only God's incomparable^a Son could have possessed it—a life abounding in goodness and truth.

1:1a Word is one of the names of Jesus Christ. He is God's word or God's message to mankind. God revealed Himself and expressed Himself to mankind thru Christ. Also, Jesus is the channel thru whom God declared His will and issued His commands. And by Jesus' very word of command all things were created. Genesis 1 & 2.

1:2a Some claim that the *beginning* referred to here is the beginning of eternity. But eternity had no beginning, and it will have no end. The *beginning* here is the beginning of creation.

1:2b 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9c; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2.

1:3a Seemingly, it was the Son, the Word of God, who by faith said, *Let there be light!* Genesis 1:1-25. The Father then brought into being whatever the Son declared by faith, and there was light. The Son of God is always dependent upon the Father for all He does, has, and is. Psalm 2:6-9; 110:1; Matthew 22:44; 28:18; John 5:26; 17:24; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. On the other hand, all things were created by the Father thru the Son, so the Son may have even accomplished the actual creating by means of the power already given Him by the Father. See 1:2 refs.

1:4a John 5:26.

1:5a Jesus is here and in other places called *The Light of the World*.

1:10a 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9.

1:12a ... *as Lord of their lives, and as their Savior from the penalty due them for their sins* ...

1:12b Present participle, denoting present progressive action. See Luke 13:23; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 15:2; 2 Corinthians 2:15.

1:12c See Acts 16:31 note for what it means to *believe in His name*.

1:13a And God brings about this new birth by His Spirit using His message to convince, convict, and completely change a life, from self-centeredness and sin to full dedication to God. See 3:3,6,8; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 4:29; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23.

1:14a Most translations use the term *only begotten* Son. But according to vss 12 and 13, God has also fathered (begotten) all who are true followers of the Lord. The Greek word translated *only begotten* can also be translated *unique* or *incomparable*. It has therefore been judged that the term *incomparable* is best suited here. The same Greek word is used in regard to Abraham's son Isaac, in Hebrews 11:17. But Abraham had many other sons.

¹⁵ “This is the One I told you would come!” John cried out to the people. “This is the One about whom I said, ‘The One who will come after me ranks far above me, because He existed long before I was born.’”^a

¹⁶ It is out of His superabundance that all of us have received undeserved blessings piled upon undeserved blessings.

¹⁷ The requirements of God’s Law were given us thru Moses. But the truth about God’s undeserved love, mercy, and compassion toward us, came to us thru Jesus Christ.^a

¹⁸ No mortal has ever seen God. But God’s incomparable Son, who is most intimately close to the Father, has given us a living picture of what He is really like.^a

John the Baptizer’s Message

¹⁹ The Jewish authorities sent some priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask John who he was.

²⁰ He plainly admitted the truth, not trying to fool anyone. He told them, “I am not the Messiah.”

²¹ “Who are you then?” they asked. “Are you Elijah?”

“No, I am not.”

“Are you the Prophet that Moses said would come?”^b

“No.”

²² Then they pressed the issue and asked him, “Well, just who are you? Tell us, so that we may return with an answer to the ones who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?”

²³ “I am the one whom the prophet Isaiah spoke about,” he replied. “I am

**The voice of one shouting in the desert,
STRAIGHTEN OUT YOUR WAYS FOR THE
LORD!^a”**

²⁴ Incidentally, these priests and Levites had been sent by the Pharisees.

²⁵ “Why are you baptizing people then, if you’re not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” they continued.

²⁶ “I baptize only in water,” John replied. “But a Person is standing right here among you^a whom you don’t know.

²⁷ “He is to become my successor. But He existed before I did, and is so far superior to me that I’m not worthy even to loosen the strap of His sandal.”

²⁸ This all took place at Bethany, on the east side of the Jordan River where John was baptizing.

Jesus, the Lamb of God

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and exclaimed, “Look! Here is the Lamb of God^a who takes away the sin of the world!”

³⁰ “This is the Man I spoke of when I said, ‘After me a Man will come who is far greater than I am, because He existed long before I was born.’

³¹ “I didn’t know who He was myself. But the reason I came here baptizing in water was for the purpose of making Him known to Israel.

³² “I saw the Spirit come down from Heaven like a dove,” John continued, “and He came to rest upon Him, and stayed there.

³³ “I didn’t know He was the One^a I was to introduce to Israel. But God, who sent me to baptize in water, had said to me, ‘When you see the Holy Spirit come down and come to rest upon a Man, and stay there, He is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’

³⁴ “I saw that happen to Him!^a That’s why I’ve told you so positively that this is the Son of God!”

The First Followers of Jesus

³⁵ The next day John was standing with two of his followers when he again saw Jesus walking by.

³⁶ “Look!” John said. “There’s the Lamb of God!”

³⁷ Upon hearing this, these two followers of John started following Jesus.

³⁸ When Jesus turned around and saw them following, He said, “What are you men looking for?”

“Rabbi,” they replied (Rabbi means teacher), “where are You staying?”

³⁹ “Come along, and I’ll show you,” He invited.

Isaac was his unique or incomparable son.

1:15a See vss 29-34 and Matthew 3:13-17, and the notes.

1:17a The old testament Law revealed sin and its consequences, while Jesus revealed the *truth* about God’s love for His children, and his offered mercy.

1:18a ... *by all that He said and did while He was here on earth as the Man Christ Jesus.* If the Father had come to earth in human form, instead of the Son, He would have spoken and acted just like Jesus did. See John 14:7-9, and the notes.

1:21a Malachi 4:5.

1:21b Seemingly, these men didn’t realize that Moses was referring to the coming of Messiah. Deuteronomy 18:15,18; Acts 3:22-23.

1:23a Isaiah 40:3.

1:26a John had baptized this Person, Jesus, some 40 days before this. Matthew 3:13-17.

1:29a Centuries earlier, God had ordered that lambs and other animals be sacrificed in order that He might forgive the sins of the people. But these lambs were merely living pictures of the Lamb of

So they went with Him. When they arrived at His lodging place, it was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and they spent the rest of the day with Him.

⁴⁰ One of the two men who had heard what John said, and then followed Jesus, was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter.

⁴¹ The next thing Andrew did was find his brother Simon. "We have found the Messiah!" he exclaimed. (Messiah is Hebrew for Christ.)^a

⁴² Then Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. Looking intently at him Jesus said, "You are Simon, the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which translated is *Peter*, meaning, *a stone*).

Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael

⁴³ The next day, after deciding to go into Galilee,^a Jesus came in contact with Philip. "Come along with Me," Jesus invited him.

⁴⁴ Philip was from Bethsaida, the same city that Andrew and Peter were from.

⁴⁵ Philip then hurried off and looked up his friend Nathanael, and exclaimed to him, "We have found the very Person Moses wrote about^a in the Law, the One the prophets also wrote about!^b He's from Nazareth, and His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph."

⁴⁶ "Nazareth!" Nathanael exclaimed. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

"Come and see for yourself," Philip responded.

⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching Him, He said, "Look! Here comes a genuine son of Israel. There is no dishonesty in this man."

⁴⁸ "How can You know anything about me?" Nathanael questioned.

"I saw you before Philip spoke to you," Jesus informed him, "when you were under the fig tree."

⁴⁹ "Teacher!" Nathanael exclaimed. "You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

⁵⁰ "Do you believe," Jesus replied, "just because I said I saw you under the fig tree? You will see much greater things than that."

⁵¹ "I tell you the absolute truth:" Jesus continued, "In time to come, you will see Heaven opened

wide, and the angels of God springing into action^a and coming down to the Son of Man."

The Wedding at Cana

2 Three days later, Jesus' mother was attending a wedding at Cana in Galilee.

² Jesus and His followers had also been invited.

³ When they ran out of wine, Jesus' mother told Him, "They don't have any more wine."

⁴ "My dear woman," Jesus replied, "that's not your problem, nor Mine. My time hasn't come yet."

⁵ "Do whatever He tells you," His mother told the servants.

⁶ Six stone water jars, used by the Jews for ritual washings, were nearby. Each held between 20 to 30 gallons.

⁷ "Fill these jars with water," Jesus instructed the servants. So they filled them to the brim.

⁸ "Now take some out and bring it to the master of ceremonies," He said. And so they did.

⁹ When the host of the feast had tasted the water, which had now turned into wine, he quickly called the bridegroom. He didn't know where the wine had come from, but of course the servants who had drawn the water knew.

¹⁰ "Everyone serves the choice wine first," he said to the bridegroom, "and when the folks have drunk freely, then they serve the cheaper brand. But you've kept the best until now!"

¹¹ Jesus performed this first miracle at Cana in Galilee, and in this way revealed the glory of His power. His followers' faith in Him greatly increased when this happened.

¹² After this, Jesus and His followers, together with His mother and brothers, went down to Capernaum where they stayed for just a few days.

Jesus Cleans Out the Temple

¹³ As it was now almost time for the annual Jewish Passover festival, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

¹⁴ There, right in the Temple courts, He found merchants selling cattle, sheep, and pigeons; and

God (Jesus, the Son of God) who would later be sacrificed for the sins of the world.

1:33a See Matthew 3:14 note.

1:34a Matthew 3:13-17.

1:41a Centuries before, God had promised to send a great Deliverer to Israel, the Messiah. Genesis 3:15, 49:10; Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

1:43a Evidently, Jesus had recently returned from the wilderness, where He had been tempted by Satan. Luke 4:1-13.

1:45a See v 41 refs.

1:45b Psalm 132:11; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Daniel 7:13-14; 9:24-27; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 9:9.

1:51a Literally *rising up*. Matthew 28:2-7; Luke 22:43; 24:1-9; John 20:11-13. All Heaven was busily concerned about Christ's ministry on earth, and especially at His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Acts 1:10-11.

others were sitting at tables exchanging money.^a

¹⁵After making a whip from some rope, Jesus drove them all out of the Temple area, together with the sheep and cattle. At the same time, He overturned the bankers' tables, spilling their money on the ground.

¹⁶"Get these things out of here!" He powerfully commanded the pigeon sellers. "Don't turn my Father's House into a marketplace!"

¹⁷His followers were then caused to remember^a the Scripture, **My zeal for Your house has become My intense concern and burning passion!**^b

¹⁸The Jewish authorities then challenged Him, "What miracle can you perform for us as proof that you have the right to take such actions?"

¹⁹"Destroy this Temple," He told them, "and in three days I will raise it up."

²⁰"It has taken 46 years to build this Temple!" they exclaimed. "And you will rebuild it in three days?"

²¹But the Temple He spoke of was His body.

²²After He had risen from the dead, His followers remembered that He had said this, and they believed the Scripture that predicted His resurrec-

tion^a and what He Himself had said about His rising back to life again.^b

²³Now while He was in Jerusalem at the Feast of Passover, many came to believe that He was indeed the Messiah—their Savior—when they saw the miracles He was performing.

²⁴But Jesus didn't immediately put His trust in them, because He knew everything about everyone,

²⁵and He needed no one's testimony about anyone. He knew what was in the mind of each of them.

Nicodemus Visits Jesus

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a member of the Jewish Supreme Council, named Nicodemus.

²He came to visit Jesus by night and said, "Teacher, we know You are a teacher sent to us by God, because no one can do the miracles You're doing unless God is with Him."

³"I tell you the absolute truth," Jesus replied, "that unless you are born again,^a you will never see or experience the Kingdom of God."

⁴"How can a person be born again?" Nicodemus

2:14a See Matthew 21:12 note.

2:17a Passive voice. God caused them to remember.

2:17b Psalm 69:9.

2:22a Psalm 16:8-11; Acts 2:27-32; 13:35-37.

2:22b In this place and Matthew 20:18-19; Mark 8:31; 9:30-31; 10:33-34; Luke 18:32-33.

3:3,5a A life-changing spiritual transformation of profound consequence—an unconditional surrender of your will to God is essential to enter Heaven. See v 6; 1:13, and note; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:8-10.

3:7a God demands nothing less than a complete renewal of one's life—a complete change, from living to gratify and satisfy self, to yielding to full obedience to Him. 2 Corinthians 5:17.

To be born again means to be so changed in mind and heart that you sincerely ask God to take full charge of your life for all of life and for all eternity. Anything less is not a new birth, but a counterfeit, and it will not get you to Heaven. If you are depending on anything less, you are still lost, and facing God's judgment in an awful Hell.

There are many calling themselves Christians today who are not. Don't follow them or you will end up with them. Make sure that what you are being taught is the truth, and the full truth. See Matthew 7:21-27.

3:8a The Spirit works where and as He wills, mysteriously, powerfully, and effectively—but still never forcing the will of any person.

The new birth is accomplished by *the Spirit of God* (1:13; Galatians 4:29) using *the word of God* (1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18) to convict and convince you of your sin and of the judgment to come. He also reveals the Savior, who will become your Savior as you turn from your sinning and surrender your will to Him and obey Him. Philippians 2:13; Hebrews 5:9.

3:12a Thruout these notes we point out that two things must happen to a person if he is to gain eternal life. The Apostle Paul said about this, *You must both turn from your sinning and obey God, and believe in our Lord Jesus the Messiah as your Savior.* Acts 20:21. See also Appendix 211, page 476.

And this is what Jesus says here. The first 12 verses deal with the change that must occur in your life, from living to please yourself to living to please God. And verses 14-21 deal with your need of forgiveness for your past sins. And that forgiveness comes thru accepting Jesus as Savior. So you must receive Jesus as both your Lord and your Savior if you are to gain eternal life.

3:14a Numbers 21:4-9.

3:15a Regarding what it means to believe, see Luke 14:26-33; John 3:36; Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9-10; Galatians 3:11, and the notes there.

3:15b ... *beginning now and lasting forever.* But it is more than endless, because it is sharing in the life of God in Christ. All true believers are baptized (placed into, immersed) by the Holy Spirit into

questioned. "Can a man be born when he's old? Can he enter his mother's womb a second time and be born?"

⁵"I tell you the absolute truth," Jesus again replied, "that unless you are born not only by water, but by the Spirit,^a you cannot enter the Kingdom of God.

⁶"Whatever is given birth by the flesh is physical, but only the Spirit of God can give you spiritual birth and renewal, and change you into a child of God.

⁷"So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.'^a

⁸"You know the wind is blowing when you hear it and see what it's doing. But you don't know where it's coming from or where it's going. You can also see the results of the work of the Spirit of God in the lives of people who are born again, even though you can't explain how it all happened."^a

⁹"But, how can such a thing happen?" Nicodemus still questioned.

¹⁰"Are you the respected teacher of Israel, and yet you don't know about such things?" Jesus replied.

¹¹"I tell you the absolute truth," He continued,

"when I tell you that I know what I'm talking about. I'm telling you about that which I have actually seen, and still you people won't accept what I tell you.

¹²"If you don't believe Me when I tell you about things that happen right here on earth, how will you believe if I tell you about things in Heaven?"^a

¹³"Still, no one has ever gone up into Heaven except the Son of Man, who came down from Heaven, and whose home is in Heaven.

¹⁴"And in the same way that Moses lifted up the bronze serpent on a pole in the desert,^a in that same way, I, the Son of Man, must be lifted up on a cross,

¹⁵so that everyone who is believing^a in Me should not perish, but have everlasting life.^b

¹⁶"Because God's love for everyone in the world is so overwhelmingly great,^a He gave His incomparable^b Son as His Lamb to be sacrificed, to endure extreme suffering and shame, and then die, in order that He might make amends for the sins of all mankind,^c so that whoever is believing in Him may not perish^d but have everlasting life.^e

¹⁷"When God sent His Son into the world, it was

union with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27) when they are truly converted to Him. But all believers who earnestly *ask* the Father *for* the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13) will also be baptized *by* Christ (Luke 3:16) *in* the Holy Spirit.

All who earnestly and perseveringly ask (Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8) and receive this baptism *in* the Holy Spirit receive a blessing that is out of this world. But even that is only a very, very small taste of what it will be like to share the life of God in Christ in Heaven. See 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5-6; Ephesians 1:14.

As marvelous an experience as the baptism in the Holy Spirit is, Christ's main purpose in baptizing His followers in this blessing is to empower them for His service. Acts 1:4-14; 2:1-21.

3:16a Just how deeply does God love you? Yes, you! See John 17:23; Ephesians 1:11, and the notes.

3:16b See 1:14 note.

3:16c ... by wiping out even the record of our sins, to bring us into harmony with God.

3:16d The word *perish* is in the subjunctive mood, which is *the mood of mild contingency; the mood of probability*. Also, it's in the middle voice, *which is that use of the verb which describes the subject as participating in the results of the action*. And the action we must take is to believe the truth to the extent that we are believing with the heart, moving us to obedient action. Romans 10:9-10. And according to the subjunctive mood, that heart belief must

continue, otherwise the translation would have been "definitely will not perish" instead of "may not" or "should not perish." The same applies to v 15.

3:16e Why did God do it? Why did He send His Son whom He loved so dearly, to a rebellious people? He knew what would happen. He knew they would finally kill Him.

It was His love for us that compelled Him to do it. God loves us, His created children, *just as much and to the same extent that He loves His Son Jesus*. See John 17:23. And since we were the ones who had rebelled against Him and were facing His righteous judgment in Hell, He did what had to be done. Because of His righteousness and wisdom, He could not simply ignore our sins, so He made the greatest sacrifice He could make for us, at great cost to Himself, so that He could offer us forgiveness for our rebellion.

* * *

Now there is no need for any of us to have to face God's judgment on Judgment Day and be lost. We can accept God's forgiveness (on the terms He sets forth thruout the entire New Testament), and rejoice in the fact that we will live forever in such happiness that we will experience complete and total fulfillment in His presence, forever.

Some even testify today with awe, that they were actually given a very brief taste of that total fulfillment with God. They testify of its most vivid reali-

not for the purpose of passing judgment on the world, but that the world might be saved thru Him.

¹⁸“The person who is now believing in Him is not being condemned. But the one who is not believing has already been condemned, because he has not believed^a in the name of God’s incomparable Son.

¹⁹“And this is why most people will face God’s terrifying judgment: The true Light from Heaven has come into the world, but because their behavior is wicked, these people love the darkness. They want nothing to do with the Light.

²⁰“Every person who lives in sin hates the Light, and shrinks away from the Light, so that the evil he’s doing won’t be exposed.

²¹“But the one who lives by what he knows to be the truth, gladly comes into the Light so that it may be clearly seen that he is living in harmony with God.”

Jesus and John the Baptizer

²²After this, Jesus and His followers went into Judea, where He remained with them for some time, baptizing the people.

²³John was also baptizing at Aenon, near Salim, because there was an abundance of water there, and people were continuing to come to be baptized.

²⁴(This was before John was thrown in jail.)

²⁵An argument about baptism occurred at this time between John’s followers and some of the Jews.

²⁶So they went to John and said, “Teacher, you remember the Man who was with you on the east side of the Jordan River, the Man you talked so highly about. Well, He’s baptizing people now, and everyone is going to Him!”

²⁷“A man can’t receive anything unless it’s been

given to him by God,” John replied.

²⁸“You, yourselves, will admit that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah. I am only the one sent to prepare the way for Him.’

²⁹“The bride belongs to the bridegroom. But the bridegroom’s friend, who stands close by and listens to him, is extremely glad just to be there and hear what the bridegroom has to say. So my joy is now complete.

³⁰“It’s only right that He become increasingly more highly regarded, while I become less regarded.

³¹“He came from Heaven and is far greater than all others. A person who is from the earth belongs to earth, and the earth is the source of his knowledge and experience. But this One, who came from Heaven, surpasses all others.

³²“And He’s telling about what He has actually seen and heard in Heaven. Still, no one^a is believing Him.

³³“But everyone who is accepting what He’s telling them as truth, has put their seal of approval on the fact that it is God who is declaring the truth.

³⁴“Because the One whom God has sent is speaking God’s own words, and God has given Him the full power of the Holy Spirit, without measure.

³⁵“The Father loves the Son and has put everything into His hands.

³⁶“The person who is believing in the Son has eternal life. But the person who refuses to live in obedience to the Son will never see life.^a Instead, God’s anger in judgment continues to remain on him.”

Jesus Talks to a Samaritan Woman

4 When the Lord was aware that the Pharisees had heard that He was gaining and baptizing more followers than John

ty and the utterly indescribable wonder of it, a wonder way beyond any earthly experience.

3:18a Because he has taken an attitude of refusal. Perfect tense—implying a process, but viewing that process as having reached its consummation and existing in a finished state. But you can still change your state of rebellion, and cancel God’s judgment upon you by surrendering your will to Him and accepting His forgiveness thru Jesus Christ, and live! For full information and the steps to take, read *The Amazing Story of God*, Appendix 247, page 520.

3:32a That is, *very few*. v 33.

3:36a In this verse the main emphasis is belief in Christ as Lord and Ruler of one’s life—heart-belief in what Christ taught and commanded. It refers to being born again, being truly converted from self-

ishness and sin to sincerely living (by God’s help, Philippians 2:12-13) to please Christ in everything. This is clearly indicated in the second sentence of this verse.

That God equates belief with obedience, and unbelief with disobedience, is clearly set forth in Hebrews 3:19; 4:6,11; 5:9. There is no saving faith apart from obedience. Some translate the Greek word *ápeithoun* in the second sentence to mean *disbelieves* or *rejects* instead of *refuses to live in obedience to*. But such use of the word is done only by some Bible translators, not by those who use the Greek language daily or translate other Greek writings. People of the Greek world know that their word *ápeithoun* means *to refuse obedience* or *refuse to be subject to*. See Romans 2:1-10; 6:16; 2

² (though of course it wasn't Jesus Himself who baptized them—His followers did the baptizing),

³ He left Judea and went back to Galilee.

⁴ But it was necessary for Him to pass thru Samaria on the way.

⁵ In doing so, He came to Sychar, a Samaritan town near the tract of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

⁶ Jacob's well was there. And Jesus, being tired from the long walk, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ He was alone, since His followers had gone into town to buy food.

⁸ But before long, a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus asked her for a drink.

⁹ "How is it that you ask me for a drink," the woman asked, "since I'm a Samaritan woman, and you're a Jew?" (Because the Jews refused to have anything to do with the Samaritans.)

¹⁰ "If you only knew about the wonderful gift that God wants to give you,"^a Jesus replied, "and who it is that has asked you for a drink, you would have asked Me for a drink, and I would have given you water that gives life."

¹¹ "But sir," she said, "you don't even have a rope or a bucket to draw any water, and the well is deep. Where then do you get this life-giving water?"

¹² "You aren't greater than our ancestor Jacob, are you,^a who gave us this well and used to drink from it himself, as well as his sons and his cattle?"

¹³ "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again," Jesus replied.

¹⁴ "But whoever drinks the water that I offer will never be thirsty again. In fact, the water I give him will become a gushing spring of water continuous-

ly welling up within him to bring him everlasting life."

¹⁵ "Sir!" the woman exclaimed, "please give me a drink of that water! Then I'll never be thirsty again nor need to come all this way to draw water!"

¹⁶ "Go and get your husband," Jesus told her, "and then come back."

¹⁷ "But I don't have a husband," she replied.

"You are right in saying you don't have a husband," Jesus returned.

¹⁸ "Because you've had five husbands, and the man you now live with is not your husband. So you've told the truth."

¹⁹ "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet!" the woman responded.

²⁰ "Our ancestors worshiped God on this mountain,^a but you Jews claim that Jerusalem is the place where one must worship."

²¹ "Dear woman, you must believe Me," Jesus replied. "The time is coming when you will not be able to worship the Father on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem.

²² "You Samaritans don't know what your worship is all about. But we Jews do know what our worship is about, because salvation is coming to the world thru the Jews.

²³ "But the time is coming, and indeed has already come, when genuine worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth.^a In fact, that's the kind of worship the Father is most earnestly looking for.

²⁴ "God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in all sincerity from the very depth of their being."^a

Corinthians 10:6; Hebrews 5:9; 2 Peter 2:10; 1 John 2:3-4,17.

4:10a He was speaking about the gift of God's forgiveness and everlasting life.

4:12a From the word she used, she expected a negative reply.

4:20a Mount Gerazim.

4:23a The *place* of worship is not important. But *how* we worship is important in the most complete and highest degree! Is our worship sincere, genuine, real? It's the spirit and sincerity in which we worship that is all-important. Philippians 3:3.

4:24a Literally *must worship in spirit and truth*. God will accept no other kind of worship. God is a conscious, intelligent, spiritual being who is aware of all that takes place at all times and in all places. There are other spirit beings, but God is the Creator of them all—even of those that have rebelled against Him.

Man is also a spirit being, living in a material body which he will soon leave. Man's spirit, because it is created in the likeness of our Father in Heaven (Genesis 1:26-27), possesses the power of honoring, praising, thanking, and loving the living God.

It is this spirit of love that God demands! He is not so much interested in your going to a certain place and sitting down in a pew, and standing or kneeling at the right time, or singing, reading, or even preaching. He wants the very heart (the heart-center of your emotions) joined in spirit with His spirit in deep love and worship of Him, in all sincerity!

Yes, we are to gather together to worship God, but it must be worship from the heart, or it is worse than nothing. Don't try to fool God with mere body language.

Continued ➤

²⁵ “I know that Messiah is coming, who is called Christ,” the woman said. “When He comes He will explain everything to us.”

²⁶ “I, the One speaking to you right now, I am the Messiah,” Jesus informed her.

²⁷ Just then His followers returned, and they were astonished to find Him talking to a woman.^a But they didn’t ask her what she wanted, or ask Him why He was talking to her.

²⁸ At this point the woman left her water pitcher and went into the town and called out to everyone.

²⁹ “Come!” she cried out, “and see a man who has told me everything I ever did. He can’t be the Messiah, can He?”

³⁰ The people immediately streamed out of the town and made their way toward Him.

³¹ At the same time, His followers were urging Him, “Teacher, eat something.”

³² “I have food to eat that you know nothing about,” He replied.

³³ At this, His followers began to ask one another, “Has someone else brought Him food?”

³⁴ “My nourishment,” Jesus responded, “comes from completely obeying the One who sent Me, and from My concern about completely finishing the work He gave Me to do.

³⁵ “Wouldn’t you say there are still four months before harvest? But just look, I tell you! Raise your eyes and look at the fields.^a They are already ripe for harvest.

³⁶ “The reaper is being paid even now, and is also having the satisfaction of gathering fruit that will live on forever,^a so that both the sower and the reaper may rejoice together.

³⁷ “Here you have the true meaning of the saying, ‘One sows, while another reaps.’

³⁸ “I am sending you to reap a harvest which has not been brought to maturity thru your efforts. Others worked hard, and you are receiving the benefits of their hard work.”

³⁹ Many of the Samaritans of that town believed

in Him because of the woman’s statement, “He told me everything I ever did.”

⁴⁰ So when they came to Him they insisted that He remain with them. So He stayed there two days.

⁴¹ Then many more believed because of the things He personally told them.

⁴² They then told the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said, but because we have now heard Him ourselves, we are convinced that this is indeed the Christ,^a the Savior of the world.”

Jesus Heals an Official's Son

⁴³ After the two days He left there and continued on to Galilee, *but not to Nazareth*,^a

⁴⁴ because Jesus Himself had said that a prophet isn’t respected in His own town.

⁴⁵ When He reached Galilee, the Galileans gladly received Him, because they had also attended the Passover Feast in Jerusalem and had seen all the things He had done there at the Feast.

⁴⁶ As He traveled about in Galilee He again arrived at Cana, where He had turned the water into wine. At the same time, the son of a certain government official in Capernaum was very sick.

⁴⁷ When the man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he came to Him in Cana and begged Him to come down to Capernaum and heal his son, who was at the point of death.

⁴⁸ “You people will never believe unless you see signs and wonders,” Jesus responded.

⁴⁹ “Sir,” the man pleaded, “please come down before my little child dies!”

⁵⁰ “Go your way,” Jesus replied. “Your son will live.” The man believed what Jesus told him and started for home.

⁵¹ While on his way, some of his servants met him with the news, “Your son is better and is going to live!”

⁵² So he asked them when it was that he began to improve. “It was one o’clock yesterday afternoon

You expect deep, heartfelt love from those you love, and God demands no less. There is no possibility that you can be saved from the penalty of your sins and be ready for Heaven, while not really worshipping God in all sincerity in true love from the very depths of your being.

Some claim that Christ offered this woman the water of eternal life without any condition of obedience or surrender to God. But when she indicated a desire to receive this water (v 15) Jesus called her attention to the sinful life she was living, and then told her the kind of worship that was necessary to be accepted by God. And there was no way that she

could continue living in disobedience to God, and yet claim that she was worshipping God acceptably and being accepted by Him.

* * *

Christ’s call to worship the Father *in spirit and in all sincerity from the very depth of our being* is a clear call to the deepest and most extensive kind of spiritual submission. Those who refuse to acknowledge and forsake their sin will discover on that Last Great Day that Jesus is their Judge, not their Savior.

But God is still inviting to Himself all who will submit in obedience to Him. The Savior earnestly desires to receive, forgive, and liberate from sin all

when the fever left him,” they replied.

⁵³The father then realized that this was exactly the time when Jesus had told him, “Your son will live.” So he and his entire household became believers.

⁵⁴This was the second miracle that Jesus performed after arriving in Galilee from Judea.

The Sabbath Healing at the Pool

5 Sometime later, Jesus again went up to Jerusalem for one of the Judean festivals.

²Near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem, there’s a pool surrounded by five porches, which in Hebrew is called Bethesda.

³A great number of sick people—blind, lame, and paralyzed—were lying on these porches, waiting for the water to stir,

⁴because at certain times an angel came down to the pool and stirred up the water. Then whoever got into the pool first, after the water was stirred, was cured of whatever ailment he suffered.

⁵One of the men lying there had been an invalid for 38 years.

⁶When Jesus saw him, knowing that he had been in that condition a long time, He asked him, “Do you wish to get well?”

⁷“Sir,” the sick man replied, “I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is disturbed; but while I’m on my way, someone else always steps down ahead of me.”

⁸“Stand up and pick up your mat and walk!” Jesus told him.

⁹Instantly the man was well, and he picked up his mat and began to walk. This occurred on a Sabbath.^a

¹⁰So the Jewish authorities challenged the man who was cured, saying, “This is the Sabbath! It’s not lawful for you to carry your mat on the Sabbath!”

¹¹“But the Man who healed me told me to pick up my mat and walk,” he replied.

who will come to Him in true sincerity. Call out to Him and see how true this is.

4:27a It was considered very improper for a man to talk to a woman in public.

4:35a He was evidently pointing to the crowds approaching from the town.

4:36a The souls of converts, who will live on forever. There will also be rich eternal rewards for all who have labored faithfully to win those souls to Christ.

4:42a Or *Messiah*.

4:43a Implied.

5:9a Saturday, the Jewish day of rest.

¹²“Who told you to do that?” they demanded.

¹³But the man who had been healed didn’t know who it was, because Jesus had moved away, and the place was crowded.

¹⁴Later on Jesus came across him in the Temple area. “Listen!” He said to the man. “You are well now, but don’t sin any more or something even worse may happen to you.”^a

¹⁵The man then went off and told the Jewish authorities that it was Jesus who had healed him.

¹⁶So because of this, these Jewish authorities began to keep up a steady harassment of Jesus and began looking for a way to kill Him, because He was doing such things on the Sabbath.

¹⁷“My Father is continually working, even up to the present moment, and so am I,” He answered them.

¹⁸But this made them more determined than ever to kill Him, because not only was He breaking the extra laws they had made about the Sabbath, but He was also speaking of God as being His own Father, thereby making Himself equal with God.

The Son’s Authority

¹⁹“I tell you the absolute truth,” Jesus told them, “the Son can do nothing by Himself.^a He can do only what He sees the Father doing. Because whatever the Father does, the Son does also, and in the same way.

²⁰“Because the Father loves the Son, He shows Him everything that He Himself is doing. And He will show Him even greater things to do than these, so that you will be amazed.

²¹“Because in the same way that the Father awakens the dead and gives them life, the Son does also. He gives life to anyone He chooses.

²²“In fact, the Father doesn’t judge anyone, but He has entrusted all judgment into the hands of the Son,

²³so that everyone may honor the Son in the same way that they honor the Father. So those

5:14a See Galatians 6:7-8, and the note there.

5:19a The Son is so in union with the Father that He can and will do nothing independently or separately from the Father. He does only that with which the Father is in total agreement and which He commands. This is the perfect oneness that exists between the Father and the Son—the same oneness that God desires between each believer and Himself (John 17:20-23)—with the same results (John 14:12-14) when the same perfect oneness is attained.

5:24a The word *listening* suggests moral as well

who refuse to honor the Son are refusing to honor the Father who sent Him.

²⁴“I tell you the absolute truth: Whoever makes a practice of listening^a to what I tell him to do, and believes^b the message of the One who sent Me^c — he has eternal life. He will not come into judgment. He has passed^d out of death into life.

²⁵“I assure you most sincerely that the time will come, and is here even now, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God. And those who take heed to what they hear will become alive.^a

²⁶“Because, just as the Father has power to give life, He has given the same power to the Son.^a

²⁷“He has also given His Son the right to judge mankind, because He is the Son of Man.^a

²⁸“Don’t be surprised at this, because a time is coming when all who are dead in their graves will hear His voice and will rise from those graves!

²⁹“Those who in life practiced doing good will be raised to live forever, and those who continued to indulge in their sinning will be raised for judgment.^a

³⁰“And even when I judge, I can do nothing by Myself, but I judge according to whatever the Father tells Me. And My decisions are just, because I never desire to please Myself, but to please My Father who sent Me.

Testimonies About Jesus

³¹“If I had no other evidence than My own testimony about Myself, that would not be enough proof.

³²“But someone else is also testifying about Me, and I know that His testimony about Me is true.

³³“You yourselves sent representatives to question John, and he told you the truth about Me.

³⁴“But I don’t depend on what people say about Me. I simply mention this about John so that you may be convinced concerning the truth about Me and be saved.

³⁵“John was like a burning lamp that shined brightly. And you were willing for a short while to be extremely happy in the light he gave you.

³⁶“But I have proof that is far greater than what John said about Me. The great miracles that My Father has enabled Me to do until My work is finished, the very works in which I am now engaged, these are My proof that the Father has sent Me.

³⁷“And the Father who sent Me has Himself testified about Me. You have never heard His voice at any time, nor have you ever seen His form,

³⁸nor is His message living in you,^a because you refuse to believe the One whom He has sent.

³⁹“You carefully search the Scriptures,^a because

as physical listening. To listen to God’s word, but refuse to obey Him, is not effective listening. And it is only effective listening that results in regeneration of the heart. Then, and then only, does faith obtain justification thru Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. The one who *believes*, and listens with an honest heart, yielding to the will of God thru His *word*—it is he who *has eternal life*.

5:24b In regard to what it means to believe in order to receive eternal life, see John 3:16 notes.

5:24c John 12:47-50.

5:24d Perfect indicative. The perfect tense in the Greek affirms two things: the fact of an action in the past, and the fact of the continued existence of the results of the action as of the present moment. But it makes no affirmation whatever with respect to the future. The person described here must continue in the faith, faithful to Christ to the end (Matthew 10:22; Colossians 1:23) if he is to be finally saved.

5:25a The *dead* refer to those who are dead spiritually, and face the condemnation and judgment of Almighty God. The human race was then, and is now, in what is known as the *day of grace*. Literally millions of people *dead* in trespasses and sins have since that day called on the Savior to be their Lord, and the Savior of their souls. They have effec-

tively *listened* and *have become alive*.

5:26a The Father has power to give both physical as well as spiritual life to whom He will. And He has given the same authority and power to *the Son*.

5:27a Besides giving the Son power to give life, the Father has also *given Him authority to execute judgment*—because in addition to His being the Son of God, *He is the Son of Man*.

“The principle involved is based upon perfect justice. The basis for it is the reasoning that He who by experience knows what is in man should be the Judge of men. By personal experience of man’s temptations and frailties; by knowing every attempt to gloss over our sins, every attempt to justify our failures, every exaggeration of our weakness; by gazing thru human eyes with human consciousness upon our mysterious destiny, He is competent to judge. And because He is the Son of God as well as Son of Man, the Father has entrusted into His hands the power to execute the judgment of the Eternal God.”—by H. R. Reynolds in *Pulpit Commentary*.

5:28-29a Yes, the time of resurrection is definitely coming, and there is no way of escaping it. For those of us who have the assurance of forgiveness and life, we look forward to that hour with joy. 2 Timothy 4:8. But to the ungodly and the hypocritical, the thought is terrifying. There is no mere sim-

you believe they spell out the way to everlasting life, and it is those very Scriptures that tell about Me!

⁴⁰“But in spite of that, you are still unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.”^a

⁴¹“I am not saying these things in order to receive human applause.

⁴²“But I know you—I know that you have no real love for God in your hearts!”^a

⁴³“I have come by My Father’s authority, but still you refuse to receive Me.”^a But if someone else comes in his own name,^b you will accept him.”^c

⁴⁴“How is it possible for you to believe^a when you accept praise from one another, but have no interest in zealously seeking praise from the only God?

⁴⁵“Don’t think for a moment that I plan to accuse you before the Father. You already have an accuser. And that’s Moses, on whom you build your hopes.

⁴⁶“If you truly believed Moses, you would believe Me, because it was about Me that he wrote!”^a

⁴⁷“But since you don’t believe what he wrote, how can you believe what I tell you?”^a

Jesus Feeds More than 5,000 People

6 After this, Jesus went across to another area on Lake Galilee, which is also called Lake

Tiberias.

²A large crowd was following Him along the lakeshore, because they had seen the miracles He was performing for the sick.

³When Jesus and those with Him went ashore, they walked up a hill and sat down together.

⁴It was near the time of the Jewish Passover Feast.

⁵When Jesus looked up and saw the immense crowd coming toward Him, He asked Philip, “Where can we ever buy enough food to feed all these people?”

⁶Jesus knew what He was about to do, but He said this to test Philip.

⁷“A laboring man would have to work almost a whole year to earn the money to buy enough food to give even a tiny portion to each person in this crowd!” Philip replied.

⁸Then one of His followers, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, told Him:

⁹“There’s a small boy here who has five loaves of barley bread and two small fish, but what does that amount to for so many?”

¹⁰“Have the people sit down,” Jesus told them. So they all sat down on the thick grass which covered the ground. The men alone numbered about five thousand.

ple belief in Christ as Savior taught here as the way to salvation. That *belief* must include *doing what is good*—referring to a genuine new birth. 3:1-8.

The two resurrections spoken of here will actually occur 1,000 years apart. The resurrection of those who have practiced doing what is right will take place when Christ calls His Church (His called ones) to meet Him in the air. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 24:29-31. But the *resurrection of those who have practiced evil*, to receive their judgment in the lake of fire, will not take place until the end of the first 1,000 years of Christ’s reign. Revelation 20:5,11-15. In the meantime, they will be in Hell. Luke 16:19-31.

5:38a See 8:30-59.

5:39a Referring to the Old Testament.

5:40a ... *that is vibrant, fulfilling, and everlasting.*

5:42a ... *no deep desire to learn all you can about God, to discover just how He would have you live and serve Him (without concern for personal gain or men’s applause, only God’s “Well done!”), and what He would have you do and refrain from doing, to make Him (your Father) glad.*

5:43a He came representing the Father, and by His authority. He also came with plenty of proof

that the Father had sent Him, especially by the miracles He performed, and by His resurrection from the dead.

5:43b ... *not even pretending to have a Divine commission* ...

5:43c He is referring to the Antichrist, who will come on the scene in these last days of the age. Jewish political and religious leaders will gladly accept him, until he double-crosses and enslaves them.

5:44a Jesus is not referring only to mental belief, but to belief with the heart. See Romans 10:9-10; Galatians 3:11 notes.

5:46a Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

5:47a The Jews will accept the Antichrist when he appears on the scene. It is not certain that they will accept him as their Messiah. But it seems quite apparent from Daniel 9:27 that Israel will be one of the *many* nations that will make some kind of a 7-year agreement with him. Ironically, Israel will accept his person and ideas after having crucified the Lord of glory.

It may even be that Israel will accept the Antichrist as their ruler during his rise to power over the nations of the Middle East and Europe. He could even become the ruler of Israel before he conquers other territory. It’s very possible that he will be a Jew. But it’s also likely that he will come to

¹¹Jesus then took the loaves,^a and after giving thanks to God, He distributed them to His followers, who then served those who were seated. He did the same with the fish, and they all ate as much as they wanted.

¹²When everyone was fully satisfied, He told His followers, “Now gather up the leftover pieces, so that nothing will be wasted.”

¹³And when they had gathered them up, they had filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves that were left over by those who had eaten!

¹⁴When the people realized what a miracle Jesus had just performed, they exclaimed, “Surely this is the Prophet whom we were promised^a would come into the world!”

¹⁵Knowing that they were about to take Him by force and make Him their king, Jesus withdrew again farther up the hill, alone.

Jesus Walks on the Lake!

¹⁶When evening came, His followers went down to the lake.

¹⁷When it got dark, Jesus still hadn’t returned to them. So they got into the boat and headed out across the lake for Capernaum.

¹⁸Then a strong wind started blowing, causing the lake to become extremely rough.

¹⁹They had rowed three or four miles—when suddenly they saw Jesus approaching their boat, walking on the water! They were terrified.

²⁰“Don’t be afraid,” Jesus called out to them. “It is I.”

²¹They were then willing to take Him into the boat. And immediately the boat was at the shore for which they were headed.

²²The next morning, the crowd was still waiting on the other shore. They had seen only one boat there, and that Jesus hadn’t boarded the boat with

His followers, but that His followers had left without Him.

²³But now other boats had come from Tiberias and had landed near the place where they had eaten the food after the Lord had given thanks.

²⁴So when the people realized that neither Jesus nor His followers were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum to look for Him.

Jesus, the Bread that Gives Life

²⁵When they arrived on the other shore of the lake and found Him, they said, “Teacher, when did You get here?”

²⁶“I tell you the absolute truth,” Jesus replied, “you are not looking for Me because you understand the meaning^a of the miracles you saw, but because you had your stomachs filled with the bread you ate.

²⁷“Don’t be mainly concerned about getting food that will perish.^a Your main concern must be to get food that will last and give eternal life—the food that the Son of Man will give you. You can have absolute confidence that what He tells you is truth, because God the Father has put His seal of endorsement upon Him.”

²⁸“What must we do then, so that we may do what will please God?” they asked Him.

²⁹“What God wants you to do,” Jesus told them, “is to believe in the One whom He has sent.”

³⁰“What miracle will You perform then,” they replied, “so that we may see it and believe in You? What great thing will You do?

³¹“Our ancestors ate manna in the desert. As it is written, **He gave them bread right out of Heaven to eat.**”^a

³²“I tell you the absolute truth,” Jesus replied. “It was not Moses who gave you that bread from Heaven, but it’s My Father who is now giving you the true Bread from Heaven.

power in the area over which Assyria ruled in ancient times, because he is called *the Assyrian* in a good number of Scriptures. Micah 5:5-6; Isaiah 10:24-25; 14:24-25; 30:30-31; 31:8-9.

6:11a A loaf of bread was generally a round loaf, seven inches in diameter, and half an inch to one inch thick.

6:14a Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Acts 3:22-23.

6:26a The miracles were proof that He had come from God, and that God was with Him.

6:27a Their only objective was more bread to satisfy their physical bodies, not their eternal souls.

6:31a Exodus 16:4; Nehemiah 9:15; Psalm 78:24-25.

6:35a What does it mean to believe in Jesus? See

Galatians 3:11; Luke 14:26-33; John 3:36; Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9-10, and the notes there.

6:35b Jesus offers peace and fulfillment right now to the soul who hungers and thirsts for life which satisfies in the way that God intended life to be. But in Heaven there will be total fulfillment, as well as no physical hunger or thirst. By surrendering to Him as your Lord and trusting Him as your Savior, you will receive life that is eternal and totally fulfilling.

6:39a ... *the last day of this age, the age of grace.*

6:37-40a These are all wonderful words of assurance to everyone who has received Christ as the Son of God, as the Savior of the world, and as the Lord to whom they owe their full allegiance. All who

³³ “Because the Bread of God is He who has come down from Heaven and is now giving Life to the people of the world.”

³⁴ “Sir!” they exclaimed, “give us that bread all the time!”

³⁵ “I am the Bread that gives Life,” Jesus replied. “No one who comes to Me will ever go hungry. And no one who is believing^a in Me will ever be thirsty.^b”

³⁶ “But as I said before, ‘You have already seen plenty of proof as to who I am, and still you don’t believe.’”

³⁷ “Everyone whom the Father is giving to Me will indeed come to Me. And I absolutely will never turn away anyone who comes to Me.

³⁸ “Because I didn’t come down from Heaven to do what I want. My only desire is to do the will of My Father who sent Me.

³⁹ “And what the Father wants is that I make sure that I don’t lose a single one of all whom He has given Me. He wants Me to raise them all back to life again on the Last Day.^a”

⁴⁰ “My Father wants everyone who sees the Son and is believing in Him to have everlasting life. And I will indeed raise them up from the grave and back to life on the Last Day.”^a

⁴¹ Then the people began murmuring among themselves about Him because He had been so positive in saying, “I am the Bread that came down from Heaven!”

⁴² “Don’t we know this man’s father and mother?” they said. “Isn’t this Jesus, the son of Joseph? How can he say then, ‘I have come down from Heaven?’”

⁴³ “Stop your murmuring among yourselves,” Jesus responded.

⁴⁴ “No one is able to come to Me unless he is drawn to Me by the Father who sent Me. And those who do come, I will raise back to life on the Last

Day.

⁴⁵ “One of the prophets wrote, **And they will all be taught by God.^a** So everyone who has sincerely listened to the Father and has learned from Him will come to Me.

⁴⁶ “That doesn’t mean that anyone has actually seen the Father, except the One who has come from God. He has seen Him.

⁴⁷ “I tell you the absolute truth—anyone who is believing in Me^a has eternal life.

⁴⁸ “I am the Bread that gives life!

⁴⁹ “Your ancestors ate manna in the desert, and still they died.

⁵⁰ “But here is Bread that has come down out of Heaven, of a kind that anyone who eats of it will never die.

⁵¹ “I am the Life-giving Bread that came down from Heaven. If anyone eats this Bread he will live forever. And this Bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give as a sacrifice so that the world may live.”^a

⁵² At this the people began angrily debating among themselves, asking, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

⁵³ “I tell you the absolute truth,” Jesus continued, “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.

⁵⁴ “But whoever continues to eat My flesh and drink My blood has everlasting life, and I will raise him back to life again on the Last Day.

⁵⁵ “Because My flesh is indeed food, and My blood is indeed drink.

⁵⁶ “Whoever continues to eat My flesh and drink My blood^a continues to live in union with Me and I in union with him.

⁵⁷ “Just as I live because of the life-giving Father who sent Me, likewise, whoever continues to feed on Me will live because of Me.

⁵⁸ “This is the Bread that came down from Heav-

have put their trust in Him in this way will be raised up from among the dead by Christ when He returns. And those alive and living for Christ at that time will rise with them, to meet Him in the air. 1 Thesalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 24:29-31.

6:45a Isaiah 54:13.

6:47a ... *by full acceptance of Who I am and what I teach* ...

6:51a He later gave His body in extreme suffering and death on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins. When we gratefully accept that sacrifice for ourselves, and give ourselves to God the best way we know how, to now live (with His help) as He would have us live, He has promised to forgive our sins and give us eternal life.

Just as there are conditions to be met before God will answer our prayers, there are conditions to be met in order to gain eternal life. The Apostle Paul said there are two conditions. He said, *You must both turn from your sinning and obey God, and believe in our Lord Jesus the Messiah as your Savior.* Acts 20:21.

6:56a Christ gave His flesh and blood as a sacrifice on the cross for our sins. Those who accept that sacrifice for their sins are partaking of His flesh and blood. This has nothing to do with the Lord’s supper, except that the Lord’s supper is a living picture of what the believer has done and is doing in trusting Christ for salvation and eventual resurrection to everlasting life.

en. It is not the same kind of bread your ancestors ate, and still died. Whoever continues to eat this Bread will live forever.”

⁵⁹These are the things Jesus said in the synagogue while teaching at Capernaum.

Many Followers Desert Jesus

⁶⁰Many who had been following Him and had been listening then said, “What a disgusting speech! Who can accept such nonsense?”

⁶¹Aware within Himself that these followers of His were murmuring about what He had said, Jesus asked, “Are you taking offense at this?”

⁶²“What would you do if you should see the Son of Man go back up to Heaven where He was before?”

⁶³“It is God’s Spirit that gives life. The flesh doesn’t give life. And the very words that I speak to you are from God’s Spirit, and they are the means by which you can obtain eternal life.

⁶⁴“But some of you refuse to believe in Me.” Jesus knew from the beginning who the unbelievers were, and even who it was who would betray Him.

⁶⁵Jesus then continued, saying, “That’s why I told you that no one can come to Me unless My Father attracts and draws him to Me.”

⁶⁶It was at this time that many of His followers turned back and no longer followed Him.

⁶⁷Then Jesus asked the Twelve, “Are you also planning to leave Me?”

⁶⁸“Lord, to whom would we go?” Simon Peter replied, “You alone have the truth that gives eternal life.

⁶⁹“We firmly believe and are fully convinced that You truly are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.”

⁷⁰“Didn’t I choose the Twelve of you?” Jesus replied. “And even one of you is a devil.”

⁷¹He was speaking about Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, because he was the one, even though one of the Twelve, who would later betray Him.

The Unbelief of Jesus’ Brothers

7 After this, Jesus went from place to place in Galilee, not wanting to travel in Judea because the Judean authorities there were looking for a chance to kill Him.

²But when the time for the Jewish Feast of

Tabernacles approached,

³His brothers said to Him, “You’d better leave here and go to Judea, so your followers there can see the miracles you’re performing.

⁴“No one works in secret if he wants the world to know about him. If you are really doing these things, make yourself known to the world.”

⁵Because even His brothers didn’t yet believe in Him.

⁶“It’s not My time to go just yet,” Jesus replied. “But as for you, any time is right.

⁷“The people of the world can’t hate you. But they hate Me because I keep pointing out the evil lives they are living.

⁸“You go ahead and go up to the Feast. I’m not going up to this Feast right now, because My time hasn’t yet come.”

⁹After saying this He remained in Galilee.

¹⁰But after His brothers had left for the Feast, then He also went up, not openly, but in secret.

¹¹As expected, the Jewish authorities were looking for Him at the Feast, and kept asking, “Where is that fellow?”

¹²There was also a great deal of debating about Him among the people.

“He’s a good man,” some said.

“He is not!” others exclaimed. “He’s misleading the people!”

¹³But no one had the courage to speak up openly for Him, because of their fear of the religious leaders.

Jesus Teaches at the Feast

¹⁴Not until the Feast was about half over, did Jesus go up into the Temple courts and begin to teach the people.

¹⁵The Jewish leaders were amazed. “How can he know so much about the sacred writings,” they questioned, “when he’s never studied in any of our theological schools?”

¹⁶In response Jesus said, “I am not teaching what I have decided is the truth. My message comes from God, who sent Me.

¹⁷“Anyone who truly wants to practice obeying God will know whether this teaching is from God, or whether these are just My words.

¹⁸“A person who says what he himself decides is the truth is looking for honor for himself. But the

7:15a The rabbinical theological schools.

7:22a ... on the eighth day after birth ...

7:28a Referring to God the Father. He is the only One who is truly God, as Jesus states in John 17:3. See Appendix 246, page 512.

7:38a Again—present participle, denoting present progressive action—heart belief. See Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9-10, and the notes.

7:38b Job 32:18-19; Isaiah 58:11; 44:3-4.

7:39a The Holy Spirit did not live within believers

Man who wants to honor the One who sent Him is sincere and trustworthy, and there is nothing dishonest about Him.

¹⁹ “Didn’t Moses give you the Law? Still, not one of you strictly obey it. Why then are you trying to kill Me for not strictly obeying it?”

²⁰ “Who’s trying to kill you?” the crowd responded. “You must have a demon.”

²¹ “You are all angry and upset about one action of Mine,” Jesus replied.

²² “Now listen, Moses ordered you to circumcise your sons^a (not that it started with Moses, but with your earlier ancestors), and even on the Sabbath you circumcise a male child.

²³ “If, in order to keep from breaking the Law of Moses, you circumcise a boy on the Sabbath, have you any right to be angry with Me because I made a man perfectly well on the Sabbath?

²⁴ “Stop judging superficially, but according to what is right!”

Is Jesus the Messiah?

²⁵ “Isn’t this the man the authorities are looking for, in order to kill him?” some of the people of Jerusalem began asking one another.

²⁶ “But look, he’s speaking out boldly and they’re not saying a thing to him. Could it be that the authorities have decided that this is indeed the Messiah?

²⁷ “But then, of course, we know where this man was born and raised, but no one will know where the Messiah is from when He comes.”

²⁸ “Yes,” Jesus then cried out as He taught in the Temple area, “you know Me and you know where I was born and raised. But I have not come of My own accord. The One who sent Me is the True God,^a whom you do not know.

²⁹ “But I know Him, because I have come from His very presence, and He sent Me.”

³⁰ On hearing this, the religious leaders tried to arrest Him. But no one was able to lay a hand on Him, because His time hadn’t yet come.

³¹ Still, many in the crowd believed in Him, saying, “Can the Messiah be expected to do more miracles when He comes than this Man has done?”

Police Officers Sent to Arrest Jesus

³² When the Pharisees heard the crowd saying

such things about Him, they and the chief priests sent Temple police to arrest Him.

³³ So Jesus said to them, “I will be with you for only a little while longer, and then I will return to the One who sent Me.

³⁴ “You will look for Me and not find Me, because you are not able to come to the place where I am.”

³⁵ “Where is it that he intends to go, that we’ll not find him?” the religious leaders then questioned among themselves. “Surely he isn’t planning to go to our people scattered among the Greeks, and also teach the Greeks, is he?

³⁶ “What does he mean by saying, ‘You will look for me and not find me, because you are not able to come to the place where I am’?”

³⁷ On the last and most important day of the Feast, Jesus stood up and shouted, “If you are thirsty, come to Me and drink!

³⁸ “Whoever believes^a in Me will have, as the Scriptures declare, rivers of life-giving water flowing out from deep within him.”^b

³⁹ He said this about the Holy Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were soon to receive. The Spirit had not yet been given,^a because Jesus had not yet ascended to Heaven—to the glory and honor that awaited Him there.

⁴⁰ Upon hearing all that He was saying, many in the crowd said, “Surely this is the Prophet that Moses said would come.”^a

⁴¹ “This is the Messiah,” others agreed. But still others said, “Do you really expect the Messiah to come out of Galilee?

⁴² “Doesn’t the Scripture state that the Messiah is to come from the family of King David,^a and be born in Bethlehem,^b the town where David lived?”

⁴³ So the people were divided in opinion about Him.

⁴⁴ Some of them wanted Him arrested, but no one laid hands on Him.

Unbelief of the Jewish Leaders

⁴⁵ The Temple police then went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who challenged them, “Why didn’t you bring him in!”

⁴⁶ “No one has ever spoken like this man!” the guards replied.

⁴⁷ “Do you mean that you have also been fooled by him?” the Pharisees shouted.

until Jesus, the Son of God, had suffered and died on the cross as the ransom for them because of their sin. See 14:17; 20:19-22; Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-39.

7:40a They were evidently referring to Moses’ prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15,18.

7:42a Isaiah 11:1-5; Jeremiah 23:5-6.

7:42b Micah 5:2.

8:5a Why didn’t these hypocrites also bring the man? See Leviticus 20:10.

⁴⁸“Not one Pharisee or anyone in authority has believed in him, have they?”

⁴⁹“But it’s the masses, who don’t know the Law, who are cursed under his spell!”

⁵⁰Then Nicodemus, their member who had gone to Jesus by night, said,

⁵¹“Does our Law condemn a man without first giving him a hearing to learn the facts of the case?”

⁵²“Are you from Galilee too?” they retorted. “Check and see for yourself that no prophet is to come from Galilee!”

⁵³After that they each went home.

The Woman Caught in Adultery

8 Jesus, however, went to the Mount of Olives.

²Early the next morning, He returned to the Temple court, and all the people gathered around Him.

³He had sat down and was teaching them when the teachers of the Law of Moses and the Pharisees came to Him, bringing a woman who had been caught in bed with a man who was not her husband.

⁴They made her stand in the middle of the court, and then said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of adultery.

⁵“In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such a person to death!^a But now, what do you say?”

⁶They said this to trap Him, in order to have some charge to bring against Him. But Jesus, after stooping down, wrote in the dust with His finger.

⁷But when they continued to question Him, He straightened up and said, “Let the sinless man in your group throw the first stone at her.”

⁸Then again, stooping down, he wrote in the dust.

⁹When these men heard this they were conscience stricken and, beginning with the oldest, they slipped away one by one until the last one had left, leaving Jesus alone in front of the crowd with

the woman.

¹⁰Then Jesus again straightened up, and seeing none of the men, only the woman, He said, “Woman, where are the men who accused you? Didn’t anyone condemn you?”

¹¹“No one, Sir,” she replied.

“I’m not going to condemn you either,” Jesus declared. “Go now, but from now on, don’t sin any more.”

The Validity of Jesus’ Testimony

¹²Then Jesus again spoke to the crowd. “I am the Light for the people of this world!” He declared. “The one who follows Me will by no means walk in darkness. Instead, he will have the Light that will give him light on the pathway that leads to Life.”^a

¹³At this, the Pharisees in the crowd interrupted. “You alone are speaking on behalf of yourself!”^a they charged. “So all you say is worthless.”

¹⁴“Even if I do speak on behalf of Myself,” Jesus responded, “what I say is true, because I know where I came from and where I’m going. But you know nothing about where I’m from, nor where I’m going.

¹⁵“You’re passing judgment by human reasoning. But I’m passing judgment on no one.

¹⁶“But even if I did judge, My decision would be fair, because I would not be doing it alone. The Father who sent Me is always with Me.

¹⁷“Even your own Law says that the testimony of two men who agree is conclusive testimony.

¹⁸“I am one who gives testimony about Myself; the other Witness is the Father, who sent Me.”

¹⁹“Where is your father?” they challenged Him.

“You don’t know Me, and neither do you know My Father,” He replied. “If you knew Me you would also know My Father.”

²⁰These are the things Jesus said as He taught in the area of the Temple where the offering boxes were located.^a Still no one arrested Him, because His time hadn’t yet come.

²¹Another time He said, “I will soon be leaving you. You will keep on looking for Me,^a but you

8:12a Matthew 7:13-14.

8:13a See John 5:31-47.

8:20a This is past tense, because when John wrote (between A.D. 90-100) Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Romans, and the Temple lay in ruins.

8:21a They would keep looking for their Messiah, but would not find Him, for they had unknowingly rejected Him.

8:24a ... *the Messiah, the Christ, your Lord and*

Savior ...

8:28a ... *the Son of God, the Messiah, the King of Israel* ...

8:31a Notice! Believing in Jesus is not merely believing the truth about who He is and what He has done. Saving faith includes belief in what He taught, to the extent of obedience to His teachings! Without sincere obedience you are still rebelling against God, and are lost, and face His judgment and the awful consequences of that judgment. Just

will die with your sins unforgiven, and not be able to go to the place where I'm going."

²² "He's not planning to kill himself, is he?" the Jewish leaders murmured. "Is that why he says, 'You're not able to reach the place where I'm going'?"

²³ Then Jesus said, "You are from below, but I am from above. You are from this world, but I am not from this world.

²⁴ "That's why I told you that you will die with your sins unforgiven. Because unless you believe in Me for who I am,^a you will indeed die with your sins unforgiven."

²⁵ "And just who are you?" they demanded.

"I am the One I have always claimed to be," He replied.

²⁶ "There are many things I could say in judging you, but I can rely for absolute truth only on the One who sent Me, and for that reason I speak to the world only what He has told Me to say to you."

²⁷ But they still didn't understand that He was speaking to them about the Father.

²⁸ So He added, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man on a cross, then you will know who I am.^a You will also know that I do nothing on My own, but that I say only what the Father has told Me to say.

²⁹ "The One who sent Me is with Me. The Father hasn't left Me alone, because I always do what is pleasing to Him."

³⁰ As He said these things, many came to believe in Him.

The Truth Will Set You Free!

³¹ Then Jesus said to the Jews who now believed in Him, "If you continue to obey and live by what I teach, then you truly are My followers.^a

³² "You will then come to understand what the truth really is, and the truth will set you free."^a

³³ "But we are descendants of Abraham," others challenged Him, "and have never been slaves to anyone! So how can you say, 'You will be set free'?"

³⁴ "I tell you the absolute truth," Jesus replied.

"Everyone who lives in sin is a slave of sin.

³⁵ "Now a slave doesn't have any permanent place in the family, but a son is a part of it forever.

³⁶ "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.^a

³⁷ "Yes, I know you are the descendants of Abraham. But some of you are looking for a way to kill Me, because you won't accept what I'm telling you.

³⁸ "I'm telling you what I've learned from My Father, and your actions reveal what you've learned from your father."

³⁹ "Our father is Abraham!" they shouted.

"If you were really children of Abraham, you would behave like Abraham," Jesus responded.

⁴⁰ "But instead, because I've told you the truth, which I heard from God, you're determined to kill Me. That's not the way Abraham acted.

⁴¹ "You are doing exactly what your father wants done."

"We're not illegitimate children!" they again shouted. "God is our Father, and no one else!"

⁴² "If God were your Father," Jesus replied, "you would love Me, because I left the very presence of God to come to be with you. I didn't come of My own accord, but He sent Me.

⁴³ "Why don't you understand what I'm saying? It's because you can't stand to listen to what I'm telling you.

⁴⁴ "You are from your father—the devil—and you are eager to satisfy your appetites, which are the same as your father's. He has been a murderer from the beginning, and never has stood for the truth, because there's no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he's just acting out what he really is, because he's a liar and the father of lies!

⁴⁵ "So because I speak the truth, you refuse to believe Me.^a

⁴⁶ "Have any of you ever found Me guilty of any sin of any kind? Why don't you believe Me then, if you know I speak only the truth?

⁴⁷ "*The reason you refuse to believe Me is because.*^a Only the person who belongs to God really listens to what God says. You refuse to listen because you don't belong to Him."^b

sitting in church every Sunday and agreeing with what is said doesn't make you a Christian! Acts 14:22; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Colossians 1:23; 1 John 2:24.

8:32a ... *free from slavery to Satan and sin, from corrupt, premeditated evil, and degraded, sapless, scrubby, miserable views of life and eternity.*

8:36a Free from your slavery to sin, and adopted

into God's family as His children. Romans 8:13-18.

8:45a ... *because it's your nature to believe that everyone lies, like yourself.*

8:47a Implied

8:47b Do you belong to God? Is it your sincere desire and aim to listen to God and accept ALL that He says as truth—and live it and obey it, and teach it to others? Do you really belong to God? Do you?

8:51a And the obvious truth is that those who do

Jesus and Abraham

⁴⁸“We’ve been right all along!” those Jewish leaders again shouted. “You’re a Samaritan possessed by a demon!”

⁴⁹“I am not possessed by a demon,” Jesus replied. “But I am honoring My Father, and you are dishonoring Me for doing so.

⁵⁰“However, I am not seeking honor for Myself. But there is One who has determined that I be honored, and He will see to it that I am.

⁵¹“I am telling you the absolute truth when I tell you that anyone who carefully guards and preserves My words as precious treasures, and obeys what I tell him to do, will never experience death.”^a

⁵²“Now we know you’re possessed by a demon!” those Jewish leaders exploded. “Abraham died, and so did the prophets, and still you say, ‘If anyone obeys what I’m telling you to do, he will never experience death.’

⁵³“You aren’t greater than our father Abraham, who died, are you? The prophets also died. Just who do you think you are?”

⁵⁴“If I should boast about Myself,” Jesus replied, “My honor would be worthless. It is My Father who honors Me, the One you say is your God.

⁵⁵“The truth is, you have never known Him. But I know Him. If I should say I don’t know Him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know Him, and I do whatever He tells Me to do.

⁵⁶“Your father Abraham was overjoyed that he was allowed to see the time of My coming Kingdom. And he did see it, and was extremely delighted by what he saw.”

⁵⁷“You aren’t even 50 years old yet!” the Jewish leaders roared. “And sure, you’ve seen Abraham!”

⁵⁸“I tell you the absolute truth,” Jesus replied. “I was in existence before Abraham was even born.”

⁵⁹At this they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself from their view^a and walked right thru the middle of them, and on out of the Temple area.

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind!

9As Jesus was walking along, He noticed a man who had been born blind.

²“Teacher,” His followers asked Him, “who

sinned? This man, or was it his parents who caused him to be born blind?”

³“This blindness is not the result of any sin on his part nor of his parents,” Jesus replied. “But thru this man God wants to demonstrate what He can do.

⁴“I must carry on the work of the One who sent Me, as long as the day lasts. Night is coming, when no one is able to work.

⁵“As long as I am in the world, I am the Light for the world.”^a

⁶After saying this, He spit on the ground and made some mud with the saliva. Then He spread the mud over the blind man’s eyes.

⁷“Now go,” Jesus told him, “and wash the mud off in the Pool of Siloam.” (*Siloam* is Hebrew for *One Who Is Sent*.) So the man left and washed his face, and when he returned, he could see!

⁸His neighbors and others who had seen him before, and knew he was blind, exclaimed, “Isn’t this the man who sat and begged?”

⁹“Yes, it surely is!” some agreed.

“No, it isn’t,” others said. “He just looks like him.” But he assured them, “I’m the man.”

¹⁰“How is it that you can see now?” they then exclaimed. “What happened?”

¹¹“The man they call Jesus made some mud and smeared it over my eyes,” he replied. “Then He told me to go and wash it off in the Pool of Siloam. After I had washed there, I could see!”

¹²“Where is He now?” they asked.

“I don’t know,” he replied.

The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

¹³Then they brought this formerly blind man to the Pharisees.

¹⁴Now it so happened that Jesus had mixed the mud and cured this man of his blindness on a Sabbath.

¹⁵So the Pharisees now in turn also questioned the man as to how he had received his sight.

“He put some mud on my eyes,” he told them, “and after washing it off, I could see.”

¹⁶“This man isn’t from God,” some of the Pharisees then declared, “because He doesn’t keep the Sabbath.”

But others said, “How could a sinful man do such miracles?” So they were divided in opinion.

¹⁷Finally they turned again to the once-blind

not treasure and obey the words of Christ *will experience death*. He’s referring to the death of the soul—a horrendous living death in Hell. See 14:21.

8:59a He evidently hid Himself from their view in

some supernatural way.

9:5a This is to be true of every follower of Christ as well. Matthew 5:14-16. We are to give light to others who are walking thru life, both by how we

man. “It was your eyes he opened, so what do you have to say about him?”

“He’s a prophet!” the man replied.

¹⁸ But those Jewish leaders wouldn’t believe he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called his parents and questioned them.

¹⁹ “Is this your son?” they asked them. “Was he born blind? How is it then that he’s now able to see?”

²⁰ “We know this is our son,” his parents responded, “and that he was born blind.

²¹ “But we know nothing about how it is that he’s now able to see, or about who cured him of his blindness. He’s an adult; ask him. He can speak for himself.”

²² His parents answered in this way because they feared the Jewish authorities, who had already agreed that they would expel from the synagogue anyone who claimed that Jesus was the Messiah.

²³ That’s why his parents had said, “He’s an adult; ask him.”

²⁴ So the Pharisees again called in the formerly blind man, and said, “Give God the praise for what’s happened to you. We know this man is a sinner.”

²⁵ “Whether or not He’s a sinner, I don’t know,” he replied. “But I do know one thing—I was blind, but now I can see.”

²⁶ “What did he actually do to you?” they again questioned him. “How did he cure you of your blindness?”

²⁷ “I told you already,” he protested, “and you didn’t listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His followers?”

²⁸ At this they scornfully ridiculed him: “You’re evidently his follower!” they sneered. “But we’re followers of Moses!

²⁹ “We know that God spoke to Moses. But this fellow—we don’t know where he’s from!”

³⁰ “That’s the incredible thing about it,” the man replied. “You don’t even know where He’s from, and yet He’s cured me of my blindness.

³¹ “We know God doesn’t listen to sinners. He listens only to those who sincerely worship and obey Him.

³² “Such a thing has never been heard of before, that someone cured a blind person who had been born blind.

³³ “If He weren’t from God, He could do nothing.”

³⁴ “You!” they retorted, “a person who has been

totally born in sin—would you try to teach us?” And they expelled him from the synagogue.

Spiritual Blindness

³⁵ Jesus heard they had thrown him out, and when He found him, He asked him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?”

³⁶ “Sir,” the man replied, “tell me who He is, so that I may believe in Him.”

³⁷ “You have even seen Him,” Jesus replied, “and He’s talking to you right now.”

³⁸ “Lord!” he exclaimed, “I believe!” And immediately he kneeled in worship at Jesus’ feet.

³⁹ “I came into this world to declare the condition of mankind,” Jesus stated, “so that the blind might see, and that those who think they see should become blind.”^a

⁴⁰ When some Pharisees who were with Him heard this, they asked, “You surely don’t mean that we’re also blind, do you?”

⁴¹ “If you were blind,” Jesus replied, “you would be guilty of no sin. But since you insist that you know what you’re doing, your guilt remains.”^a

Jesus the Good Shepherd

10 “I tell you the absolute truth,” Jesus continued. “The man who doesn’t enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs over some other way, is a plundering thief.

² “But the man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.

³ “The gatekeeper opens the gate for him. And the sheep obey his voice when he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

⁴ “After he’s brought his sheep out he walks ahead of them. And his sheep follow him because they recognize his voice.

⁵ “But they won’t follow a stranger. In fact, they’ll run from him, because they don’t recognize the stranger’s voice.”

⁶ But those who heard Him give this allegory didn’t understand at all what He meant by it.

⁷ So He said, “I tell you the absolute truth, I am the Gate for the sheep!

⁸ “All who came as such before Me were thieves and robbers, and the sheep wouldn’t listen to them.

⁹ “I am the Gate! All who come in thru Me will be saved. And thru Me they will come and go and find pasture.”^a

live and by what we tell them.

9:39-41a He was referring to spiritual blindness and spiritual understanding.

10:9a He will have liberty, protection, and provision for soul and body, as he follows his Lord. Every happening is made useful to him, as Christ causes

¹⁰ “The thief’s only purpose in coming is to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come so that mankind may have Life, and have it in unimagined abundance.”^a

¹¹ “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd is even willing to lay down His very life for the sheep.

¹² “But when the hired man sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs, because he is not the shepherd and the sheep don’t belong to him. Then the wolf carries off some of the sheep and scatters the flock.

¹³ “The hired man runs because he’s merely an employee, and has no real love or concern for the sheep.

¹⁴ “I am the Good Shepherd, and I know those who are mine.

¹⁵ “And those who are mine know Me, in the same way that the Father knows Me, and as I know the Father. I am now in the process of laying down My very life for My sheep.

¹⁶ “But I have other sheep in addition to those in this pen. I must bring them in too. They will also obey My call, and then there will be one flock, and one Shepherd.

¹⁷ “That’s why My Father loves Me, because I am willing to give up My life in order that I may receive it back again later on.”^a

¹⁸ “No one is taking My life from Me, but I am voluntarily laying it down. My Father has given Me orders that give Me power to lay it down, and power to take it back again.”

¹⁹ These words of His led to a fresh division of opinion among the religious leaders.

²⁰ “He’s demon possessed and crazy!” many of them protested and complained. “Why listen to him?”

²¹ “Words like these don’t come from one who’s under the power of a demon,” others argued. “Can a demon open blind eyes?”

Jesus Rejected by the Jews

²² That winter Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication.^a

²³ One day as He was walking in Solomon’s Porch in the Temple area,

²⁴ the Jewish leaders surrounded Him and said, “How long do you plan to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, say so in plain language!”

²⁵ “I have already told you,” Jesus replied, “but you don’t believe Me. The miracles I’m doing by the power and authority of My Father are proof enough as to who I am.

²⁶ “But as I said, you aren’t believing because you are not My sheep.

²⁷ “My sheep always pay close attention to what I tell them. I know who My sheep are. They are those who continually follow Me.

²⁸ “I am giving them everlasting life, so they will never perish. And no one is able to snatch them out of My hand.

²⁹ “My Father, who gave them to Me, is greater than anyone else, and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.”^a

³⁰ “I and the Father are one.”^a

³¹ Again the Jewish leaders picked up stones to stone Him.

³² So Jesus asked them, “My Father has enabled Me to do many good deeds in your presence. For which of these deeds are you planning to stone Me?”

³³ “We are not going to stone you for any good you have done, but for blasphemy; because you, a mere man, are setting yourself up as being God!” the Jews retorted.

³⁴ “Is it not written in your Law, **Yes, As I have told you, you are gods**?”^a Jesus replied.

³⁵ “So God gave the title of ‘gods’ to those to whom His message was addressed, and the words of God cannot be nullified.

all things to work together for good for His true followers. See v 10b and Romans 8:28.

10:10a 1 Corinthians 2:9.

10:17a Jesus willingly laid His life down so that we might be saved. He now calls each of us to willingly lay our life down in service to Him, so that others may be saved. Afterward, we are promised an eternal life of total fulfillment in great happiness and glory.

10:22a Known today as Hanukkah.

10:27-29a What a comfort this promise is to the true follower of Christ. But it is obvious that the

promise is only to those who pay close attention to Christ’s instructions and continue to obey them. No man or angel, nor any other outside power, no matter how powerful, can take us from our all-powerful God. But Christ does not promise that we will be protected in spite of our own willfulness and neglect, or if we fail to continue to persevere in saving faith. See Colossians 1:21-23, and the note.

10:30a See note on John 5:19. They are “one” in total unity of will and love, and they are also one in their united will and set purpose to protect each believer who makes a practice of following Jesus.

³⁶“Are you right then in saying to the One whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God?’

³⁷“If I am not doing the same things My Father does, don’t believe Me.

³⁸“But if I am, then even if you have trouble believing what I say, at least believe that the miracles are of God. Then you will come to realize and understand that the Father is indeed working in and thru Me,^a and that I am working in agreement and in united purpose with the Father.”

³⁹So again they tried to arrest Him,^a but He escaped out of their hands.

⁴⁰Then He returned across the Jordan River to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there He stayed.

⁴¹Many people came to Him there. “John didn’t perform any miracles,” they said, “but all the things he said about this Man have certainly been proved to be true.”

⁴²Many became believers in Him there.

The Death of Lazarus

11 A man by the name of Lazarus became sick. He was from Bethany, the town where Mary and her sister Martha lived.

²This was the same Mary who later poured perfume over the Lord’s feet and then wiped His feet with her hair.^a It was her brother Lazarus who was now sick.

³So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, saying, “Lord, the one You treasure so dearly is very sick!”

⁴But when Jesus got the message He said, “The final result of this sickness will not be death. But thru it, God will reveal His glory, and the Son of God will be glorified by it.”

⁵Jesus was very fond of Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

⁶Still, even when He heard that Lazarus was sick, He remained where He was for two more days.

⁷Then He said to His followers, “Let’s go back

now to Judea.”

⁸“But Teacher!” His followers objected, “only recently the Jewish leaders there tried to kill You, and You’re going back there again?”

⁹“Are there not twelve hours of daylight?” Jesus replied. “If anyone walks in the daytime, he doesn’t stumble, because he sees by means of light from the sun.

¹⁰“But a man does stumble if he walks during the night without a light, because he has no light in himself.”^a

¹¹Then He added, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep. But I’m going there to wake him up.”

¹²“Lord,” His followers replied, “if he’s sleeping, he’ll get well!”

¹³But Jesus meant that Lazarus had died, while they thought He was speaking of resting in sleep.

¹⁴So Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.

¹⁵“And for your sakes I’m glad I wasn’t there. It will help you to believe. But now, let’s go to him.”

¹⁶Then Thomas, who is also called Didymus,^a said to the others, “Well, let’s go with Him, so we can die with Him.”

Jesus Comforts the Sisters

¹⁷When Jesus got to Bethany, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

¹⁸Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem.

¹⁹So quite a number of their Jewish friends had come from the city to comfort Mary and Martha in the loss of their brother.

²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was arriving, she went to meet Him, but Mary remained seated in the house.

²¹“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if You had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died!

²²“But I know that whatever You ask of God, even now, He will grant it.”

²³“Your brother will rise and live again,” Jesus responded.

²⁴“I know he will rise and live again in the resurrection, on the Last Day,” Martha replied.

See vs 37-38. They are one in full agreement. In Deuteronomy 6:4 the word *one* (*echad*) in relation to God means oneness in a collective unity, like a cluster of grapes is one.

10:34a Psalm 82:6.

10:38a 14:10-11; 17:21-23; 1 Corinthians 8:6.

10:39a ... *because He again called God His Father.*

11:2a See 12:3.

11:10a Where there is no light for the eye to receive to transfer to the brain, there is no light within man to direct him. This is also true spiritually.

11:16a His name, meaning the Twin, is Thomas in Hebrew and Didymus in Greek. He was sometimes called Thomas, other times Didymus.

11:25a Notice the I am’s of Jesus: The Bread that gives life (6:35); the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5);

²⁵ “I am^a the One who raises the dead and gives them life!”^b Jesus replied. “Whoever is believing in Me, even though he dies, he will come to life again.

²⁶ “And no one who continues to live and believe in Me will ever really die.^a Do you believe that?”

²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe You are the Messiah, the Son of God, whose coming into the world we have so long looked forward to.”

²⁸ After saying this, she went to her sister Mary and whispered, “The Teacher is here and wants to see you.”

²⁹ On hearing this, Mary hastily got up and went to Him.

³⁰ Jesus hadn’t yet come into the town, but was still at the place where Martha had met Him.

³¹ When the Jews, who were in the house comforting Mary, saw her quickly get up and leave, they followed her, saying, “She’s going to the tomb to weep there.”

³² As soon as Mary arrived at the place where He was, and saw Jesus, she fell at His feet. “Lord!” she said, “if You had been here my brother wouldn’t have died.”

³³ Upon seeing her weeping, and the Jews who were with her also weeping, Jesus was greatly stirred and deeply moved.

³⁴ “Where have you laid him?” He asked.

“Lord, come and see,” they replied.

³⁵ Tears then began flowing down Jesus’ face.

³⁶ “Look!” the Jews remarked. “See how dearly He loved him.”

³⁷ Still others said, “Couldn’t this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept him from dying?”

Lazarus Raised Back to Life!

³⁸ With continued deep emotion, Jesus now approached the tomb. It was a cave, and a large stone had been rolled against the entrance.

³⁹ “Roll the stone away,” He said.

“But Lord!” exclaimed Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time the smell will be awful! He’s been dead four days!”^a

⁴⁰ “Didn’t I tell you,” Jesus responded, “that if you

would believe, you would see the glorious power of God?”

⁴¹ So they rolled the stone away. Then Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, thank You for listening to Me.

⁴² “I know, of course, that You always listen to Me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, so that they may believe that You sent Me.”

⁴³ After saying this, He loudly shouted, “Lazarus, come out here!”

⁴⁴ And out walked the man who had been dead! He was wrapped in burial cloth from his hands to his feet, and a cloth also covered his face. Then Jesus instructed them, “Unwrap him, so that he may move about freely.”

The Plot to Kill Jesus

⁴⁵ Upon seeing what Jesus had done, many of the Jews who had come with Mary now believed in Him.

⁴⁶ But some of them went off to the Pharisees and told them what He had done.

⁴⁷ So the chief priests and Pharisees called a meeting of the Council, and said, “What are we really doing about this man who’s performing all these miracles!

⁴⁸ “If we let Him continue on like this, everyone will believe in Him. Then the Roman army will move in and destroy both our Temple and nation!”

⁴⁹ One of them was Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year, and he declared, “You men don’t understand the situation at all!

⁵⁰ “Don’t you realize that it’s better for us that one man should die for the people, than that the whole nation should be destroyed?”

⁵¹ He didn’t say this of his own accord, but, since he was High Priest that year, he was inspired by God to prophesy that Jesus was about to die for the whole nation.

⁵² But Jesus would not die only for that nation, but also in order that He might gather into one body all the children of God who are scattered far and wide.

the Gate (10:7); the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14); the Resurrection and the Life (v25); the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6); the True Vine (15:1-5). Jesus is the answer to mankind’s needs in every dimension, both in this life and in the life hereafter.

11:25b What greater claim could He make to being Divine. All the knowledge, wisdom, and power to impart, restore, and maintain life was in Him. And He could impart or restore life now, as

well as later.

11:26a What Jesus is saying here is *And no one who continues to live in obedience to Me and believes in Me for salvation will ever really die.* See Hebrews 5:9; Colossians 1:23.

11:39a The situation was impossible—but not for God!

11:56a There was new excitement because of the recent raising of Lazarus and the public order for

⁵³ So from that day on they seriously plotted to kill Him.

⁵⁴ For that reason Jesus no longer went about openly among the Jews, but He went from there into the town of Ephraim, which is close to the desert. And there He remained with His followers.

⁵⁵ The Jewish Passover was approaching, and many from all over Israel and all parts of the world went up to Jerusalem several days before the Passover to purify themselves.

⁵⁶ And they kept looking for Jesus, asking one another as they stood about in the Temple area: "What do you think? Do you think He'll even show up at the Feast?"^a

⁵⁷ Both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he should alert them, so they could arrest Him.

Mary Anoints Jesus at Bethany

12 Now six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived. (He was the dead man whom Jesus had brought back to life.)

² They made a dinner for Jesus there; Martha served it and Lazarus was one of those who ate at the table with Him.

³ Mary had obtained about a pint of pure nard perfume,^a which was very expensive, and she now came and poured it over Jesus' feet^b and wiped his feet with her hair, so that the fragrance of the perfume filled the whole house.

⁴ Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, then spoke up. He was one of Jesus' followers, the one who was about to betray Him.

⁵ "That perfume must have cost as much as a laboring man could earn in a whole year!"^a he fumed. "Why wasn't it sold, and the money given to the poor?"

⁶ He didn't say this because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief. He had charge of the money bag, and he used to steal from what was put into it.

⁷ "Leave her alone!" Jesus told him. "She has

kept this for the day of My burial.

⁸ "You will always have the poor with you, but you won't always have Me."

⁹ A great number of people found out that Jesus was in Bethany, and they went there, not only on His account, but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead.

¹⁰ So the chief priests plotted to kill Lazarus too,
¹¹ because he was the reason that many of the Jews were leaving them and believing in Jesus.

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

¹² The next day a large crowd of those who had come to the Feast heard that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem.

¹³ So they took palm branches and went out to meet Him, shouting as they went,

"Hosanna!"^a

"God bless the One who comes in the name of the Lord! **The King of Israel!**"^b

¹⁴ Having located a young donkey, Jesus was now riding upon it, just as the Scripture predicted:

¹⁵ **Don't be afraid, people of Israel. Look! Your King is coming in meekness,^a sitting on the colt of a donkey.^b**

¹⁶ His followers didn't know at the time why Jesus rode a donkey. But after He was glorified, they remembered that this was written about the Messiah,^a and that they had actually brought the donkey to Him and put Him on it.

¹⁷ And those in the crowd who had been with Jesus when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, kept telling others about it.

¹⁸ In fact, one of the main reasons the crowd went to meet Him was because they had heard He had performed this miracle.

¹⁹ In desperation the Pharisees said among themselves, "Just look at that! We're getting nowhere. Look! The whole world is running after him!"

Jesus Predicts His Death

²⁰ Now among those who had come to Jerusalem

the arrest of Jesus.

12:3a A perfume extracted from the spiked nard plant in the Himalayas.

12:3b The custom of the time was to lie on couches as they ate, with the feet stretched out away from the table.

12:5a Literally *300 denarii*. A laboring man earned one denarius (a small silver coin) per day.

12:13a Psalm 118:25-26. See Matthew 21:9a note.

12:13b Zeephaniah 3:15.

12:15a Zechariah 9:9. A king never rode on a donkey, but always on a horse or in an expensive carriage. Notice the modesty, and absence of pomp and display of worldly wealth and power. His trust was in the power and wisdom of God.

12:15b Zechariah 9:9.

12:16a Luke 19:29-35.

12:25a See Matthew 16:24-26; Mark 8:34-38; 10:29-30; Luke 9:24, and notes.

12:26a ... *wants to be a Christian* ...

to worship at the Feast were some Greeks.

²¹They went up to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said, "Sir, we would like to talk with Jesus."

²²Philip told Andrew. Then together they went and told Jesus.

²³But Jesus' answer was, "The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

²⁴"I tell you the absolute truth, that unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it never becomes more than one single kernel. But if it dies, it produces many others.

²⁵"If you love your life and insist on living it as you please, you will lose the life you could have lived forever. But if you will despise and reject all you could have gained to satisfy yourself in this brief life, you will save your life for all eternity.^a

²⁶"Whoever wants to serve Me^a must follow Me.^b And wherever I am, My servant will also be.^c Anyone who faithfully serves Me will indeed be honored by My Father.

²⁷"Now My soul is in deep agony, and what shall I say? Shall I plead with My Father, 'Father, save me from what's just ahead!?' But the reason I came to earth was to endure this time of suffering.

²⁸"Father, glorify Your name!" When He said that a voice out of Heaven said, "I have already glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

²⁹When the crowd standing there heard the voice, some said it had thundered. Others said, "An angel spoke to Him."

³⁰"This voice came for your benefit," Jesus

explained, "not Mine.

³¹"Now comes the time when justice will be administered,^a and Satan, the ruling prince of this world,^b will be stripped of all his power.

³²"And if I am lifted up from the earth on a cross, I will draw people from all mankind to Myself."

³³He said this to point out the way He would be put to death.

³⁴At this, the people spoke up, saying, "We've heard from the reading of the Law that the Messiah will live on forever,^a so how is it that you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up on a cross'? Who is this Son of Man You're talking about?"

³⁵"The Light is still with you," Jesus replied, "but only for a short time. Keep on living in it while you still have the Light, so that darkness doesn't overtake you. The one who walks in darkness doesn't know where he's going.

³⁶"While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become children of Light."^a After saying this Jesus left, and hid Himself from them.

The People Still Refuse to Believe

³⁷In spite of the many miracles He had performed in their presence, most of the people still refused to believe in Him.

³⁸This fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, who had said:

"Lord, who has believed what we told them? And who has recognized You and Your power in the miracles You performed?"^a

³⁹But they couldn't believe because, as the Lord

12:26b ... *must imitate Me; do what I do, suffer and endure what I suffer and endure, take a stand where I would take a stand, love what I love, hate what I hate, obey what I teach and command.*

12:26c Jesus simply emphasizes here the statement in the previous sentence. See 1 John 2:6. The promise comes in the next sentence.

12:31a The Greek text here is *Krísis*, meaning *judgment* or *administration of justice*. Jesus here refers to the administration of God's justice upon man's sin, which He Himself would soon receive on the cross as the Savior of mankind. We can now either accept Him as our Lord and Savior, and receive the promise of God's honor in Heaven (v26), or continue in our selfishness and sin and soon receive God's administration of justice upon ourselves in Hell and the Lake of Fire.

12:31b He is also called *the god of this world*. 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 6:12. The death of Christ on the cross was the beginning of the end for Satan, and for all who persist in following Satan.

12:34a Psalm 110:4; Daniel 2:44; Isaiah 9:6-7.

12:36a ... *walking in the Light and holding up the Light for others.*

12:38a Isaiah 53:1.

12:40a Isaiah 6:10. This does not mean it was God's plan that they should not be converted. But when they refused to listen and see, God locked them up in that unbelief for His own good reasons and purposes. And God foresaw that this would happen.

12:45a Christ was not speaking about His physical appearance, but about the wisdom and power by which He spoke and acted by means of the Holy Spirit. Both what He said and did were of the Father. Time and time again, He stated that He said only what the Father told Him to say. And all of His miracles were done by power given Him by the Father.

Thru Christ, the people were both hearing the Father speak and seeing the Father's power in the miracles. The Father was working in and thru Christ in both wisdom and power.

said to Isaiah:

⁴⁰ “I have blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they would be unable to see with their eyes or understand with their hearts, to turn back and be healed by Me.”^a

⁴¹ Isaiah said this because he had been given a vision and had seen Messiah’s glory. That’s why he was able to report these things about Him.

⁴² Still, even among the leaders, many believed in Him. But because of the Pharisees, they didn’t confess Him openly, so they wouldn’t be put out of the synagogue.

⁴³ They were more concerned about the approval of men than the approval of God.

⁴⁴ But Jesus had loudly declared, “The one who believes in Me does not believe only in Me, but in the One who sent Me.

⁴⁵ “When you look at Me, you are actually seeing the One who sent Me.”^a

⁴⁶ “I have come as Light into the world, so that all who are believing in Me would no longer continue to live in darkness.

⁴⁷ “But if anyone hears what I’m saying, and still refuses to accept the message and act upon it, I am not judging him, because I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.

⁴⁸ “But whoever keeps on rejecting Me and persists in refusing to accept the message I have for him has a judge, however—the very words which I have spoken will judge him on the Last Day.”^a

⁴⁹ “This is true, because I have not spoken of My own accord, but the Father who sent Me did Him-

self give Me orders as to what to say. He even gave Me the very words to say.

⁵⁰ “And I know that your faithful acceptance of the message He has commanded Me to speak will result in everlasting life for you. So I have given you the exact message My Father told Me to give.”

Jesus Washes His Followers Feet

13 Jesus knew before the Passover Feast began that the time had come for Him to leave this world and return to the Father. He had always had genuine love and concern for His followers in this world, and He loved them to the very end.

² Here’s what happened after preparations for the Passover meal had ended. The devil had already put it into the heart of Simon’s son, Judas Iscariot, to betray Jesus.

³ And even though Jesus was fully aware that the Father had given Him complete power over everything, and that He had come from God and was returning to God,

⁴ He got up from the table, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist.

⁵ Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the feet of His followers, wiping them with the towel He had tucked into His waist.

⁶ When He came to Simon Peter, Peter objected, saying, “Lord, are you really intending to wash my feet?”

⁷ “You don’t understand now what I’m doing,” Jesus replied, “but you will later on.”

12:47-48a At His first coming, Christ did not come to *judge* the world. He came to give words of life and words of warning, and to give His life as a sacrifice to ransom sinners. When He comes the second time, however, He will be Judge of all. All true Christians will be judged in regard to their labor and service for Him. 1 Corinthians 3:1-15. Not even a cup of cold water given to a fellow-servant of the Lord will be overlooked. Matthew 10:42. This judgment will be to determine the rewards to be received by each true Christian.

Christ will likewise judge the nations at His return, to determine who among the non-believers will be allowed to continue to live upon the earth throughout the Millennium and beyond. Matthew 25:31-46. Then at the end of the first thousand years, the ungodly dead will be judged and punished according to their works. Revelation 20:7-15.

Every human being, both sinners and followers of the Lord, will be *judged by the words* the Lord has *spoken*, and by the words given by inspiration through

His apostles. How important it is then to read God’s message to us humans and to accept it for what He actually said, and not for what we want to believe He meant by what He said.

The sinner has his reasons for not believing what Christ said—but he will be *judged* by these very *words* nonetheless. How much greater will be the judgment of those many who say “yes” to the Lord and to His *words*, but who then twist and distort His message to make it say what they want to believe.

Our churches today—even many evangelical churches—are filled with many who claim to be believers and followers of the Lord, but who are still not converted to the Lord! These unchanged people, no matter how pious they may look or speak, are as lost as the most outspoken unbeliever. Isaiah 55:6-11; Jeremiah 29:13. *Prepare to meet your God!* Amos 4:12. See Appendix 247, page 520.

13:8, 10a 1 John 1:8-9.

13:10b Meaning *anyone who is trusting in Jesus as his Savior from the penalty and power of sin,*

⁸“You will never wash my feet!” Peter declared.

“If I don’t wash you,” Jesus replied, “you can have no part with Me.”^a

⁹“In that case, Lord,” Peter strongly proposed, “don’t wash only my feet, but also my hands and my head.”

¹⁰“Anyone who has taken a bath^a is clean all over,” Jesus replied, “and doesn’t need to wash more than his feet.^b And you men are clean—but not all of you.”

¹¹Jesus knew who His betrayer was, so that’s why He said, “You are not all clean.”

¹²When He had finished washing their feet and had replaced His clothing, He returned to the table. Then He said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you?”

¹³“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’, and rightly so, because that’s what I am.

¹⁴“If I, then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.

¹⁵“I have set an example for you; as I have done to you, you should also do to one another.

¹⁶“I state a very obvious truth when I say that a servant is not superior to his master, nor is a messenger superior to the one who sent him.

¹⁷“If you understand what I’m saying here, you’ll be happy and blessed if you put this code of conduct into practice.

¹⁸“I am not speaking about all of you—I know the ones I have chosen—but the Scripture is to be fulfilled that states:

One who ate My food with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.^a

¹⁹“I am telling you this now, before it happens, so that when it takes place you will have further proof, enabling you to believe with certainty that I am the One you’ve been waiting for.^a

and has surrendered to Him as the Lord of his life.

13:18a Psalm 41:9.

13:19a ... *the Son of God, the Messiah, the King of Israel, the Savior of the world!*

13:23a ... *on a couch at the table* ...

13:25a Evidently a whispered conversation, as no one else seems to have been in on it, according to v 28.

13:29a The Passover Festival continued for seven additional days as the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:4-8), so some of the followers thought that Jesus had directed him to buy the food needed for the next several days.

14:1a A person cannot remain in a state free from a troubled mind unless he is continually trusting in the Lord. Isaiah 26:3. The moment we get our minds off the Lord and on circumstances, we

²⁰“I tell you the absolute truth: Anyone who welcomes any messenger I send, welcomes Me; and whoever welcomes Me welcomes the Father who sent Me.”

Jesus Predicts His Betrayal

²¹After saying this, Jesus was deeply disturbed. Then He solemnly declared, “I tell you the absolute truth—one of you will betray Me.”

²²His followers looked at one another, utterly puzzled as to whom He could be talking about.

²³One of His followers, the one Jesus especially loved, was reclining^a close to Him.

²⁴So Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus whom He was talking about.

²⁵That follower then leaned back on the couch against Jesus and whispered, “Lord, who is it?”^a

²⁶“It’s the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the sauce,” Jesus told him. And when He had dipped it, He gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

²⁷Immediately after Judas had received the bread, Satan entered into him. “What you’re planning to do,” Jesus then told him, “do it quickly.”

²⁸But none of the others at the table knew why He said this to him.

²⁹Since Judas was the one who carried their money, some thought that Jesus had sent him to buy the additional food needed for the Feast,^a or that he was to give something to the poor.

³⁰So after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out into the night.

The New Command

³¹After Judas left, Jesus said, “The Son of Man has now been glorified, and God has been glorified thru Him.

become troubled. The Lord can overcome any circumstance! See Romans 8:28; John 14:27.

14:2a The *Father’s house* is no doubt the heavenly Jerusalem, the *city that’s laid out in the form of a square*, and more than likely in the form of a cube, as it is 1,500 miles long, wide, and high (a large house indeed), which will come down to earth after the first 1,000 years of Christ’s reign on earth. Revelation 21:9-27; 22:1-5.

The Christians’ home will be in the new Jerusalem even before this beautiful city comes to earth. We will commute from that city to earth, to carry out our responsibilities of reigning with Christ. Daniel 7:18,27. And Christ promises here that He is *preparing* a home in that great and beautiful city for each individual who honestly allows Him to be both Lord and Savior in his life consider-

³²“And if God has been glorified thru the Son, God will thru Himself also glorify the Son, and He will glorify Him without delay.

³³“My dear children, I will be with you for only a short while longer. You will look for Me, but I now say the same to you as I said to the Jewish authorities, ‘You are not able to reach the place where I’m going.’

³⁴“I have a new commandment to give you: Love one another! Continue to love one another in the same way that I have loved you.

³⁵“This is how everyone will know that you truly are My followers, if you actively reveal your love for one another with genuine and generous concern.”

Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial

³⁶“Lord, where are You going?” Simon Peter questioned.

“You’re not able to follow Me now to where I’m going,” Jesus replied, “but you will follow Me later.”

³⁷“But Lord,” Peter persisted, “why am I not able to follow You now? I’ll even lay down my life for You!”

³⁸“Are you really willing to die for Me?” Jesus responded. “I tell you the absolute truth, Peter, before a rooster crows you will have disowned Me three times.

Jesus Is the Way to the Father

14 “Never allow yourselves to be anxious and worried about anything. Always trust in God. Likewise, always trust in Me!^a

²“In My Father’s house^a there are many dwelling places. Would I have told you I was going away to prepare a place for each of you if it were

not so?

³“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will also return and take you to be with Me, so that you may be where I am.”^a

⁴“So you know where I’m going, and you also know the way there.”

⁵“Lord,” Thomas spoke up, “we don’t know where You’re going, so how can we know how to get there?”

⁶“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” Jesus replied. “No one can come to the Father unless he comes thru Me.

⁷“If you had known Me, you also would have known My Father. From now on you do know Him, and have even seen Him.”^a

⁸“Lord,” Philip now broke in, “allow us to see the Father and we’ll be satisfied.”

⁹“After I’ve been with you for all this time,” Jesus replied, “do you still not recognize Me, Philip? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father.^a How can you then say, ‘Allow us to see the Father’?

¹⁰“Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me? I don’t even speak these words I’m speaking to you of My own accord^a; but it’s the Father, who lives within Me, who is continually speaking to you thru Me.^b

¹¹“You must believe Me when I tell you that by My Spirit I live in the Father, and by His Spirit the Father lives in Me. But if you cannot trust what I say, then at least allow the miracles themselves to convince you to believe Me.

¹²“I tell you the absolute truth: The one who believes in Me will do the same works that I have done. In fact he will do even greater things than these, because I am going to My Father.^a

¹³“And there with My Father, I will do whatever

ation. Matthew 7:21-27.

14:3a As wonderful as a home in Heaven will be, the greatest part of all will be that we will be with the Lord. *From that moment on, we will be with the Lord forever.* 1 Thessalonians 4:17. And He hasn’t even begun to reveal what His great plans are for those who will live with Him in the great eternity that stretches out before us in such incomprehensible magnitude. 1 Corinthians 2:9. But every test, trial, hardship, temptation, and persecution here will be worth it all.

We have only this very brief life in which to take a stand for Christ in the midst of hostility, but we will have all of eternity in which to enjoy the rewards of a faithful life and service here.

14:7a A good paraphrase here could be: “If you had known My real purpose in coming to earth as a

man, you also would have known the great plan and design of My Father in regard to My death and resurrection. From now on, you will know the plans and goal that God has in mind. And by seeing Me you have even seen Him.”

14:9a If the Father had come instead of the Son, He would very likely have taken on the same appearance as Jesus did. He would certainly have done and said the very same things that Jesus did, because Jesus did and said only what the Father told Him to. 12:45-50; Hebrews 1:3a.

14:10a Deuteronomy 18:18; John 17:8.

14:10b 1 Corinthians 8:6.

14:12a ... and you will carry on ...

14:13a To ask in Jesus’ name means to ask for the same reason and purpose that Jesus would ask if He were in your place and situation.

you may ask in My name,^a so that the Father may be glorified thru the Son.

¹⁴“If you ask for anything in My name,^a I will do it.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

¹⁵“If you really love Me, you will do what I tell you to do, and not do.^a

¹⁶“And when you do, I will appeal to the Father, and He will give you another Helper^a who will stay with you forever.

¹⁷“He is the Spirit of Truth.^a People of the world cannot receive Him because they’re not looking for Him, nor do they have any acquaintance with Him. But you know Him, because He is constantly with you, and very soon now He will live within you.^b

¹⁸“I won’t abandon you as helpless orphans. I will come back to you.

¹⁹“In just a short while, the world will no longer see Me, but you will.^a Because I will live again, and you will too.

²⁰“When that time comes, you will know that I am in My Father, that you are in Me, and that I am in you.

²¹“Whoever not only knows what I command but also continues to do what I tell him to do is the one who truly loves Me. And whoever truly loves Me will be loved by My Father. I also will love him, and will reveal Myself to him.”

²²“Lord,” Judas questioned (not Judas Iscariot), “how is it that You will reveal Yourself to us but not to the world?”

²³“The person who truly loves Me will do what I tell him to do,” Jesus replied. “My Father will love him for that, and We will both come to him and make Our home with him.

²⁴“But the person who does not truly love Me is one who is not doing what I’ve told Him to do.^a And remember, the words you are hearing are not Mine, but are from the Father who sent Me.

²⁵“I am telling you these things now while I am still with you.

²⁶“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send to represent Me, will teach you everything you need to know, and will remind you of everything I have told you.

²⁷“What I am leaving with you is peace of mind and heart. And this gift which I bequeath to you is

14:14a Before you pray, ask yourself, “How would Jesus pray if He were in my situation right now?” Also consider the other needful conditions for prayer to be answered. See Luke 11:9-10 note.

14:15a Finis Dake in *Dake’s Annotated Bible* lists 1,050 commands in the New Testament.

14:16a The Holy Spirit. Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-39; Luke 11:5-13.

14:17a He is the Holy Spirit, the One who teaches us and enables us to understand spiritual truth.

14:17b Ever since Jesus died on the cross for the sins of mankind and then rose back to life again, the Holy Spirit comes to live *within* a person when he becomes a true follower of Jesus. See vss 21-23 and 20:19-22. And *the proof* that one is a true follower is that his desire, purpose, and sincere aim now is to do all that Christ has commanded His followers to do, as Christ states in v 15. See also Romans 2:1-10; 6:16; Hebrews 5:9.

Jesus also promises the anointing, or baptism, of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16; Acts 1:4-5) *to those who persevere in asking Him*. Luke 11:13.

14:19a ... see Me *by faith, knowing that I am with you because I promise to always be with you, especially when you are obedient in sharing the Great News with others*. Matthew 28:18-20.

14:24a And remember, God will not accept selective obedience. It’s all or nothing. Is God living within you by His Spirit? Does the Spirit of God witness within your spirit that you are a child of His?

Romans 8:12-16.

14:27a God knows everything about any problem or situation you may ever experience. So talk that problem over sincerely with the Lord, and trust Him to help you work it out. He has the solution!

14:28a Many believe that in saying that the Father was greater than He, that Jesus was speaking about His human nature in relation to the nature of God. The Pulpit Commentary goes into various beliefs concerning this statement of Christ, but we will not take the space here to go into all of them. But they quote from a Bishop Bull from his book entitled, *The Defense of the Nicene Creed*, published by Oxford Press, quoting from his three chapters on *The Subordination of the Son*. Bishop Bull says there, “The Father alone has the Divine nature from Himself, but the Son has received the Divine nature from the Father. It is the Father that is the Fountain, Origin, and Principal of the Divinity which is in the Son.”

The Scriptures are very plain that all that Jesus, the Son of God, is and has, has been given Him by the Father. Jesus Himself makes this very clear in the 17th chapter of John, especially in the first nine verses, and v 24. See also Matthew 28:18.

Notice that Jesus is telling His followers that the reason they should be very happy for Him was that when He arrived home in Heaven, He would be with One who was greater than He. If He didn’t mean that, why did He say what He did? His followers

not like the temporary, unsatisfactory, empty peace that the world gives. I give you the tranquil, uninterrupted, everlasting peace that I possess. So do not allow yourselves to be worried or fearful about any situation whatever.^a

²⁸“You heard Me tell you, ‘I am going away, and then I am coming back to you.’ If you loved Me the way you should, you would be very happy for Me when I tell you that I am going to the Father, because My Father is greater than I am.^a

²⁹“I have told you this now before it all happens, so that after it happens you will be able to believe.^a

³⁰“I will no longer be talking with you at length, because the ruler of this world is coming.

³¹“Satan has no claim on Me, but what happens will take place so that the world may know that I love the Father, and that I am doing what the Father has told Me to do. Let’s get up now and be on our way.

The Vine and the Branches

15 “I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Owner and Gardener of the vineyard.

²“If any branch in Me doesn’t bear fruit, He cuts it off. And He keeps pruning every branch that

continues to bear fruit so it will be clean and bear even more fruit.

³“You are already pruned by the words I have spoken to you.

⁴“But you must remain united to Me.^a Then I will remain united to you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself, without remaining united to the vine, neither can you, unless you remain united to Me.

⁵“I am the Vine, you are the branches. If you remain united to Me, and I united to you, you will continue to bear much fruit. But apart from Me you can’t do a thing.

⁶“Anyone who does not continue to be united to Me is thrown out as a branch, and then withers. Such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire and burned.

⁷“But if you remain united to Me, and allow My teachings to inspire and guide you in all your thoughts and actions,^a you can pray and ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

⁸“My Father is glorified when you bear much fruit. And it is by bearing much fruit that you give proof that you are indeed true followers of Mine.^a

⁹“I have loved you in the same way that the

already knew that the Father was greater than the Son in His human state.

For an extensive account as to who Jesus Christ really is, see Appendix 246, page 512.

14:29a ... *that I have indeed gone back to the Father to do all I said I would do for you, and be all I said I would be for you.*

15:4a See Colossians 1:23.

15:7a Or *and allow My teachings to continually control and guide your life* ...

15:8a Well, just what does the Lord mean by bearing fruit? Six considerations come to mind. They are:

1) You must *daily* read God’s message to you (the Bible) in order to know how God would have you live. Someone has so rightly said, “The reading of this Book will keep you from sin, but sin will keep you from reading this Book.” Which will you choose—your sin, and its end result, or the reading of God’s word in order to overcome sin? So by reading God’s message to us *daily* we will be able to present to Him *the fruit of our obedience*. Hebrews 5:9.

2) The second means of bearing fruit is our prayers. God’s love for us is great beyond our understanding or imagination. And God intensely desires our love in return. We should tell God in prayer many times a day how much we love Him. Any marriage that is lacking in love will soon fall apart. The same is true with our relationship with

our Lord. By our prayers, we present to God *the fruit of loving fellowship*.

3) Another means of fruit-bearing is our witnessing about Christ and His salvation to others. Read the notes on Romans 10:9-10. This can be called *the fruit of our lips*.

4) Then there’s the need for Christian fellowship. We need to get together often with others who love our Lord. We need their encouragement, and they need ours. This can be called *the fruit of the encouragement of our brothers and sisters in Christ*.

5) Always be willing to take a stand for the truth and righteousness. This takes courage, but you can always count on the Lord being with you when you speak out for Him and for what’s right. Others will be strengthened and encouraged when they see and hear the stand you take. Don’t be afraid to speak out! This can be called *the fruit of our courage when confronting the enemy*.

6) Another fruit that the Lord expects to find in your life is the determination to resist all temptation to sin. You may fail at times, but then immediately ask the Lord’s forgiveness, and ask the forgiveness of others if others are involved. This can be called *the fruit of our total surrender to our Lord*.

Whatever you do, never allow yourself to become lukewarm in your love for the Lord. As the Lord has

Father has loved Me. But you must remain in My love.

¹⁰ “You will continue to be loved by Me if you continue to do what I tell you to do, just as I continue to be loved by My Father because I always do what He tells Me to do.

¹¹ “I have told you these things so you may continue having My joy deep within yourselves, and so you may later have fullness of joy!^a

¹² “What I’m telling you to do is to love one another in the same way that I have loved you.

¹³ “No one has greater love than the one who willingly lays down his life for his friends.

¹⁴ “And you are My friends if you continue doing whatever I command you to do.^a

¹⁵ “I no longer call you servants, because a servant doesn’t know what his master is actually doing. But I’ve called you My friends because I have revealed everything to you that I heard from My Father.

¹⁶ “You did not choose Me. I chose you. And I have appointed you to go out and bear fruit, and to continue bearing fruit, so that My Father may grant whatever you ask in My name.^a

¹⁷ “Again, what I am actually commanding you to do is—Love one another!

The World’s Hatred for True Followers

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, just remember that it hated Me before it hated you.

¹⁹ “If you belonged to the world, the people of the world would treat you with affection as one of their own. But they hate and despise you now because you are no longer one of them, because I have chosen you and taken you out from among them.^a

²⁰ “Remember what I told you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they have closely scrutinized^a whatever I’ve said,^b they will do the same to you.

so definitely shown here, it is possible to apostatize and fall away from Him. Be sure to read Colossians 1:23, and the notes there. The Lord wants you to be a great overcomer, and an inspiration and challenge to others in the same determination. God bless you in your great adventure in bearing fruit for the Lord and in bringing great joy to Him by continuing to do so.

But in all reality, you cannot bear fruit for the Lord by your own strength and determination alone. You need God’s help. So do look to Him as your constant guide and strength. Proverbs 3:6.

15:11a ... *in far greater measure than you can*

²¹ “They will do all these things to you because you are My authorized agents, and because they are not acquainted with the One who sent Me.

²² “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have no excuse for their sin.

²³ “Whoever hates Me also hates My Father.

²⁴ “If I had not done things among them that no one else ever did, they wouldn’t be judged guilty of sin. But now, even after seeing all these miracles, they still hate both My Father and Me.

²⁵ “But this has happened so that the words written in their Law might be fulfilled:

They hated Me for no good reason.^a

²⁶ “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, who comes forth from the Father, He will tell you all about Me.

²⁷ “And you also will continually tell others about Me, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

16 “I have told you all these things to keep you from falling away.

² “They will expel you from the synagogues. In fact, the time is coming when they will think they are serving God by killing you.

³ “They will do these things to you because they don’t know either the Father or Me.

⁴ “But I have told you these things now, so that when the time comes that they cruelly persecute you, you will remember that I warned you that this was how they would mistreat you. I didn’t warn you earlier because I was with you.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

⁵ “But now I am going back to the Father, who sent Me, and not one of you has asked Me with any real concern as to where and why I am going.

⁶ “Instead, you are filled with sorrow for yourselves because of the things I’ve told you.^a

⁷ “But I tell you the truth when I say that it will

now even imagine. 1 Corinthians 2:9.

15:1-14a The solemn words of our Lord in these verses clearly state the necessity of perseverance. The lesson of six of our Lord’s parables teach the need of perseverance in the faith. And the necessity is plainly implied in numerous other parables. The six parables are: The Sower (Luke 8:4-15), The Watchful Servants (Luke 12:35-40), The Unfaithful Servant (Luke 12:42-48), The Tower Builder (Luke 14:28-30), The Savorless Salt (Luke 14:34-35), and the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13).

15:16a See John 14:13-14 notes.

15:19a ... *to pursue far more noble and eternal*

be for your good that I leave. Because if I don't leave, the Helper won't come. But if I go, I will send Him to you.

⁸“When He comes, He will convict the people of the world about the evil lives they are living, about their failure to live the upright lives that God demands that they live, and about Judgment Day.

⁹“He will convict them of their sin of refusing to believe^a in Me.

¹⁰“He will also convict them of My honest and upright life, proved by My Father receiving Me into His presence,^a where you will no longer see Me.

¹¹“Finally, He will convict them about the inescapable judgment that awaits them; because sentence has already been passed on the ruler of this world.^a

¹²“I still have many things to tell you, but you're not able to take them in at the present time.

¹³“But when the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into the full truth. He will not speak His own message, but will give you the message that has been given to Him for you. And He will tell you what will happen in the future.

¹⁴“He will glorify Me, because He will take the things that belong to Me and tell you about them.

¹⁵“All that the Father has belongs to Me. That's what I meant when I said that He will take the things that belong to Me and tell you about them.

¹⁶“In a short while, you will no longer see Me. Then a short while later, you will again see Me, because I will be leaving you to go to be with the Father.”^a

Their Grief Would Turn to Joy

¹⁷This caused some of His followers to ask each other, “What does He mean, saying, ‘In a short while, you will no longer see Me. Then, a short while later, you will again see Me,’ and, ‘because I will soon go away to the Father’?”

¹⁸“What does He mean by a short while?” they

murmured. “What's He talking about?”

¹⁹Jesus knew they wanted to ask Him about this, so He said, “Are you questioning My saying, ‘In a short while, you will no longer see Me, and a short while later, you will see Me again’?”

²⁰“I tell you the absolute truth: You will weep and wail, but the people of the world will be extremely glad. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will later turn to joy.

²¹“A woman giving birth to a child is in pain because her time has come. But as soon as the baby is born she forgets all her pain and anguish, because of her joy that a child has been born into the world.

²²“That's how it is with you. For the present moment, your minds are racked with pain. But I will see you again, and then your hearts will exult with joy. And no one will be able to take your joy from you.

²³“When that time comes, you will no longer bring your requests to Me. I tell you the absolute truth, My Father will grant you whatever you ask in My name.^a

²⁴“Until now you haven't asked My Father for a single thing in My name. But now you must make a practice of asking, and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

²⁵“I have spoken these things to you in symbolic language. But the time is coming when I will no longer use figurative speech in speaking to you, but will inform you about the Father in plain words.

²⁶“At that time, you will make requests of the Father in My name. And I'm not saying that I will plead with the Father to answer your prayers.

²⁷“No! Because the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from Him.

²⁸“I came into the world from the Father, and now I am leaving the world to return to the

rewards.

15:20a The primary meaning of the Greek word here, *tayréo*, means to *keep watch over*. This certainly applies in this context, as the Pharisees were closely watching Jesus, doing their best to trap Him into saying something that would ruin Him.

15:20b ... *for the purpose of having something to use as evidence against Me* ...

15:25a Psalm 35:19; 69:4.

16:6a They were thinking only of themselves, of what they would lose.

16:9a See John 6:35 and Acts 16:31 notes regarding what it means to believe in Jesus.

16:10a Christ's ascension to the Father (Luke

24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11) was evidence of His uprightness. God would not have given power to an imposter to ascend into the heavens as Christ did.

16:11a If Satan has already been sentenced, then be sure that all other rebels against God and right living will likewise be sentenced to Hell, and later to the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15.

16:16a He was referring here to His death, resurrection, and ascension to Heaven.

16:23a See John 14:13-14 notes.

16:30a He knows even the questions in our minds, as well as the answers. He had just answered their questions of vs 17-18 without their asking.

Father.”

²⁹“Ah,” said His followers, “now You are speaking plainly and not in veiled language.

³⁰“Now we know that You know everything, and that You don’t need anyone even to ask You their questions.^a Because of this we believe that You truly came from God.”

³¹“Do you really believe Me now?” Jesus responded.

³²“But take notice—an hour is coming, and in fact it’s here now, when you will all scatter, each to his own place, leaving Me alone. But I am never alone, because the Father is always with Me.

³³“I have said all these things to you so that you may realize that you can look to Me alone for peace and happiness. In this world you will experience all kinds of trouble, but be fearless and courageous! I have overcome the world!”^a

The Prayer of Jesus

17 After Jesus had finished talking to His followers about these things, He looked toward Heaven and said, “Father, the time has come. Glorify Your Son, so that Your Son may glorify You.

²“Even as You have given Him authority over all humankind, now glorify Him so that He may give everlasting life to all whom You have given Him.

³“And this is what eternal life will mean to them: They will come to really know^a You, the only One who is truly God.^b And they will also come to really know^a Jesus Christ, whom You sent to them.

⁴“I have glorified You on the earth, and I have completed the work You gave Me to do.

⁵“And now, My Father, glorify Me with Yourself with the glory I had with You before there ever was a world.^a

⁶“I have revealed what You are really like^a to the men whom You took out of the world and gave to Me. They were Yours, and You gave them to Me. They have listened carefully and conscientiously to the message You gave Me for them.

⁷“They now understand that everything You have given Me, of whatever nature, is indeed from

You. Because I have given them the very message You gave Me to give them.

⁸“They have accepted what I told them, and have come to believe with absolute certainty that I came from Your presence, and that You sent Me.

⁹“I am praying for them—not for the world, but for those whom You have given Me, because they are the ones who belong to You.

¹⁰“All I have is Yours, and all You have is Mine. And I have been glorified thru them.^a

¹¹“Now I will no longer be in the world. But while I return to You, they will remain here on earth. Holy Father, preserve them faithful and true to You and Your cause—these whom You have given Me—in order that they may be of one heart and mind in feeling, plan, and purpose, in the same way that We are.

¹²“While I was with them in the world, I kept them dedicated to worshiping and obeying You. I carefully guarded those You gave Me, and not one of them perished except the son of destruction.^a And even this was in fulfillment of what the Scriptures said would happen.^b

¹³“Now I am returning to You. But I’m saying these things while still in the world so that they may^a experience the full measure of My joy in themselves.

¹⁴“I have given them Your message. Now the world crowd hates them, because they are no longer a part of it, just as I am not.

¹⁵“I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You protect them from falling to Satan’s cunning and deceitful temptations.

¹⁶“They are not a part of the world crowd and its low aims and ambitions anymore than I am.

¹⁷“Cleanse them by Your truth, because all that You have revealed in Your Great and Marvelous News is the truth.

¹⁸“Just as You sent Me into the world, I am now also sending them into the world.

¹⁹“I am dedicating Myself to You to be of the greatest possible benefit to them, so that as they read and study Your truth, and meditate on it, they will become wholly dedicated to all that You are

16:33a And thru Christ’s help, we can conquer it too. In a Bible Concordance look up references to *overcame, overcome, overcomes, and overcometh*. See Philippians 2:13 and Appendixes 217 and 218.

17:3a See 1 Corinthians 13:12.

17:3b Previously stated in Isaiah 30:27.

17:5a See v 24.

17:6a Literally *revealed Your name*. The word *name* is often used to designate the unique quali-

ties of the person. Jesus revealed the kind of person God is by delivering God’s unique message and by validating that message by miracles thru God’s power.

17:10a Masculine, plural. Therefore, referring to His eleven faithful followers, not material things. Jesus also desires to be glorified in and thru you.

17:12a One who is in a constant state of being destroyed, referring here to Judas, the traitor.

and desire.

²⁰“I am not praying only for these, but also for all who will believe in Me thru their testimony, preaching, and teaching.

²¹“My prayer for all of them is that they will be of one heart and mind, just as You and I are, Father. Just as I am in agreement and united in purpose with You, and You are in agreement and united in purpose with Me, may they also be of one heart and mind in agreement and united in purpose with Us,^a so that the world may be convinced that You sent Me.

²²“And I have given them the same glory that You gave Me, so that they may truly be one in heart and mind in glorious unity in the same way that We are—

²³I in them and You in Me—so that they may be perfected with one heart and mind in order that the world will definitely know that You sent Me, and that You love them just as much and to the same extent that You love Me.^a

²⁴“My Father, I want all whom You have given Me to also be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory—the glory which You gave Me—because You loved Me even before the world was created.

²⁵“O Righteous Father, the people who mainly love what they can experience and gain in this present life don’t know You. But I know You, and these followers of Mine know that You sent Me.

²⁶“I have told them Your plan and purpose, and what You are like, and I will continue to do so, so that the same love that You have for Me may be in them, and that I Myself may live in them.”

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

18 When Jesus finished praying, He went out with His followers and crossed the Kidron Brook. There was a garden there, and He and His followers entered it.

²Judas, the betrayer, also knew the place, because Jesus had gone there often with His followers.

³And look! Here comes Judas now, leading a detachment of Roman soldiers and some Temple police from the chief priests and Pharisees, carry-

ing lanterns, torches, and weapons.

⁴Then Jesus, knowing everything that would happen to Him, stepped forward and asked them, “Who are you looking for?”

⁵“For Jesus, the Nazarene,” they said.

“I am He,” Jesus replied.

⁶Judas, who was in the very act of betraying Him, was also standing there with them. And when Jesus said, “I am He,” they all stumbled backward and fell to the ground.

⁷Once again He asked them, “Who are you looking for?”

“For Jesus, the Nazarene,” they again replied.

⁸“I already told you that I am He,” Jesus responded. “If I am the one you are looking for, then let these other men go their way.”

⁹He said this so that what He had said earlier would come true, when He had prayed, “I haven’t lost even one of those You gave Me.”

¹⁰Simon Peter had a sword, and he now drew it and slashed out at a servant of the High Priest and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus.

¹¹“Put your sword back in the sheath,” Jesus commanded Peter. “Shall I not drink the cup of suffering that the Father has given Me?”

Jesus Taken to Annas

¹²Then the Roman soldiers, together with their commanding officer and the Temple police, arrested Jesus and tied Him up.

¹³First they led him to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year.

¹⁴Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders, “It’s better that one man should die, than all the people.”^a

Peter Denies Jesus

¹⁵Only Peter and one other follower followed Jesus. Since the other follower knew the High Priest, he was allowed to enter the courtyard of the High Priest along with Jesus.

¹⁶But Peter was left standing outside near the door. So the other follower went out and persuaded the doorkeeper to let Peter in.

17:12b Psalm 41:9.

17:13a ... *fully understand what the situation is, and as a result* ...

17:21a See John 5:19 note.

17:23a The Greek *kathōws* means *just as, as ... so, likewise, to the same degree that*. As a true, born-again follower of the Lord, have you really considered how deep and wide and genuine God’s

love really is for you? Yes, you! God loves you—He really does—as much as He loves His Son Jesus! See Ephesians 1:11, and the notes, and Psalm 103:11.

18:14a See John 11:47-52.

18:19a This is Annas. At this period the office of High Priest was filled and vacated at the whim of whoever was Roman governor at the time. Annas

¹⁷ “You’re also a follower of this man, aren’t you?” the girl in charge of the door challenged Peter.

“Not me!” Peter replied.

¹⁸ It was cold, so the servants and the Temple police had made a charcoal fire, and they stood there now, warming themselves. Peter went over and stood there too, warming himself.

The High Priest Questions Jesus

¹⁹ Meanwhile, the High Priest^a questioned Jesus about His followers and about His teaching.

²⁰ “I have spoken openly to the world,” Jesus replied. “I always taught in synagogues or at the Temple, where the Jews always assemble. I have said nothing in secret.

²¹ “So why do you question Me? Question those who heard Me as to what I told them. They know what I said.”

²² When Jesus said that, one of the Temple police officers standing nearby struck Him a blow with the palm of his hand, demanding as he did so, “Is that the way you answer the High Priest?”

²³ “If I was wrong in saying what I did,” Jesus replied, “give evidence of the wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike Me?”

²⁴ Then Annas sent Him, still tied up, to Caiaphas the High Priest.

Peter’s Second and Third Denials

²⁵ As Simon Peter was standing there warming himself, he was again asked, “Aren’t you also one of his followers?”

But Peter again denied it, saying, “No, I am not!”

²⁶ Then one of the servants of the High Priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, “Didn’t I see you with him in the garden?”

²⁷ But again Peter denied it—and immediately a rooster crowed.

had been dismissed by this time, but he still held tremendous power and influence, to the extent that five of his sons and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, held the priesthood in almost unbroken succession. Caiaphas held the title of High Priest at this time, but Annas was still considered the virtual High Priest by many Jews, because of his age, ability, and dominant personality.

18:28a They were not concerned about eating the pascal lamb. They had all eaten that the evening before. They were concerned about the Passover feast (the Feast of Unleavened Bread) which continued for seven days after the Passover meal.

Jesus Before Pilate

²⁸ From the residence of Caiaphas, they led Jesus to the Roman governor’s palace. It was now early morning, and in order to keep from being defiled, the Jews didn’t enter the palace themselves, so that they might eat during the Passover festival.^a

²⁹ So Pilate, the governor, went out to them and asked, “What charges are you making against this man?”

³⁰ “If he weren’t a criminal, we wouldn’t have turned him over to you!” they retorted.

³¹ Pilate then said, “Take him yourselves, and judge him by your own law.”

“But we’re not allowed to put anyone to death,” the Jews responded.

³² By demanding death by the hands of the Romans, they would fulfill Jesus’ prediction of the kind of death He was about to die.^a

³³ Then Pilate went back into the palace and sent for Jesus. “Are you the King of the Jews?” he questioned.

³⁴ “Is this your own question?” Jesus replied. “Or did others say this about Me?”

³⁵ “Do you think I’m a Jew?” Pilate retorted. “It’s your own people and the chief priests who’ve turned you over to me. What have you done?”

³⁶ “My Kingdom is not of this world,”^a Jesus replied. “If My Kingdom were of this world, then My servants would have fought to keep Me from being turned over to the Jewish authorities.^b But the truth is, My Kingdom is not of this world.”

³⁷ “So you are a king,” Pilate responded.

“You speak the truth in saying that I am a king,” Jesus replied. “It was for this purpose that I was born. And the reason I came into the world was to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who sincerely wants to know the truth listens to what I have to say.”

³⁸ “And what is truth?” Pilate questioned. But without waiting for an answer, he again went out

18:32a In John 3:14 and 12:32-33, Jesus had predicted He would die by crucifixion. This was the Roman form of capital punishment, not the Jewish form. So both the Romans and the Jews killed Jesus. All the world had sinned and was lost, and all the world was involved in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, which now enables God to forgive all who come to Him thru Jesus.

18:36a That is, *the origin and nature of My Kingdom is not of this world.*

18:36b There was no danger then that His subjects would fight to establish His Kingdom. His dominion is over the heart, subduing evil passions

to the Jewish authorities and said:

"I don't find this man guilty of any crime.

³⁹"But you have a custom that I release one prisoner to you at the Passover season. So, do you want me to release to you the 'King of the Jews'?"

⁴⁰At this they all shouted, "No! Not him! Release Barabbas!" Yet Barabbas was a robber.

Jesus Sentenced to Death

19 Then Pilate ordered that Jesus be taken away and whipped with a scourge.^a

²Following this, the soldiers twisted some branches with long sharp thorns into a crown, which they put on His head, after which they put a purple^a robe on Him.

³Then one after another they came up to Him, shouting, "Hail! King of the Jews!"—and then repeatedly striking Him with blows to the face.

⁴Again Pilate went out to the crowd and said, "Now look, I'm bringing this man out to you again to let you clearly understand that I find him not guilty."

⁵When Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said, "Look! Here's the man!"

⁶But the moment the chief priests and Temple police saw Him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

"You take him, then, and crucify him," Pilate responded, "because I find absolutely nothing to charge him with!"

⁷"We have a law that concerns His case," the Jewish authorities shouted back, "and according to that law he must die! He has set himself up as being the Son of God!"

⁸When Pilate heard this, he was more frightened than ever.

⁹He took Jesus back into the palace and questioned Him again. "Where are you from?" he asked. But Jesus didn't answer.

¹⁰"Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate demanded. "Don't you realize that I have power to have you nailed to a cross or power to set you

free?"

¹¹"You would have no power whatever over Me," Jesus replied, "if it hadn't been given you from God above. But the man^a who turned Me over to you has committed the greater sin."

¹²From that moment on, Pilate tried to set Him free. But the Jews kept shouting:

"If you release this man you are no friend of Caesar! Anyone who sets himself up as a king is declaring himself to be in rebellion against Caesar!"

¹³When Pilate heard that charge, he brought Jesus out and seated himself on the judge's seat in a place called The Stone Pavement. In Hebrew it's called Gabbatha.

¹⁴It was then almost noon, when preparations were being made for the special Sabbath^a that would follow the Passover, and for Passover week. Pilate then addressed the Jews standing there, saying, "Look! Here is your King!"

¹⁵"Away with him! Get rid of him!" they stormed furiously. "Crucify him!"

"Shall I crucify your King?" Pilate asked.

"We have no king but Caesar!" the chief priests shouted back.

¹⁶So he surrendered to what they demanded and handed Him over to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led Him away.

Jesus Is Crucified

¹⁷They made Him carry His own cross to the place called The Place That Looks Like a Skull. In Hebrew it's called Golgotha.

¹⁸There they nailed Him to a cross. Two others were crucified at the same time, one on each side, and Jesus in the middle.

¹⁹Pilate also had a sign made, and had it nailed to the cross. It read:

**JESUS THE NAZARENE
THE KING OF THE JEWS**

²⁰Many of the Jews read the sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city,

and corrupt desires, and by revelation of the truth, bringing His subjects to indeed love God and man.

19:1a The Roman scourge consisted of a handle, to which several cords or leather thongs were fastened, weighted with jagged pieces of bone or metal, and sometimes with spikes, to make the blows more painful and effective. Up to 39 lashes with the scourge were then painfully inflicted.

The punishment was so severe that the victim usually fainted, and often died from it. And this was

only part of the suffering our Lord endured to free us from the guilt of our sins.

19:2a *Purple*, color of royalty, used here in mockery of Christ's claims.

19:11a Caiaphas, the High Priest.

19:14a See v 31, and Matthew 28:1 note.

19:24a Psalm 22:18.

19:26a The apostle John.

19:29a A cheap, sour wine consisting of vinegar mixed with water.

and the sign was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

²¹The chief priests of the Jews then complained to Pilate. “Don’t write, ‘The King of the Jews,’” they said, “but that he claimed to be King of the Jews.”

²²“What I have written, I have written!” Pilate defiantly replied.

²³After the soldiers had crucified Jesus they divided His clothing into four parts, a part for each soldier. His tunic, however, was woven from top to bottom without a seam.

²⁴“Let’s not rip it apart,” they said among themselves. “Let’s throw dice to decide who gets it.” In doing this they fulfilled the Scripture, which says,

“They divided My clothing among them, and threw dice for My tunic.”^a

And that was exactly what the soldiers did.

²⁵Standing near the cross now was Jesus’ mother, His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

²⁶Seeing His mother, and His follower whom He especially loved^a standing nearby, Jesus said to His mother, “Dear woman, look! Here is your son.”

²⁷Then to His follower He said, “Look, there is your mother.” From that time on this follower received her into his own home.

The Death of Jesus

²⁸Following this, so that the Scriptures might be completely fulfilled, and knowing that everything else had already been accomplished, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.”

²⁹There was a jar full of vinegar wine^a there. So they filled a sponge with the vinegar and lifted it to His mouth^b on a stalk of the hyssop plant.

³⁰Immediately after Jesus had received the vinegar, He said, “It is finished.” Then, bowing His head, He gave up His spirit and died.

³¹Meanwhile, the Jewish authorities had asked Pilate to have the legs of the dying men broken,^a and their bodies removed, because it was the day of Sabbath preparation, and they didn’t want the bodies to remain on the crosses on the Sabbath, because this was a special Sabbath.^b

³²So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the

two men crucified with Jesus.

³³But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they didn’t break His legs.

³⁴But one of the soldiers thrust a spear into His side, and immediately blood and water flowed out.

³⁵The one telling you about these things actually saw them happen. I’m telling the truth. I’m telling you these things which I know to be the truth, so that you also may believe.

³⁶These things happened in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, which predicted,

“Not one of His bones will be broken.”^a

³⁷And another Scripture says,

“They will look at the One into whose side they had plunged a spear.”^a

The Burial of Jesus

³⁸After this, Joseph from Arimathea, a follower of Jesus, but a secret follower because of his fear of the Jewish authorities, asked Pilate for permission to remove Jesus’ body. And Pilate granted permission. So he came and took the body away.

³⁹Nicodemus, who had earlier visited Jesus at night, also came, bringing a mixture of about a hundred pounds of spices, a mixture of myrrh and aloes.^a

⁴⁰Then they took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, which is the burial custom of the Jews.

⁴¹There was a garden in the area where Jesus was crucified, and in the garden was a new tomb in which no one had yet been buried.

⁴²So because it was the Jewish day of Preparation for the Sabbath and Passover week, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

The Tomb Found Empty!

20 Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb. There she discovered that the large stone had been rolled away from the entrance!

²So she hurriedly ran and found Simon Peter and the other follower, the follower whom Jesus especially loved, and exclaimed, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they have taken Him!”

19:29b Psalm 69:21.

19:31a ... to hasten death ...

19:31b See Matthew 28:1 note.

19:36a Exodus 12:46; Psalm 34:20.

19:37a Zechariah 12:10.

19:38-39a Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, two highly placed Jews, and both members of the

Sanhedrin, are identified as Messianic Jews. So even at the highest level of Jewish religious authority, not all of Israel rejected Christ, as some imply.

20:8a ... that someone had taken the body from the tomb.

20:9a Psalm 16:8-11.

20:23a The Greek word used here, *aphíami*, is a

³So Peter and the other follower immediately started for the tomb, both of them running.

⁴But the other follower outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

⁵As he leaned inside and looked, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he didn't go in.

⁶Behind him came Simon Peter, who ran right into the tomb when he arrived. He also saw the linen cloths.

⁷But the face cloth that had been around Jesus' head wasn't lying with the other cloths. It had been folded up and laid in a place by itself.

⁸Then the other follower also went in, the one who had reached the tomb first. And he saw and was convinced.^a

⁹At that time, they still didn't know about the Scripture that said He must rise from the dead.^a

¹⁰Then they returned to the place where they were staying.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene!

¹¹By that time, Mary had returned and was standing outside the tomb, crying. And as she wept, she leaned inside and looked into the tomb.

¹²There she saw two angels dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other where His feet had been!

¹³"Woman," they asked her, "why are you crying?"

"Because they took my Lord away," she sobbed, "and I don't know where they have put Him."

¹⁴After saying this, she looked behind her, and there she saw Jesus standing, but she didn't recognize Him.

¹⁵"Woman, why are you crying?" He asked her. "Who are you looking for?"

She thought He was the gardener, so she said, "Sir, if you carried His body away, tell me where you put Him, and I will go and get Him."

¹⁶"Mary!" Jesus addressed her. Whereupon she whirled around full toward Him, and exclaimed in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher!").

¹⁷"Don't keep hanging on to Me," Jesus protested, "because I haven't yet gone up to My Father. But go now to My brothers and tell them that I am

indeed soon going up to My Father and your Father, to My God, and your God."

¹⁸So Mary Magdalene hurried to Jesus' followers and exclaimed, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them His message.

Jesus Appears to His Followers!

¹⁹That same Sunday evening, the followers were gathered together behind locked doors, because of their fear of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, there was Jesus standing in the room with them! "Peace be with you," He said to them.

²⁰After saying this, He showed them His hands and His side. His followers were overwhelmingly overjoyed at seeing Him.

²¹Then again He said to them, "Peace be with you. Just as the Father sent Me, I now also send you."

²²After saying this, He breathed on them, and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

²³"Those whom you now lead to a cancellation of their sins^a will indeed receive forgiveness. But as for those whom you neglect, or fail to lead to this pardon, they will remain unforgiven."

Jesus and Thomas

²⁴Thomas, however, one of the Twelve (the one called the Twin), wasn't with them when Jesus appeared to them.

²⁵When the others later told him, "We have seen the Lord!" his response was:

"Unless I see the scars from the nails in His hands, and put my finger on those scars, and put my hand where the spear went into His side, I won't believe it."

²⁶Eight days later, His followers were again indoors, and this time Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus again came and stood among them, and said:

"Peace be with you."

²⁷Then He said to Thomas, "Examine My hands with your finger. And reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting, and believe!"

²⁸"My Lord and My God!" Thomas exclaimed.

²⁹"Thomas, now you believe because you have

legal term which implies that legally God no longer has any record of our sins, when we accept and obey the Great News according to His terms. Hebrews 5:9; Psalm 103:12.

This is a solemn responsibility the Lord has given to all of us who are His followers. Luke 24:33 reveals that not only the ten were present to receive this commissioning. This witnessing of the Great News

to others is the responsibility of every person who has received for himself God's forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:9-10; Ezekiel 33:1-9.

20:31a Acts 16:30-31.

seen Me,” Jesus said. “Happy and blessed are those who believe without seeing.”

The Purpose of This Book

³⁰ Now Jesus performed many other miracles in the presence of His followers, which are not recorded in this book.

³¹ But these have been written down so that you may believe that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the Son of God, and that you may have eternal life by believing in His name.^a

Jesus Appears to Seven Followers

21 Sometime later, Jesus appeared to His followers along the shore of Lake Tiberias. It happened this way:

² Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the two sons of Zebedee, and two other followers of Jesus were together.

³ “I’m going fishing,” Simon Peter informed them.

“We’ll go with you,” they volunteered. So they immediately went out and got into the boat. But they didn’t catch a thing that night.

⁴ Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore, but His followers didn’t recognize Him.

⁵ “Young men!” He called to them, “you don’t have any fish there, do you?”

“No,” they replied.

⁶ “Throw your net out on the right side of the boat and you’ll find some,” He said. So they threw the net out, and then they weren’t able to haul it in because of the mass of fish in it.

⁷ “It’s the Lord!” the follower whom Jesus especially loved said to Peter. When Simon Peter heard it was the Lord, he threw his outer cloak around himself, because he was stripped to the waist, and jumped into the water.

⁸ The others, however, came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish. They weren’t far from shore, only about a hundred yards.

⁹ When they got on land, they saw a charcoal fire burning with some fish on it, and bread close by.

¹⁰ “Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught,” Jesus requested.

¹¹ So Simon Peter went over and pulled the net ashore. It was filled with 153 large fish! Still, even with so many fish, the net wasn’t broken.

¹² “Come and have breakfast,” Jesus invited. Not one of His followers dared to ask Him who He was, because they knew it was the Lord.

¹³ Then Jesus took up the bread and served them, and did the same with the fish.

¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus had appeared to His followers after He had risen from the dead.

Jesus Talks to Peter

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he answered, “You know that I love You.”

“Then feed My lambs,” He replied.

¹⁶ Again, a second time He asked him, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?”

“Yes, Lord,” he replied, “You know that I love You.”

“Then be a shepherd to My sheep,” He charged him.

¹⁷ Then a third time He asked, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?”

It really hurt Peter that Jesus asked him three times, “Do you love Me?”

So he replied, “Why, Lord, You know everything; You know that I love You.”

“Then feed My sheep,” Jesus commanded.

¹⁸ “I am telling you the absolute truth when I tell you that when you were younger, you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you get old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you, and you will be taken where you won’t wish to go.”

¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then He added, “Faithfully follow Me!”

²⁰ Turning around, Peter saw the follower Jesus especially loved following them, the one who had leaned over against Jesus at the supper and had asked, “Lord, who’s going to betray You?”

²¹ On noticing him, Peter asked Jesus, “But Lord, what about him?”

²² “If I should choose that he survive until I return,” Jesus replied, “why should that concern you? Your need is to concern yourself about faithfully following Me.”

²³ So the report got out among the brothers that this follower would never die. But Jesus didn’t say, “He will never die.” He only said, “If I should choose that he survive until I return, why should that concern you?”

²⁴ The follower mentioned here is the one who has given this testimony concerning these happen-

ings and wrote this record. And we know that what he has told us is the truth.

²⁵Jesus did many other things—so many, in fact, that if they were all described in detail, I suppose that the world itself would not have room for all the books that would be written. So be it!

Because God's love for everyone in the world is so overwhelmingly great, He gave His incomparable Son as His Lamb to be sacrificed, to endure extreme suffering and shame, and then die, in order that He might make amends for the sins of all mankind, so that whoever is believing in Him may not perish but have everlasting life."

—John 3:16

The Old Rugged Cross

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame,
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

Oh, that old rugged cross, so despised by the world,
Has a wondrous attraction for me,
For the dear Lamb of God left His glory above,
To bear it to dark Calvary.

In the old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine,
A wondrous beauty I see,
For 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died,
To gain pardon and glory for me.

To the old rugged cross I will ever be true,
It's shame and reproach gladly bear;
Then He'll call me someday to my home far away,
Where His glory for ever I'll share.

Chorus:

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
Till I exchange my own cross for a crown.*

*Words and music by George Bernard.
Copyright expired. Now in the Public domain.*

* It is not Christ's cross that we will lay down (as implied in the original wording of the hymn) but our own cross, which Christ said we must take up. See Matthew 10:38; 16:24, and the notes.

THE ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

Dear Theophilus:

In my first report to you about the amazing happenings here, I wrote about all that Jesus both did and taught from the very beginning of His ministry until the day He was taken up into Heaven.

²But before He was taken up, He gave strict instructions (thru the help of the Holy Spirit) to the men He had chosen as His apostles.^a

³Yes, they saw Him alive again after He had suffered for our sins and died, because He revealed Himself to them several times over a period of 40 days. He spoke to them about the Kingdom of God, and proved to them beyond any doubt that He was indeed alive again.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

⁴The last time He was with them, He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem. "You must wait here now,"^a He said, "until you receive the gift I told you about, the gift My Father promised you.

⁵"It's true that John baptized^a the people in water, but in a few days you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit!"

⁶And while they were together there, they asked Him, "Lord, is this the time when You will free us from Rome and give the Kingdom back to Israel?"

⁷"It is not for you to know the dates and periods of time that God has set. He alone has the right to decide such matters," He replied.

⁸"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you will then be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and thruout all Judea and Samaria, and even to the most remote parts of the earth."

Jesus Taken up into Heaven

⁹Immediately after He had spoken those words, while they were still standing there looking at

Him, He began to rise from the earth! And He continued rising into the sky until a cloud hid Him from their view.

¹⁰As they were staring into the sky to get another glimpse of Him going up, all of a sudden two men in white clothing were standing beside them.

¹¹"Why are you men from Galilee standing here staring into the sky?" they questioned. "This Jesus, who has just been taken from you into Heaven, will return in the very same way that you've just seen Him go into Heaven."^a

¹²So they immediately left the hill where they were, called the Mount of Olives, which is about half a mile from Jerusalem, and returned to the city.

¹³When they arrived, they went upstairs into the room where they were staying. This included Peter, James, John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Apphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son^a of James.

¹⁴They were all of one mind, and devoted themselves to unwavering, continuous prayer and earnest pleading. Several women were with them, including Mary, Jesus' mother. His brothers were also there.

Matthew Chosen to Replace Judas

¹⁵One day, when about 120 of the Lord's followers were gathered together, Peter stood up and said,

¹⁶"Brothers and sisters, the prophecy in Scripture about Judas, who guided the mob that arrested Jesus, was bound to come true. This was foretold by the Holy Spirit, speaking thru David.

¹⁷"Because he was one of us, and had a part in this ministry."

¹⁸(This man actually bought a field with the money he got as the reward for his evil deed.^a Then he committed suicide, falling headlong, so

1:2a Or *messengers*.

1:4a Since Christ's crucifixion, they had been back home to Galilee, and had now returned to Jerusalem. Matthew 28:16-20; John 21:1-24.

1:5a Literally *immersed*. See Matthew 3:11.

1:9-11a When Christ returns, He will be seen coming in the clouds of Heaven. Do not be fooled by

any other announcement that He has come or will come in any other way. When He returns *every eye will see Him*. Revelation 1:7.

1:13a Literally *Judas of James*, so we don't know whether he was a son or brother of James.

1:18a Matthew 27:3-10.

that his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out.

¹⁹Everyone in Jerusalem has heard about this. So they've named that field *Akel Dama* in their language, meaning, the *Field of Blood*.)

²⁰"Now in the book of Psalms it is written," Peter continued,

Let his property be desolate. Let no one live there.^a And let someone else take his place.^b

²¹"So it is necessary that from among those who have been with us all the time our Lord Jesus lived with us,

²²from His baptism by John until the day He was taken from us up into Heaven, one of these needs to become a witness with us to testify about the truth of His resurrection."

²³Two men were nominated: Joseph (also called Barsabas) whose last name was Justus, and Matthias.

²⁴Then they prayed, "Dear Lord, You know what's in the heart of everyone. Show us which of these two You have chosen

²⁵to take over this apostolic ministry which Judas turned down to go where he belongs."

²⁶Then they drew lots, and Matthias was chosen. Following that he was counted as an apostle, with the other eleven.

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

2 When it became full daylight on the day of Pentecost,^a the believers were all in peaceful harmony in one place.

²And suddenly, down from the sky came a thundering sound like the roaring of a powerful torna-

do, and it filled the whole building^a where they were sitting.

³Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire that divided and came to rest upon each one of them!

⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in languages they had never learned, as the Spirit gave them the words.

⁵Staying in Jerusalem at that time were godly Jews from every nation on earth.

⁶And when they heard the sound of what was happening, crowds of these Jews converged on the place. And they were stunned, because each of them heard these people speaking in his own language.

⁷Amazed and astonished, they said to each other, "Look, aren't all these who are speaking from Galilee?

⁸"How is it, then, that each of us is hearing them speak in our own native language?

⁹"We're here from Parthia, Media, and Elam. Others are from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia,^a

¹⁰and from both Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the district of Libya around Cyrene. There are also visitors here from Rome, Crete, and Arabia (both Jews and converts to Judaism).

¹¹"And yet we are all hearing them tell of the great things God has done, in our various native languages!"

¹²And they all continued to be amazed and perplexed, asking one another, "What's the meaning of all this?"

¹³But others began to laugh and ridicule.

1:20a Psalm 69:25. The field he bought became a graveyard. Matthew 27:2-10.

1:20b Psalm 109:8. Or *his office as overseer*.

2:1a The Feast of Pentecost, the firstfruits harvest festival, one of the three great feasts of the Jews, takes place 50 days after Passover.

2:2a It was the *men* who stayed in the upper room (1:13), although the women met with them in their room the first day. 1:14. Luke 24:53 informs us that they continually worshiped in the Temple during the daytime. It was no doubt in some area of the Temple complex that this happening took place.

There were 3,000 converts as a result of Peter's preaching that day. That number of people could never have gotten into the upper room. The Greek *oikos* can be translated *house* or *building*.

2:9a Western Turkey.

2:17-18a This is from the prophecy of Joel 2:28-29. This was partially fulfilled on the day of Pente-

cost (Acts 2:1-41), following Christ's ascension into Heaven. And His *Spirit* has been *poured out* on His people in certain measure thruout the centuries ever since. However, if you will read all of Joel 2:28-32 you will see that there is good reason to believe that the greatest outpouring of God's Spirit upon the earth is yet to come.

The promise in Joel 2:23 (faithfully translated in King James and New King James versions) could be symbolic of this outpouring. The outpouring of God's Spirit on the day of Pentecost could have been the seedtime outpouring. Then notice the tremendous, double harvest-time outpouring promised just before God's judgments and harvest. Joel 2:30-31; 3:14-16. These are the same latter-day judgments mentioned in Matthew 24:29; Luke 21:25-26; Revelation 6:12-17.

* * *

The latter-day outpouring of God's Spirit could result in the conversion of the 144,000 Jews of Rev-

"They've just had too much new wine," they sneered.

Peter Speaks to the Crowd

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the eleven other apostles, and with a loud and clear voice he said, "My fellow Jews, those of you who live here in Jerusalem, and all others, listen to me. Let me explain what's happened.

¹⁵ "These people are not drunk, as some of you claim. After all, it's only nine o'clock in the morning!

¹⁶ "But this is what God had the prophet Joel speak of when he said:

¹⁷ **This is what God says will happen in the last days. "I will pour out My Spirit upon people in all nations. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will have dreams.**

¹⁸ **Yes, in those days I will pour out My Spirit on My bondservants, both men and women, and they will prophesy.^a**

¹⁹ **And I will cause wonders to appear in the sky above, and signs on the earth below. There will be blood and fire and billowing clouds of smoke.**

²⁰ **The sun will be semidarkened, and the moon will become blood-red. All this will happen before the coming of the great and glorious Day of the Lord.^a**

²¹ **And it will be that whoever will turn from his sinning and call out to the Lord for mercy and forgiveness^a will be saved."^b**

²² "People of Israel," Peter continued, "listen to me! Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, God proved that He was a Man sent from Him by the miracles, signs, and wonders which He did thru Him among

you. All of you know this.

²³ "This Man was handed over to you by the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. And using the hands of godless men, you took Him and put Him to death by nailing Him to a cross.

²⁴ "But God raised Him back to life again, delivering Him from the agony of death, because it was not possible for death to hold Him in its power.

²⁵ "And here's what David revealed the Messiah would say and do when all this happened:

I know the Lord is with Me all the time. And because He is right here beside Me, I have no reason to be shaken up with fear or concern.

²⁶ **So My heart rejoices and My tongue overflows with praise. And even more than that, My body will rest in hope.**

²⁷ **Because You won't leave My soul in Hades, nor leave the body of Your Holy One in the grave to putrefy.**

²⁸ **You have shown Me the paths that lead to life, and You will fill Me with joy with Your presence.^a**

²⁹ "Fellow Israelites, let me point out some simple facts about the patriarch David who wrote this. He wasn't speaking about himself, because he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is still with us today.

³⁰ "But because he was a prophet, and knowing that God had solemnly promised him under oath that from a descendant of his own physical body He would raise up the Messiah to sit on his throne,

³¹ David was able to look ahead and speak about the resurrection of the Messiah. He knew that the soul of Messiah would not be left by God in Hades, nor would God allow His body to decay in the grave.

elation 7:1-8. It could also be the reason why Paul said that Christ will *present to Himself a glorious church, one having no stain or wrinkle or any other blemish*. Ephesians 5:27. It seems very possible that God plans to give this world the greatest chance it has ever had to become converted to Him, before judgment falls. Even at this writing there are many evidences of God's moving greatly in the hearts of mankind. See Revelation 14:14-16.

We can praise God for the outpouring of His Spirit in wonderful ways today, but still, the greater outpouring seems yet to come. The great outpouring of God's Spirit today could be very insignificant compared to what's still ahead.

2:19-20a See Joel 2:30-31. Shortly following that great latter-day outpouring of God's Spirit, the world can expect to see the fulfillment of these two verses. There will be terrifying judgments upon the earth (Revelation 8:6-13) because the greater por-

tion of mankind will still refuse the greatest witness the world has ever been given, when God's Spirit is outpoured in such tremendous measure.

The *signs* and *wonders* mentioned in these verses will occur in the period immediately preceding the Battle of Armageddon and the return of our Lord to earth to judge the nations and to reign over the earth as King of kings and Lord of lords.

2:21a Literally *call upon the name of the Lord*. See 16:31 note as to what it means to call on *the name of the Lord*. See also 3:19.

2:21b Joel 2:32. Nowhere in Scripture is it stated that the day of God's grace will end. Even during the time of the Great Tribulation, as long as people have life, they will have the opportunity to seek God's forgiveness and eternal life thru Christ the Savior.

2:28a Psalm 16:8-11.

³²“God has raised this Jesus back to life again! We are all witnesses of this fact.”^a

³³“So, having been exalted and seated at the right hand of God, and having been given the Holy Spirit, just as the Father had promised, He has now poured out this which you are both seeing and hearing.

³⁴“Now David did not ascend into the heavens, but he was the one who also said:

The Lord God said to my Lord, “Sit here at My right hand

³⁵until I put Your enemies under Your feet as a footstool.”^a

³⁶“So let everyone in Israel know, without a doubt, that God has made this Jesus, the One you crucified, to be both your sovereign Lord and the promised Messiah!”^a

³⁷When the crowd heard this, they were deeply remorseful, and they questioned Peter and the other apostles, “Men and brothers,” they said, “what should we do now?”

³⁸“Each one of you must repent^a and be baptized^a in the name of Jesus the Messiah, so that your sins may be forgiven,” Peter replied. “Then you too will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

³⁹“Because God’s promise is to you and to your children, and even to all those in distant lands and times, to all whom the Lord our God will call.”^a

⁴⁰He continued to earnestly advise and urgently warn them at great length, finally saying, “I plead with you: Save yourselves from this immoral generation!”^a

⁴¹Then those who gladly received his message were baptized. About 3,000 people were added to the number of Christ’s followers that day.

Life Among the Lord’s Followers

⁴²And they were unwavering in their constant attention to the teaching of the apostles. They also fellowshiped together, and shared their meals together in fellowship and in prayer.

2:32a ... We saw Him several times, and talked to Him, touched Him, and ate and drank with him after his resurrection!

2:35a Psalm 110:1.

2:36a Or *Christ*.

2:38a Both of these words are in the imperative mood. The word *repent* means to *turn from your sin and determine to live from now on in obedience to God*, with God’s help. 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 3:20. Notice again the stated need to repent if one is to gain God’s forgiveness and everlasting life. Without a turning from sin there is no forgiveness.

⁴³A profound sense of awe gripped everyone,^a and many miraculous signs and wonders were being performed thru the apostles.

⁴⁴There was also a deep sense of unity among the Lord’s followers, and they shared what they had with each other.

⁴⁵From time to time,^a they sold their possessions and goods, and gave to others according to their need.

⁴⁶Every day they faithfully met in the Temple courts in great harmony. But they met in various homes for their meals, eating their food together joyfully with sincere thanksgiving.

⁴⁷They were constantly praising God, and always enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord kept adding to their number those who were being saved.

Peter Heals a Crippled Beggar

3 At 3 o’clock one afternoon, the hour of prayer, Peter and John went up together to the Temple.

²As they were approaching the entrance, a man who had been lame since birth was being carried there. Every day he was left at what was called the Beautiful Gate, to beg from those entering the Temple courts.

³Upon seeing Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

⁴They both looked straight at him. Then Peter said, “Look at us!”

⁵So he eagerly gave them his full attention, expecting a gift.

⁶“I don’t have any silver or gold,” Peter said. “But I’ll give you what I do have. In the name of Jesus the Messiah from Nazareth, get up and walk!”

⁷Then he took hold of the man’s right hand and lifted him up. Immediately his feet and ankles became strong.

⁸So he jumped to his feet, stood upright, and

And notice, each convert is to be baptized. This is first of all a command of the Lord Jesus. Matthew 28:19-20. A minister is to baptize all converts, and all converts are to submit to baptism as a powerful picture testimony of what has happened to them. **You dare not consider this or any command of the Lord as optional!** Mark 16:16.

2:39a See Romans 8:28-30.

2:40a ... and from the awful judgment of God that will fall upon it.

2:43a ... even the unbelievers ...

2:45a Implied from imperfect tense.

3:15a ... because we saw Him alive several

began to walk. Then leaping, walking, and praising God, he entered the Temple court with them.

⁹All the people stared at him as he walked about praising God.

¹⁰Then it dawned on them that this was the man who always sat begging at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple! And they were filled with amazement, and wondered what had happened to him.

Peter Speaks in Solomon's Porch

¹¹And as this lame man who had just been healed kept holding on to Peter and John, all the people in amazement came rushing to where they were, in what is called Solomon's Porch.

¹²When Peter saw their astonishment, he said, "People of Israel, why are you so amazed at this? And why do you keep staring at us so intently, as if by our own power or holiness we had enabled this man to walk?

¹³"The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of our fathers—has highly honored His Servant Jesus, the very One you handed over to the authorities. And when Pilate was determined to let Him go, you disowned Him.

¹⁴"You refused to accept the Holy and Righteous One. Instead, you asked that a murderer be released to you.

¹⁵"You killed the Giver of Life! But God raised Him from the dead! He lives! And we are witnesses of this fact.^a

¹⁶"It was by means of our faith in the power of His name, that this man, whom you see and recognize, has been made well and strong. It was by faith inspired by what Jesus could do that has given this man perfect health. The proof of his perfect health is here for all of you to see.

¹⁷"And now, dear friends, I know that you rejected Jesus because you didn't recognize who He was, which is also true of your rulers.

¹⁸"But this is the way God has fulfilled what He

foretold thru all His prophets: that the Messiah would suffer.^a

¹⁹"So now turn from your sinning and be converted.^a This is absolutely necessary so that the record of your sins may be blotted out.^b Then times of refreshing will come to you from the presence of the Lord.

²⁰"And God will again send you Jesus, your Messiah, whom you were promised long ago.

²¹"But the truth is, He must remain now in Heaven until the time comes when the whole earth will be recreated and restored to its former glory,^a as God has prophesied thru all His holy prophets from ancient times.^b

²²"It is also true, as Moses told our ancestors,

The Lord your God will raise up for you from among your own people a Prophet, just as He did me. When He comes, you must listen carefully to everything He tells you, and obey Him.

²³**Anyone who refuses to listen and obey Him will be separated from God's people and utterly destroyed.^a**

²⁴"In fact, Samuel and every prophet who has spoken since, have all spoken about what has now happened.^a

²⁵"You are the descendants of the prophets. It was to your ancestors that God made the promise when He said to Abraham, 'People of all nations on earth will be blessed thru your Offspring.'^a

²⁶"And when God sent His Servant Jesus with His message, He first of all sent Him to you, to bless you by seeking to turn every one of you from the sinful lives you are living."

Peter and John Arrested

4 But while they were still speaking to the people, some priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and several Sadducees broke into their meeting.

²They were thoroughly indignant that Peter and

times after God raised Him from the dead.

3:18a See Psalm 22:1-21; Isaiah 52:14; 53:1-12; Daniel 9:26; Zechariah 12:10.

3:19a Meaning to turn from your determination to live to please yourself, and determine instead to live to please and obey only God.

3:19b Again, the condition you must meet in order to be saved! God will not forgive your sins and blot out the record of your sinning and give you everlasting life thru Jesus unless you turn from your sinning and live to please Him. See 26:18 note.

3:21a This refers to *things*, not *people*. It speaks of the restoration of the earth and sky to their former state, not the regeneration of all people. Even

at the end of the Millennium under Christ's rule, there will be a great rebellion by those who are not regenerated. Revelation 20:7-10.

3:21b Isaiah 2:10-21; 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:5-13; Revelation 6:12-17; 16:17-21, and many more.

3:23a Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19. God still refuses to accept those who wish to obey Him with mere selective obedience. **It's all or nothing!** Matthew 7:13-14, 21-27; Luke 13:23-30.

3:24a And the effects of Christ's coming are continuing to be felt thruout the whole earth.

3:25a Genesis 22:18; 26:4; 28:14. Literally *your seed*, which is singular in the Greek text, referring to Christ. See Galatians 3:16. The word *seed* can

John were teaching the people and telling them that Jesus will raise the dead.

³ So they arrested them and put them in jail until the next day, because it was already late afternoon.

⁴ But many who had heard the message believed, so that the total number of men alone who now followed the Lord grew to about five thousand.

⁵ The next morning, the Jewish rulers, elders, and teachers of the Law met together in Jerusalem.

⁶ Annas the High Priest was there, and Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and other members of the High Priest's family.

⁷ And when Peter and John had been brought before them, they asked them, "By what power, or by whose authority, have you done this?"

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, answered, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

⁹ "If we are being called to task here today for a good deed done for a poor crippled man, as to how he was healed,

¹⁰ then it must be made known to all of you, and to everyone else in Israel, that this man stands here completely well today thru the name and power of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah! It was He whom you crucified! But God raised Him back to life!

¹¹ "He is the One of whom the psalmist said, **The stone which you builders threw out as worthless has become the all-important cornerstone.**^a

¹² "No one else can save us! The name of no other person in all the world has been given to mankind by which we can be saved."

¹³ The Council members were amazed at how bold Peter and John were. They knew they were just ordinary men, who had not been educated in their professional rabbinical schools. Then they realized what being with Jesus had done for them.

¹⁴ And seeing the man who had been healed standing there with them, they couldn't say a word against what Peter had said.

¹⁵ So after sending them out of the Council room, they conferred among themselves.

¹⁶ "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "It's obvious that a remarkable miracle has been done thru them, and everyone living in Jerusalem knows about it. So we can't say it didn't happen.

¹⁷ "But in order to make sure this thing doesn't spread any further among the people, we must

severely threaten them that they must never again speak about or use this name in ministering to anyone."

¹⁸ Then they called them back in and demanded that they stop all speaking and teaching in the name of Jesus.

¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, "Do you really believe that God would say we were doing right if we obeyed you instead of Him? What's your judgment?"

²⁰ "The truth is, we cannot stop talking about the amazing things that we ourselves have both seen and heard."

²¹ But the Council threatened them further, and then let them go. They found it impossible to punish them without starting a riot, because all the people were glorifying God for what had happened,

²² because the man who had been healed by this miracle was over 40 years old.

The Lord's Followers Pray for Courage

²³ After they were released, Peter and John went back to their fellow believers and told them all that the leading priests and elders had said to them.

²⁴ When the others heard the report, they all joined their voices together in prayer to God. "O Lord," they said, "You are God! It is You who made Heaven and earth and the sea, and everything in them.

²⁵ "By the mouth of Your servant David You said: **Why are the people of the world so furious? Why do they vainly imagine they can defeat God's plans?**^a

²⁶ **The rulers of the earth have taken their stand. They have actually joined forces against God Almighty and against His Messiah!**^a

²⁷ "Because Herod and Pontius Pilate did indeed join together with the Gentiles^a and the people of Israel in this city against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You have anointed as the Messiah.

²⁸ "They have done everything that, by Your power and will, You had already decided would be done.

²⁹ "Now, Lord, listen to how they are threatening, and enable us, Your servants, to continue to speak Your message with great boldness.

³⁰ "Stretch out Your hand to heal, and may miraculous signs and wonders be done thru the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

refer to one or many seeds in English, but not so in Greek.

4:11a Psalm 118:22.

4:25a ... *against God Almighty.*

4:26a Psalm 2:1-2. Expect the same vicious opposition against God and His people as this age draws

³¹When they had finished praying, the building in which they were meeting shook! And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and continued to boldly give God's message to everyone.

The Followers Share Their Possessions

³²All of the many believers were of one heart and mind. No one claimed that anything he owned was his own, but they all shared what they had with each other.

³³And with great power the apostles continued to testify about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God richly blessed all of them.

³⁴No one among them lacked anything, because those who owned houses or lands would *from time to time*^a sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales to the apostles.

³⁵They would then distribute the money to each one according to his need.

³⁶For example, Joseph, a Levite born in Cyprus who was called Barnabas by the apostles (which means Son of Encouragement),

³⁷sold some land he owned, and brought the money in and turned it over to the apostles.

Ananias and Sapphira

5 Now a certain man named Ananias, together with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property they owned.

²But, with his wife in agreement, he kept back some of the proceeds, turning over only part of the money to the apostles, while claiming he was giving the whole amount.

³"Ananias!" Peter challenged him. "Why have you allowed Satan to fill your heart so that you would lie to the Holy Spirit, and keep back part of the money you received for the property?"

⁴"Before it was sold, didn't it belong to you? And after it was sold, wasn't the money yours? Why did you plot this thing in your heart? You haven't lied to men. You've lied to God!"

⁵As soon as Ananias heard this he fell down dead. As a result, all who heard about it were terrified.

⁶The young men then came in, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

⁷About three hours later, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

⁸"Tell me," Peter asked her, "was this the full amount you and your husband received for your

property?"

"Yes," she said, "that was the amount."

⁹"How could you dare to conspire together!" Peter challenged her, "and think you could fool the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the men who buried your husband are at the door, and now they will carry you out too!"

¹⁰Instantly she fell down at his feet and died! When the young men came in and found her dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

¹¹So now great fear gripped the whole church and all others who heard what had happened.

Miracles and Wonders

¹²Many miracles and wonders were performed thru the hands of the apostles among the people. By common consent, the believers all met together in the part of the Temple known as Solomon's Porch.

¹³None of the others dared to join them, though they continued to hold them in high regard.

¹⁴But great numbers of new followers of the Lord, both men and women, continued to join them.

¹⁵As a result of the miracles, people even carried the sick out into the streets on beds and couches, hoping that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.

¹⁶And crowds of people kept coming in from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those troubled by evil spirits, and they were all healed!

The Apostles are Persecuted

¹⁷Filled with extreme jealous anger, the High Priest and all his associates, who were members of the Sadducees sect, finally took action.

¹⁸They arrested the apostles and put them in the city jail.

¹⁹But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the jail doors and brought them out, and said,

²⁰"Go and stand in the Temple courts, and keep telling the people all about this new life."

²¹They obeyed, and entered the Temple area at dawn and began to teach.

When the High Priest and his associates arrived, they called together all the elders of Israel for a full meeting of the Council and then sent word to the jail to have the prisoners brought in.

to a close.

4:27a All who are not Jews.

4:34a Implied from imperfect tense.

²²But when the officers arrived at the jail, they couldn't find the prisoners. So they returned and reported:

²³"We found the jail securely locked, and the guards were standing outside in front of the doors, but when we opened the doors and went in there was no one inside!"

²⁴On hearing the report, the High Priest, the captain of the Temple guard, and the chief priests were deeply perplexed as to what had happened to them, and wondered what was going on.

²⁵Then someone came in and told them, "Look, the men you put in jail are standing right now in the Temple courts teaching the people."

²⁶Immediately the captain went with his officers and arrested them. They didn't use force, however, because they were afraid the people might stone them.

²⁷When they brought them in, they made them stand in front of the assembled Council. Then the High Priest brought accusation.

²⁸"Didn't we give you strict orders that you are not to continue to teach in the name of this man?" he challenged them. "But look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching! And you seem determined to make us responsible for his death!"

²⁹Then Peter and the other apostles replied, "We must obey God, not men!"

³⁰"You murdered Jesus by nailing Him to a cross! But the God of our ancestors raised Him back to life.

³¹"Now God has elevated Him to the place of highest honor, at His right hand, to be the Prince and Savior, to give Israel the chance to turn from their sinning and serve and obey God, and receive His forgiveness of their sins."^a

³²"And we are His witnesses concerning these things, and the Holy Spirit is too, whom God has given to those who practice obedience to Him."

³³When the Council members heard this, they were furious, and began talking among themselves about having them put to death.

³⁴Then one of them, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law whom everyone highly respected, stood up. He gave orders that the apostles be taken outside for a brief time.

³⁵Then he said to the Council, "Men of Israel, think carefully about what you are intending to do to these men.

³⁶"Some time ago Theudas appeared on the scene, claiming to be someone great. About four hundred men followed him. But when he was killed, all of his followers scattered, and that was the end of that.

³⁷"Later, Judas from Galilee made his appearance, during the time the census was being taken. He also drew quite a following. But he was also killed, and all of his followers were scattered.

³⁸"In this case, my advice is: Stay away from these men! Leave them alone! Because if this plan and action is of human origin, it will come to nothing.

³⁹"But if it is from God, there is no way that you can overthrow it. In that case, you would find yourselves actually fighting against God."

⁴⁰Convinced by his logic, they called the apostles back in and had them whipped. After again demanding that they no longer speak in the name of Jesus, they let them go.

⁴¹So the apostles left the Council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the sake of Jesus.

⁴²Every day in the Temple courts and in people's homes, they never stopped teaching and preaching the Great News that Jesus is the Messiah.^a

The Seven Chosen to Serve

6 During this time, when the number of followers of the Lord was multiplying, the Greek-speaking Jews complained against the native Jews, claiming that their widows were not given their fair share when the money for food was given out each day.

²So the twelve apostles called a meeting of all the followers, and said, "It doesn't seem right to us that we should neglect the study and ministry of the word of God in order to oversee the distribution of food.

³"So, dear friends, choose seven men from among you who are wise and highly respected, and full of the Holy Spirit. We will then turn this task over to them.

⁴"And we will continually devote ourselves to prayer and to the teaching of God's message."

⁵This arrangement pleased everyone. So they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a Gentile who

5:31a Notice that Peter again states that a turning from our sins to obedience to God is a necessary condition for receiving God's forgiveness. This needs to be made very clear! See 3:19; 26:18. Mere-

ly believing and receiving Jesus as your Savior will never get you to Heaven. He must also be made the Lord of your life! Otherwise you are not converted, not born again, and are still lost.

had earlier been converted to Judaism.

⁶Then they brought these men to the apostles, who prayed and then placed their hands on them as they asked God to bless them.

⁷So God's message continued to go out in ever greater ways, and the number of followers in Jerusalem continued to grow rapidly. And continually there were also large numbers of Jewish priests surrendering in obedience to the faith.

Stephen Is Arrested

⁸Now Stephen was a man full of faith and power, and he was actively engaged in performing great miracles and signs among the people.

⁹But opposition sprang up from some members of what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen. These were men from Cyrene, Alexandria, and the provinces of Cilicia and Asia.^a They confronted Stephen and began arguing with him.

¹⁰But the Holy Spirit gave Stephen such wisdom when he answered that they couldn't refute him.

¹¹So they secretly convinced some men to lie about him and say, "We heard him curse and slander Moses and stir."

¹²That really stirred the people up, including the elders and teachers of the Law. And, rushing at him, they grabbed hold of him and forced him to go with them and appear before the Council.

¹³There they also produced false witnesses, who said, "This fellow never stops making damaging remarks against this holy place and the Law of Moses!"

¹⁴"We even heard him say that this Jesus, the Nazarene, will destroy this Temple and change the customs Moses gave us!"

¹⁵Everyone who sat in the Council looked intently at Stephen, and as they looked into his face, they realized he had the sincerity, fearlessness, and confidence in God of an angel.

Stephen Speaks to the Council

7 "Are these accusations true?" the High Priest demanded of Stephen.

²"Men, both brothers and fathers," Stephen replied, "listen to me! Our God, who is glorious, appeared to our ancestor Abraham when he was still in Mesopotamia, before he went to live in Haran.

³"God told him, 'Leave your country and your

relatives, and come away to a land to which I will direct you.'^a

⁴"So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After his father died, God moved him to this land where you now live.

⁵"But He didn't give him title to any of it, not even to one square foot of it. But He did promise to give it to him eventually as his possession, and to his descendants after him, even before Abraham had any children.

⁶"This is what God told him:

Your descendants will live in a foreign country where the people will enslave and mistreat them for 400 years.

⁷ **Then I will judge the nation that enslaved them. Following that they will leave that country and serve Me in this land.^a**

⁸"Then God gave him the circumcision agreement.^a So when Abraham became the father of Isaac, he circumcised him on the eighth day after his birth. Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of the twelve patriarchs.

⁹"And the sons of Jacob became very jealous of their brother Joseph and sold him into slavery in Egypt. But God was with him and set him free from all his troubles.

¹⁰"He gave Joseph such wisdom that when he was brought before Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, he gained the king's favor. The king then put him in charge of all the affairs of Egypt and of all his personal business.

¹¹"Then famine struck, causing a serious crisis thruout all of Egypt and Canaan. Our ancestors were also unable to find any food.

¹²"But when Jacob heard there was grain in Egypt, he sent his sons on their first visit there.

¹³"During their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was. That was when Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family.

¹⁴"Then Joseph sent a call for his father Jacob, and all his family, 75 people in all, to come to Egypt.

¹⁵"So Jacob moved down to Egypt, and later he and all of our ancestors died there.

¹⁶"Their bodies were carried back to Shechem, where they were placed in the tomb Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor in Shechem for a sum of money.

¹⁷"But as the time drew near for God to do what

5:42a ... the *Christ*.

6:9a The western coast of Asia Minor, which is now Turkey.

7:3a Genesis 12:1.

7:7a Genesis 15:13-14.

7:8a ... as a constant reminder of the promise God had made to Abraham and his descendants. Genesis 17:1-14.

He had promised Abraham, our people grew more and more numerous in Egypt.

¹⁸“Then a king who knew nothing about Joseph came to power.

¹⁹“This man was treacherous. He mistreated our ancestors, even forcing them to abandon their babies to exposure outdoors so they would die.

²⁰“It was during this time that Moses was born. In God’s eyes he was an exceptional child, and for three months, he was cared for in his father’s home.

²¹“When he was finally put outside, Pharaoh’s daughter rescued him and brought him up as her own son.

²²“As a result, Moses was given an education that included all the knowledge of the Egyptians. He was a powerful speaker and a man of outstanding accomplishments.

²³“When he was 40 years of age, he felt a strong urge to visit his own people, the Israelites.^a

²⁴“When he saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, he went to his defense. He avenged the tormented man by killing the Egyptian.

²⁵“He thought his own people would realize that God would use him to rescue them. But that’s not the way they looked at it.

²⁶“The next day he intervened as two Israelites were fighting. He urged them to be kind toward each other, saying, ‘Men, you are brothers, why are you trying to hurt each other?’

²⁷“But the man who was at fault pushed him away, saying, ‘Who made you our ruler and judge?’

²⁸“Are you planning to kill me too, like you killed the Egyptian yesterday?’

²⁹“On hearing this, Moses fled from Egypt and lived as a foreigner in the country of Midian. He had two sons while there.

³⁰“After 40 long years, an angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai.^a

³¹“When Moses saw the burning bush that didn’t burn up, he was amazed at the sight. When he went over to have a closer look, he heard God speaking to him!

³²“‘I am the God of your ancestors,’ God said, ‘the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ Moses was so terrified that he didn’t dare to look at the bush any longer.

³³“Take off your sandals,’ the Lord said, ‘because the place where you are standing is holy ground.

³⁴‘I have indeed seen the cruel treatment of My people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to rescue them. So now I am sending you back to Egypt.’

³⁵“This is the same Moses whom they had rejected, saying, ‘Who made you our ruler and judge?’ He was the very one God did send as their ruler and liberator, giving him the order thru the angel who spoke to him from the burning bush.

³⁶“It was Moses who led them out after performing miracles and signs in Egypt, and also in the Red Sea. And he led them in the desert for 40 years.

³⁷“It was he who later told the people of Israel, **The Lord your God will raise up for you from among your own people a Prophet, just as He did me. You must listen carefully to what He tells you, and obey Him.^a**

³⁸“He is also the one who was in the large crowd of our ancestors in the desert, and with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai. It was he who received the living words from God to pass on to us.

³⁹“But our ancestors wouldn’t obey him. Instead they pushed him aside, and in their hearts they longed to be back in Egypt.

⁴⁰“When Moses was on Mount Sinai they talked to Aaron and demanded, ‘Make us some gods who can give us some leadership! Because we don’t know what’s happened to this fellow Moses who brought us out of Egypt.’

⁴¹“That was the time they made an idol in the shape of a calf. Then they had a celebration in honor of what they had been able to make with their hands, and brought sacrifices to it.^a

⁴²“So God left them and let them worship the stars and planets. As it is written in the book of the prophets:

O people of Israel, it wasn’t for Me that you killed and sacrificed animals for 40 years in the desert, was it?

⁴³ **No, instead you carried with you the tent in which you worshiped the god Moloch and the star of your god Remphan. You made these idols yourselves and worshiped them. For this, I will send you into exile to Babylon and beyond!^a**

⁴⁴“Our ancestors had the tent in which God spoke to them in the desert. Moses made it exactly as God had told him to, according to the pattern that had been shown him.

7:23a There was great love in Moses’ heart for his people, and he longed to see them free from slavery.
7:30a Exodus 3:1-10.

7:37a Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19.
7:41a Exodus 32:1-6.
7:42-43a Amos 5:25-27.

⁴⁵ “Our forefathers, who later became custodians of this tent, brought it with them when Joshua led them in taking the land from the nations that God drove out as they advanced. It stayed here until the time of David.

⁴⁶ “David gained God’s favor, and then asked that he might build a place for the God of Jacob to live.

⁴⁷ “But it was Solomon who finally built the house for God.

⁴⁸ “But the Most High God does not live in houses made by human hands. As the Lord said thru His prophet:

⁴⁹ **Heaven is My throne, and earth is merely My footstool. What kind of a house could you build for Me? Where is the place that I would choose to rest?**

⁵⁰ **Am I not the maker of everything?^a**

⁵¹ “You unbending, stubborn people! Your hearts and ears are always unresponsive! You are always resisting what the Holy Spirit is telling you! That’s what your ancestors did, and now you’re doing the same!

⁵² “Which of the prophets did your ancestors fail to persecute? They even killed those who foretold the coming of the One who is altogether righteous. And now you’ve become His betrayers and murderers!

⁵³ “You received God’s Law thru the ministry of angels, but you haven’t obeyed it!”

Stephen Is Stoned to Death

⁵⁴ As the Council members continued to listen to these accusations, they became more and more furious and began to gnash their teeth at him in rage.

⁵⁵ But Stephen, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked right into Heaven. There he saw our God in His glory, and Jesus standing at His right hand.

⁵⁶ “Look!” he cried out, “I see Heaven opened up, and Jesus, the Son of Man, standing at God’s right hand!”^a

⁵⁷ At this the men yelled their loudest, and, covering their ears, they all rushed at him.

⁵⁸ After dragging him out of the city, the witnesses left their coats with a young man named Saul. Then they^a threw a hail of stones at Stephen in a constant barrage.^b

⁵⁹ As they continued stoning him, Stephen cried out, “Lord Jesus, take me home to be with You!”

⁶⁰ Then he fell to his knees and prayed with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge these men with this sin!” After saying this, he died.

Saul Persecutes the Church

8 Saul gave hearty approval to his being put to death. That day was the beginning of a great persecution that broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all of Jesus’ followers except the apostles scattered thruout Judea and Samaria.

² With great mourning, godly men buried Stephen.

³ But Saul was determined to completely destroy the church. He went from house to house looking for followers of Jesus, dragging off both men and women, and jailing them.

Philip Preaches in Samaria

⁴ But as a result, the scattered followers told people the Great News wherever they went.

⁵ For example, Philip went down to a city in Samaria and preached about Christ to the people there.

⁶ Large crowds paid close attention to what Philip said when they heard about what he was doing, and then saw for themselves the miracles he performed.

⁷ Because many who had evil spirits would scream loudly as the demons left them; and many others, paralyzed and lame, were healed.

⁸ So there was great joy in that city.

⁹ A man named Simon lived there, who for some time had astounded the Samaritans by his witchcraft. He claimed to be someone great.

¹⁰ Everybody, both high and low, were fascinated by him, saying, “This man must get his great power from God!”

¹¹ They kept following him because he had amazed them with his witchcraft for a long time.

¹² But now there were baptisms continually, of both men and women, as they came to believe Philip as he preached the Great News about the Kingdom of God and told them about Jesus Christ.

¹³ Even Simon himself came to believe. After he was baptized, he continually followed Philip, and was constantly amazed at the great signs and miracles he saw being performed.

¹⁴ When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God’s message,

7:49-50a Isaiah 66:1-2.

7:56a ... *evidently standing to honor and welcome His faithful servant to his home and rewards in Heaven.*

7:58a The false witnesses. Under Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 17:7) all witnesses against the one pronounced guilty had to throw the first stones.

7:58b Indicated by imperfect active tense.

they sent Peter and John to them.

¹⁵When they arrived, they prayed for the followers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit,

¹⁶because up to this time, He hadn't yet come down upon any of them. They had only been baptized with reference to the name of the Lord Jesus.

¹⁷So Peter and John placed their hands on them one by one,^a and they received the Holy Spirit.^b

¹⁸When Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given by the placing of the apostles' hands on the followers, he offered them money, saying:

¹⁹"Give me this power too, so that whenever I place my hands on people they may receive the Holy Spirit."^a

²⁰But Peter answered him, "Take your money to Hell with you! How dare you suggest that God's gifts can be bought with money!

²¹"You have no part or share in this ministry because, as God sees you, your heart is still not right with Him.

²²"So repent of this evil plan of yours, and pray earnestly to God. It may be that He will indeed forgive you for what you had in mind.

²³"Because I can see that you are still a captive of sin, and poisoned by bitter jealousy."

²⁴"Oh please,^a both of you pray to the Lord for me that none of the things you said will happen to me!" Simon pleaded.

²⁵After Peter and John had earnestly testified and preached the message of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem. On the return trip, they preached the Great News in many other towns of Samaria.

Philip and the Ethiopian

²⁶As for Philip, however, an angel of the Lord told him, "Get up now and go down the road going south thru the desert from Jerusalem to Gaza."

²⁷So he got up and went. And on that road he came upon an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official who was in charge of all the treasury of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia. He had just been to Jerusalem to worship.

²⁸He was on his way home now, sitting in his chariot, reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹The Holy Spirit told Philip, "Go over and join that man in his chariot."

³⁰So Philip ran up alongside the chariot, and heard the man reading from the book of Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked him.

³¹"No," he replied. "How can I possibly understand this unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to climb up and sit with him.

³²The verses of Scripture he was reading were these:

He was led like a lamb to be slaughtered. And like a sheep that makes no sound when its wool is cut off, He didn't say a word.

³³**At the time He was humiliated, He wasn't even given a fair trial. And no one can speak about His descendants, because His life on earth was taken from Him.^a**

³⁴"Now tell me," the eunuch asked Philip, "just who is the prophet talking about here, about himself, or someone else?"

³⁵So Philip told him the Great News about Jesus, beginning with the very Scripture he had been reading.

³⁶As they continued down the road they came to a body of water, and the eunuch said, "Look, here's water! Why can't I be baptized^a right now?"

³⁷"If you believe with all your heart,^a you may," Philip answered. And the eunuch replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God!"

³⁸He then gave orders for the chariot to be stopped. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

³⁹But when they came up out of the water the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch didn't see any more of him. But he was extremely happy and continued on his way, rejoicing.

⁴⁰However, Philip found himself at Azotus. So he continued preaching the Great News in every town until he came to Caesarea.

Saul Is Converted!

9Now concerning Saul, he was still breathing out threats of murder against the followers of the Lord.

²Going to the High Priest, he asked him for letters of introduction to the presidents of the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who

8:17a Indicated by imperfect active (repeated action) of *received*.

8:17b A Samaritan Pentecost!

8:19a Simon saw something miraculous happen when Peter and John placed their hands on these people. It was likely similar to what happened on

the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:1-18. God is still giving His Holy Spirit to *those who persevere in asking Him*. Luke 11:13.

8:24a Implied because *pray* is imperative.

8:32-33a Isaiah 53:7-8.

8:36a Baptized, from Greek *báupto*—meaning,

were followers of the Way of Jesus there, either men or women, he might be allowed to bring them in chains to Jerusalem.

³He was on his way there and approaching Damascus when suddenly a most brilliant bolt of light from the sky enveloped him in a blaze!

⁴He was so overpowered by it that he fell to the ground! Then he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you so cruel to Me?"

⁵"Who are you, Sir?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus whom you are persecuting," the Lord replied. "It's grievous and painful for you to continually kick against the prods^a."

⁶Saul was astonished! Trembling, he asked, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"

"Get up now," the Lord replied, "and go into the city. There you will be told what you must do."

⁷The men traveling with Saul just stood there, speechless. They heard a voice, but they couldn't see anyone.

⁸So Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he couldn't see a thing. So the men with him had to take him by the hand and lead him into Damascus.

⁹For three days he couldn't see, and during that time he didn't eat or drink anything.

¹⁰Now in Damascus there was a follower of Jesus by the name of Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, saying, "Ananias."

"Yes, Lord," he answered, "I am here."

¹¹"Get up and go to the home of Judas on Straight Street, and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul," the Lord said. "You'll find him praying there."

¹²"In a vision he has seen a man by the name of Ananias coming in and placing his hand on him, so that he might see again."

¹³"But Lord!" Ananias exclaimed, "many people have told me about this man, about all the harm he's done to the people who are devoted to You in Jerusalem!"

¹⁴"And here he has authority from the chief priests to arrest everyone who calls on Your name!"

¹⁵But the Lord told him, "Go! Because I have chosen this man to carry My name before the Gentiles, their kings, and the people of Israel.

¹⁶"Now I will show him how much he must suffer because of the stand he will take for Me."

¹⁷So Ananias went, and after entering the home of Judas, he placed his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were on your way here, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

¹⁸Instantly, something like thin scales fell from Saul's eyes. And immediately he was able to see again. Then he got up and was baptized.

¹⁹And when he had eaten, he regained his strength. He then spent several days with the Lord's followers in Damascus.

Saul Preaches in Damascus

²⁰Immediately he went to the synagogues and began preaching about Jesus, stating that He is indeed the Son of God.

²¹This amazed all who heard him, and they said, "Isn't this the man who destroyed the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem? And didn't he come down here for the very purpose of putting all such people in chains and bringing them to the chief priests?"

²²But Saul's preaching became more and more powerful. He totally overwhelmed and silenced the Jews living in Damascus by his convincing proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

²³After many days of this, the Jews made plans to kill him.

²⁴Saul found out about their plot, but he couldn't leave because his enemies kept close watch at the gates of the city both day and night, looking for a chance to kill him.

²⁵But one night the Lord's followers took him to an opening in the wall and lowered him down in a basket.^a

Saul in Jerusalem

²⁶When he arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join in fellowship with the followers there, but they were all afraid of him. They didn't believe he was a true follower.

²⁷But then Barnabas came to his aid and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul had seen the Lord on his way to Damascus, and that

to *dip, dip in, immerse*.

8:37a Total heart-belief is the only kind of belief acceptable by God. See Romans 10:9-10, and notes.

9:5a Actually, a goad, a stick with a pointed end for driving cattle.

9:25a According to Paul's own account in Gala-

tians 1:11-24, it was at least three years after this event before Paul went back to Jerusalem. He went from Damascus to Arabia (evidently to be alone with the Lord, and confer with Him). He returned to Damascus, and then went to Jerusalem.

Jesus had spoken to him. He also told how courageously he had preached about Jesus in Damascus.

²⁸On hearing this, they accepted him. He was then constantly with them, coming or going while in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in support of the Lord Jesus.

²⁹He also talked and debated with the Greek-speaking Jews, but they made plans to kill him.

³⁰When the followers discovered this, they brought him to Caesarea, and then sent him off to Tarsus.

³¹Finally the churches thruout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. As they were encouraged and built up by the Holy Spirit, and as they lived in reverence and awe of the Lord,^a they continued to grow in numbers.

Peter Heals Aeneas

³²During this time, Peter travelled everywhere. On one trip, he went to visit the Lord's followers living in Lydda.

³³There he met a paralyzed man named Aeneas, who hadn't been able to get out of bed for eight long years.

³⁴"Aeneas," Peter declared to him, "Jesus the Messiah now heals you. Get up and make your bed." And he promptly got up.

³⁵Everyone living in Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord when they saw this man walking around, healed.

Dorcas Restored to Life!

³⁶Now in Joppa there was a follower named Tabitha. (Her name in Greek was Dorcas, meaning *a deer*.) She was always helping the poor and doing other good deeds.

³⁷But she had become sick, and died. So they washed her body and laid it in a room upstairs.

³⁸Since Lydda was near Joppa, the followers had heard that Peter was there. So they sent two men to beg him to come to them immediately.

³⁹Peter got right up and went with them. And as soon as he arrived, they brought him to the upstairs room. All the widows stood around him weeping, and showing him the shirts and other clothing that Dorcas had made for them while she was still with them.

⁴⁰But Peter sent them all out of the room, and then knelt down and prayed. Then, turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, get up!" And she opened her eyes! Upon seeing Peter she sat up.

⁴¹Peter then gave her his hand and helped her to

her feet. Then he called the other followers, including the widows, and presented her to them alive.

⁴²Everyone in Joppa heard about it, and as a result, many people came to believe on the Lord.

⁴³So Peter stayed on in Joppa for quite some time at the home of Simon, a tanner of leather.

Cornelius Has a Vision

10 There was a man living in Caesarea at this time named Cornelius. He was a captain in what was known as the Italian Regiment.

²He and all his family were very devout people, truly dedicated to God. He gave generously to those in need, and was constantly praying to God.

³About three o'clock one afternoon he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God come into his room and say, "Cornelius!"

⁴He stared at the angel, terrified. "What is it you want, Sir?" he asked.

"Your prayers and your generosity to the needy have been an acceptable sacrifice to God," the angel answered.

⁵"You are to send some men to Joppa, who are to bring back to you a man by the name of Simon Peter.

⁶"He is staying with another Simon, a tanner of leather, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do."

⁷As soon as the angel was gone, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a godly soldier from among those who constantly cared for his needs.

⁸After telling them what had happened, he sent them to Joppa.

Peter's Vision

⁹About noon the next day, as they were on their way, and approaching Joppa, Peter went up on the roof deck to pray.

¹⁰While there he became very hungry and wished that lunch was ready. But while the meal was being prepared, he had a vision.

¹¹He saw the sky open, and then an object like a very large sheet of canvas started coming down to him. It was suspended at the four corners as it was being lowered to the earth.

¹²On this sheet were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, including wild animals and crawling creatures, and wild birds.

¹³Then he heard a voice, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

¹⁴“No! Absolutely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything common or unclean.”

¹⁵But the voice spoke again, saying, “You must never call anything unclean after God has offered it to you as something you may eat.”

¹⁶This happened three times. Then the sheet was taken back up into the sky.

¹⁷At the very moment that Peter was puzzling over what this vision was all about, the men sent by Cornelius, after asking directions to Simon’s house, now stood at the gate.

¹⁸They called out, asking if Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there.

¹⁹As Peter was trying to figure out the meaning of this vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, “Listen, three men are looking for you.

²⁰“So get up and go downstairs, and go with them. Don’t think twice about going, because I have sent them.”

²¹So Peter went down to the men and said, “Yes, I’m the one you’re looking for. Why have you come?”

²²“We were sent by Captain Cornelius,” they replied. “He’s a man who lives right and is truly dedicated to God, a man respected by Jewish people everywhere. A holy angel from God told him to ask you to come to his house and listen to a message you would have for him.”

²³Peter then invited them in, and arranged for them to stay overnight. The next day Peter went with them, and several of the Lord’s followers in Joppa went along.

Peter in the Home of Cornelius

²⁴They arrived in Caesarea the following day. Cornelius was waiting for them, and had invited his relatives and close friends to the meeting.

²⁵As Peter was entering the house, Cornelius came forward and fell to his knees in front of him, and worshiped him.

²⁶But Peter grabbed hold of him and helped him to his feet, saying, “Stand up! I’m only a man like you.”

²⁷As Peter continued talking with him, he went inside and found a large crowd gathered.

²⁸“You people know very well,” he said to them, “that our religion forbids a Jew to visit or associate with anyone who is not a Jew. But God has shown me that I must not call any man common or unclean.

²⁹“So I came without any objection as soon as I was sent for. But now I ask you, for what reason

have you sent for me?”

³⁰“Four days ago I was fasting until this time of day,” Cornelius replied. “About three in the afternoon as I was praying here in my home, suddenly, a man in radiant clothing stood in front of me.

³¹‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayers,’ he said, ‘and He has noticed the help you have given those in need.

³²‘So send for a man in Joppa named Simon Peter. He is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner of leather, who lives by the sea. When he arrives, he will have a message for you.’

³³“So I sent for you right away, and we are so glad you have come. And now, we are all gathered here in the presence of God, waiting to hear all that God has told you to tell us.”

³⁴Then Peter began speaking. “I can clearly see now,” he said, “that God does not practice favoritism.

³⁵“But in every nation, He accepts those who are truly devoted to Him and do what is right.”^a

³⁶“This is the message He has sent to the people of Israel: The amazing Great News is that we can have peace with God thru Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

³⁷“You’ve all heard about the events that took place after John preached his message about baptism. It’s been published all over Judea.

³⁸“It all began in Galilee, where God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He then went everywhere, doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil. He could do all these things because God was with Him.

³⁹“And we were there. We saw all the things He did thruout Israel and in Jerusalem. But they killed Him by nailing Him to a cross!

⁴⁰“But three days later God raised Him back to life, and gave many of us the opportunity of seeing Him again.

⁴¹“He wasn’t seen by everyone, only by some of us whom God had previously chosen. Some of us even ate and drank with Him after He was raised from death.

⁴²“And He commanded us to preach the Great News to people everywhere—and to tell them earnestly and clearly that He is the One who has been appointed by God to be our Judge, both while we are alive and after we are dead.

⁴³“All the prophets spoke and wrote about Him. Everyone who now comes to God in His name^a will receive forgiveness for their sins by believing in

Him.”

⁴⁴Then an amazing thing happened. While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came down upon all the people there who were listening to his message.

⁴⁵The Jewish followers of the Lord who had come with Peter were amazed that the Holy Spirit had also now been poured out upon the Gentiles,

⁴⁶because they heard them praising God for His greatness and speaking in languages they hadn’t learned.

⁴⁷Then Peter said, “These people have received the Holy Spirit in the same way we did!^a Who then can stop them from being baptized in water?”

⁴⁸So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of the Lord. The people then begged Peter to stay a few days.

Peter’s Report in Jerusalem

11 The news soon reached the apostles and other followers of the Lord in Judea, that the Gentiles had also accepted God’s message.

²So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the followers who had insisted that all followers be circumcised strongly criticized him.

³“You went into the home of people who are uncircumcised and ate with them!” they indignantly challenged him.

⁴So Peter told them the whole story.

⁵“One day while I was praying in the city of Joppa,” he said, “I had a vision. Something like a great sheet of canvas, suspended by its four corners, came down to me from the sky.

⁶“When I could examine it closely, I saw all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth on it, including wild animals and crawling creatures, and wild birds.

⁷“Then I heard a voice tell me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’

⁸“But I answered, ‘Never, Lord, because I have never eaten anything common or unclean!’

⁹“But then the voice from Heaven spoke to me again, saying, ‘You must never call anything unclean after God has purified it.’

¹⁰“This happened three times, and finally everything was drawn back up into Heaven.

¹¹“At that very moment, three men, sent from Caesarea, arrived in front of the house where I was staying.

¹²“The Holy Spirit told me to go with them, and not to think twice about going. Also, these six brothers went with me, and we all went into the home of the man who had sent the messengers.

¹³“He told us how he had seen an angel standing in his home, who had said to him, ‘Send men to Joppa, and have Simon Peter brought here.

¹⁴“He will bring you a message by which you and everyone in your home will be saved.’

¹⁵“Well, I had barely started telling these people the Great News when the Holy Spirit came upon them in the very same way He had come upon us at the beginning.

¹⁶“Then I remembered the words of the Lord, how He used to say, ‘John baptized in water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit.’

¹⁷“So if God gave them the same gift that He gave us after we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could go against what God had done?”

¹⁸After hearing this report they offered no further objections. Instead they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also given the Gentiles the opportunity to turn from their sinning to live to please God, so that they too may have eternal life!^a

Barnabas is Sent to Antioch

¹⁹Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that took place after Stephen was killed, traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, sharing the message with only the Jews—no one else.

²⁰But some of the followers from Cyprus and Cyrene, who went to Antioch, began speaking to the Greeks^a also, telling them the Great News about the Lord Jesus.

²¹The power of the Lord was certainly with them, because great numbers of people believed and were converted to the Lord.

²²When news about this came to the attention of the people of the church in Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to Antioch.

²³When he arrived and saw the wonderful things God was doing there, he was extremely glad, and several times he encouraged everyone there to purpose in their hearts to remain faithful to the Lord, whatever the cost.

²⁴Barnabas was truly a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and overflowing with faith in what God

10:43a His name, the Lord Jesus Christ, is explained in the Acts 16:30-31 note.

10:47a Acts 2:1-18; 8:14-19.

11:18a Notice again the truth that one must

repent (turn from his sinning and live to please God) if he is to be born again and gain Heaven. These people were already dedicated to God (10:2,22,35), but they also needed to hear about

would do. Many people were brought to the Lord thru his ministry.

²⁵ Then Barnabas left for Tarsus to look for Saul.

²⁶ When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Then for a whole year, Barnabas and Saul met with the people of that church, and they taught a large number of people there. In fact, the first place the Lord's followers were called Christians was in Antioch.

²⁷ During this time, some prophets came down to Antioch from Jerusalem.

²⁸ One of them, named Agabus, stood up and prophesied by the Holy Spirit speaking thru him that a great famine would afflict the entire Roman world. (And it came during the reign of Claudius Caesar.)

²⁹ So the followers decided to send whatever help they could to the followers in Judea.

³⁰ They did this by delegating Barnabas and Saul to take their gifts to the elders of the church in Jerusalem.

James Killed and Peter Imprisoned

12 About this time, King Herod began persecuting some of the leaders of the church.

² He had James, the brother of John, killed with a sword.

³ When he saw how much this pleased the Jews, his next move was to have Peter arrested too. (This happened during the feast days of Unleavened Bread.)

⁴ After arresting Peter, he had him put in jail, turning him over to four platoons of four soldiers each. He planned to put him on public trial after Passover.^a

⁵ But while Peter was being kept in jail, the people of the church were fervently praying to God for him.

Peter Escapes From Jail!

⁶ The night before Peter was to be put on trial by Herod, he was bound by chains and sleeping between two soldiers. Two other soldiers were standing outside in front of the jail, guarding the entrance.

⁷ Suddenly a light shined in the cell and an angel of the Lord stood beside Peter! Nudging him in the ribs, the angel woke him up and said, "Quick! Get up!" Then the chains fell off his wrists.

and accept the Savior who could forgive their sins. Romans 3:25-26.

11:20a These were Greeks, not Greek-speaking Jews.

⁸ "Tighten your belt and put on your sandals," the angel then told him. And he did. "Now put your coat on and follow me," the angel ordered.

⁹ So Peter followed him out of the jail, not realizing that this was really happening. He thought he was seeing a vision.

¹⁰ They passed thru the first guard station, then the second, and when they came to the iron gate that led out into the city, it opened for them of its own accord! The angel walked along with Peter for one block, and then disappeared.

¹¹ When Peter finally came to himself, he said, "It really happened! Now I know for sure that the Lord sent His angel to rescue me from Herod and from everything the Jewish leaders were expecting to do to me."

¹² Upon realizing this, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

¹³ When Peter knocked on the porch door, a girl named Rhoda came to investigate.

¹⁴ When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that she didn't think to open the door, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing outside in front on the porch.

¹⁵ "You're out of your mind!" they exclaimed. But she kept insisting that it was true. "It must be his angel," they then said.

¹⁶ But Peter kept knocking, and when they finally opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

¹⁷ But Peter motioned to them with his hand to be quiet. Then he went inside and told them how the Lord had brought him out of jail. After relating this he said, "Go and tell James^a and the others what happened." Then he left and went to another place.

¹⁸ When daylight came, there was a great commotion among the soldiers as to what had ever become of Peter.

¹⁹ But after Herod had ordered that a thorough search be made for him, and he still couldn't be found, he questioned the guards and then had them put to death. Herod then left Judea and went down to Caesarea, and spent some time there.

Herod Killed by an Angel

²⁰ Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. But because they depended on his

12:4a After the eight days of the Passover Festival.

12:17a This James was a brother of Jesus.

13:19a Similar to drawing straws or throwing

territories for their food, they joined forces to gain an audience with him. They made friends with Blastus, the king's servant in charge of the palace, and had him act as their agent in requesting a peace agreement.

²¹So on the day chosen for the meeting, Herod, dressed in his royal robes, sat on his throne and made a speech.

²²The people broke in and began shouting, "It's the voice of a god, not of a man!"

²³Instantly, an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he accepted the honor that belonged to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.

²⁴But the Lord's message continued to spread into many areas.

²⁵After completing their mission, Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch from Jerusalem. They also brought John Mark back with them.

Barnabas and Saul Sent Out

13 There were several prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch: Barnabas; Simeon, who was called Niger; Lucius from Cyrene; Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch; and Saul.

²One day while they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set Barnabas and Saul aside for me, to do the work which I have called them to do."

³So after further fasting and prayer, they placed their hands on them in blessing, and then sent them on their way.

On Cyprus

⁴Actually, it was the Holy Spirit who sent them out. John Mark also went with them as their assistant.

⁵They first went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to the island of Cyprus. When they arrived in Salamis, they preached God's message in the synagogues of the Jews.

⁶After traveling thru the island they came to Paphos, where they came across a Jewish man named Bar-Jesus. He was a false prophet practicing witchcraft.

⁷He was with Sergius Paulus, the governor, who was an intelligent man. The governor had sent for Barnabas and Saul, wanting to hear what they

were teaching about God.

⁸But Elymas (as he was called), which means **the magician**, continually opposed them, doing his best to keep the governor from accepting the faith.

⁹So Saul, who is also called Paul, full of the Holy Spirit, looked him straight in the eye and said,

¹⁰"You son of the devil! All you do is deceive and fake, and oppose everything that's right. Will you never stop trying to twist the Lord's truths into lies?"

¹¹"Now listen to me! The Lord's hand is upon you in judgment, and you will be blind! For a period of time you won't even be able to see the sun." Immediately he was enveloped in a mist, and then total darkness. Groping about, he began looking for someone to lead him by the hand.

¹²When the governor saw this happen, he then believed. He was amazed at the powerful teaching of the Lord.

In Antioch in Pisidia

¹³When Paul and his party left Paphos, they sailed to Perga in the province of Pamphylia. At this point, John Mark left them and went back to Jerusalem.

¹⁴Paul and Barnabas merely passed thru Perga, and went on to Antioch in Pisidia. On the Sabbath day, they went into the synagogue and sat down.

¹⁵After the usual reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent someone over to tell them, "Men and brothers, if you have any words of encouragement or inspiration for the people, we would like to hear from you."

¹⁶So Paul stood up, and raising his hand for silence he said, "People of Israel, and all the rest of you here who are devoted to God, listen!

¹⁷"The God of Israel chose our ancestors, and made them into a great nation while they lived as strangers in Egypt. He also revealed His great power when He brought them out of it.

¹⁸"Then for a period of about 40 years, He put up with their faithless conduct in the desert.

¹⁹"After destroying seven nations in Canaan, He distributed the land to Israel by drawing lots.^a

²⁰"All of this took about 450 years. After that He gave them judges, until the time of Samuel the prophet.

²¹"Then the people demanded a king. So God gave them Saul, a son of Kish, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. He reigned for forty years.

dice.

13:22a 1 Samuel 13:14.

13:25a Or *the Christ*.

13:27a Psalm 22:1-21; Isaiah 52:14; 53:1-12;

Daniel 9:24-26; Zechariah 12:10; Luke 24:25-27, 45-47.

13:32a Genesis 3:15; 12:1-3; 22:18; 49:10; Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; Jere-

²² “When God removed him, He put David on the throne as their king. Concerning him God said, ‘I have finally found a man after my own heart, who will do everything I tell him. He is David, the son of Jesse.’^a

²³ “Thru the family tree of this man, God has raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus—just as He promised.

²⁴ “Before Jesus came, John had preached to all the people of Israel that they should turn from their sinning and serve and obey God, and that they should testify that they had done so by being baptized.

²⁵ “As John was finishing his ministry he repeatedly said, ‘Who do you people think I am? I am not the Messiah.’^a But look, He will come after me! And I am not worthy to even untie the sandals on His feet.’

²⁶ “My fellow Israelites, descendants of Abraham, and all the rest of you who are devoted to God, listen to me! The Great News about how we can now be saved is for all of you!

²⁷ “Neither the people in Jerusalem nor their rulers realized who Jesus was, nor did they understand the messages of the prophets (though they read them every Sabbath). But by condemning Him to death, they have fulfilled those very prophecies!^a

²⁸ “Even though they couldn’t prove one single reason why He should be condemned, they still insisted that Pilate put Him to death.

²⁹ “After they had done everything to Him that the prophets said they would, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb.

³⁰ “But God raised Him from among the dead and caused Him to live again!

³¹ “For many days after this, He was seen by those who had come up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now His witnesses to the people that He did indeed rise from the dead.

³² “And we are here to tell you the Great News! All of this concerns the many promises which God had made to our ancestors.^a

³³ “God has now fulfilled those promises to us, their descendants, when He brought Jesus the promised Deliverer into the world. As it is written in the second Psalm:

You are My Son. Today I have become Your Father.^a

³⁴ “And because God raised Him from the dead, never to putrefy in the grave, He said this:

I will do for you what I faithfully promised David.^a

³⁵ “And for that reason David also said in another Psalm:

You will not allow the body of Your Holy One to putrefy in the grave.^a

³⁶ “But David’s body did putrefy when he died and was buried with his ancestors, after he had served his own generation in accordance with God’s will.

³⁷ “But when God raised Jesus from the dead, His body had experienced no decay.

³⁸ “So know this for sure, my dear friends, that we are now able to announce to you that thru Jesus, your sins can be forgiven!

³⁹ “The Law of Moses couldn’t free you from all guilt and declare you pure in God’s eyes. But thru Jesus, all who believe in Him^a are set free from the guilt of their sin.

⁴⁰ “So take warning, so that what has been stated by the prophets doesn’t happen to you, when they said:

Look, you scoffers who refuse to believe and act upon what God has so plainly declared! Yes, look in amazement, and then die! Because I am doing something in your day—something you won’t believe at all, even though it is explained to you very clearly in detail.^a

⁴² As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people begged them to tell them more about the Great News the next Sabbath.

⁴³ Also following the meeting, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who encouraged them to continue to take hold of the mercies that God was offering.

⁴⁴ The next Sabbath, almost everyone in town came to hear God’s message.

⁴⁵ But when the Jewish religious leaders saw the great crowds, they were filled with envy, and began to contradict what Paul was saying, and to attack him with abusive language.

⁴⁶ Paul and Barnabas then became bold and said, “It was necessary that God’s message should first of all be given to you, but since you so violently reject it, and evidently don’t consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we will now devote our time and energies to the Gentiles.

⁴⁷ “Because this is the Lord’s command to us:

I have appointed you to be a light for the Gen-

miah 23:5-6; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 9:9; etc.

13:33a Psalm 2:7.

13:34a Isaiah 55:3.

13:35a Psalm 16:10.

13:39a See 16:31 note regarding what it means to believe in Him.

13:41a Habakkuk 1:5.

13:47a This refers to Christ, but it also refers to

tiles,^a with the result that you will bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.^b

⁴⁸When the Gentiles heard this, they were extremely glad, and spoke of how highly they regarded the message of the Lord. And all who were appointed^a to gain eternal life believed.

⁴⁹So the message of the Lord continued to be brought into every part of that region.

⁵⁰But the Jewish religious leaders stirred up the religious women of prominence and the leading men of the city, causing Paul and Barnabas to be persecuted and expelled from their area.

⁵¹Shaking off the dust from their feet in protest, they went on to Iconium.

⁵²But the Lord's followers left in Antioch were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Paul and Barnabas in Iconium

14 Again, in Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went together to the synagogue, and spoke so effectively that a great number of both Jews and Gentiles believed.

²But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against those who now followed the Lord.

³Just the same, Paul and Barnabas stayed there a long time, continuing to speak out boldly for the Lord. And the Lord continued to confirm the message of His great kindness by enabling them to perform miracles and wonders.

⁴But the people of the city were divided in opinion about them, some siding with the Jews and some with the apostles.

⁵Finally, an attack was planned by some of the Jews and Gentiles, together with their leaders. They planned to mistreat Paul and Barnabas shamefully, and then stone them to death.

⁶But when they learned about it, they made their escape to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region.

⁷There they continued to tell the Great News.

In Lystra and Derbe

⁸There was a man in Lystra who had no strength in his feet. He had been born disabled, so he had never walked.

His messengers who seek to bring the light of His message to the whole world.

13:47b Isaiah 49:6.

13:48a This does not destroy our free will. God knew before the world was formed who would be disposed and determined to accept eternal life

⁹Paul noticed the man as he sat there listening to him speak. And, looking intently at him, Paul could see that the man had faith to be healed.

¹⁰So Paul shouted to him, "Get up on your feet and stand erect!" And the man jumped up and started walking!

¹¹When the crowd saw what Paul had just done, they cried out in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the form of men!"

¹²They called Barnabas, Zeus; and Paul, Hermes, because he was the main speaker.

¹³Then the priest of Zeus, whose Temple stood just outside the city near the main entrance, brought some bulls and flowers to the city gates because he and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

¹⁴But when Barnabas and Paul heard about it, they ripped their clothes in horror and ran shouting into the crowd.

¹⁵"Men! Why are you doing this?" they shouted. "We're only men! We're just as human as you are! We're here preaching the Great News that you should turn from these worthless idols to the living God, who made Heaven, and the earth, the sea, and everything in them.

¹⁶"In times past, He allowed everyone everywhere to go their own way.

¹⁷"But He has always given us proof that He is with us, by the good things He constantly does for us, by giving us rain from the skies, and the various crops in their seasons. He has literally filled us with food and happiness."

¹⁸Still they had a hard time keeping the people from sacrificing to them, even after speaking to them in this way.

¹⁹But a few days later, some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium. And after turning the crowds into a blood-thirsty, riotous mob, they stoned Paul and then dragged him out of the city, believing him to be dead.

²⁰But as the Lord's followers gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day, he and Barnabas went to Derbe.

The Return to Antioch in Syria

²¹As they preached the Great News to the people of that city, it resulted in many becoming followers

under His conditions. It is these whom God effectively calls to Himself. See Romans 8:29-30 note.

14:22a John 8:31; Colossians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 John 2:24.

14:22b We suffer when we experience abuse and rejection because of our stand for Jesus. We also

of the Lord. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.

²²There they strengthened the understanding and will of the followers, urgently encouraging them to continue in the faith.^a “Because,” they said, “in order to enter the Kingdom of God, we must be willing to go thru severe testings and sufferings.”^b

²³After praying and fasting, they appointed elders to take charge in every church, and then turned them over to the Lord in whom they had believed.

²⁴Then they went back thru Pisidia and into the province of Pamphylia.

²⁵After they had preached the Lord’s message in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

²⁶From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch in Syria, from where they had been confidently given over by their fellow-believers to God’s favor and help for the accomplishment of the work they had now completed.

²⁷Upon arriving home, they gathered the people of the church together and told them all that God, working thru them, had done, and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

²⁸They then stayed home with the followers for quite some time.

The Church Council

15 Then some men came down from Judea and began teaching the Lord’s followers that, “Unless you are circumcised, as the Law of Moses requires, you can’t be saved.”

²Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed, and entered into quite an argument with them. So it was decided that Paul and Barnabas and some of the other believers in Antioch should go up to Jerusalem and talk to the apostles and church leaders about this matter.

³After being sent on their way by the church, they traveled thru Phoenicia and Samaria. They brought great joy to all the Lord’s followers in these areas as they told them in detail how the Gentiles had been converted to the Lord.

⁴When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church, the apostles, and the leaders, to whom they reported everything that God had

done thru them.

⁵But then some Pharisees who had become believers stood up and said, “It’s necessary now that these Gentiles be circumcised, and that they be told they must obey the Law of Moses.”

⁶So the apostles and church leaders met together to consider this matter.

⁷After much vigorous debate, Peter stood up and said, “Men and brothers, you know that quite some time ago, God decided that it should be from my lips that the Gentiles should hear the message of the Great News and believe.

⁸“And God, who knows the deepest motives of everyone, accepted them, as proven by His giving them the Holy Spirit in the same way He had to us.”^a

⁹“He didn’t distinguish between us and them. He purified their hearts from all guilt when they firmly believed.

¹⁰“So why do you now want to question God’s actions by putting a heavy burden on His followers, that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear?

¹¹“We believe that we are saved by God’s undeserved favor thru Jesus Christ. The same is true with them!”

¹²Then silence came over the whole crowd as they listened to Barnabas and Paul tell of the many miracles and wonders God had done thru them among the Gentiles.

¹³After they finished speaking, James responded: “Men and brothers, listen to me!

¹⁴“Simon Peter has just told us how God, for the first time, has showed His concern for the Gentiles by taking out from among them a people who would belong to Him.

¹⁵“And this agrees with the words of the prophets, which say:

¹⁶ **After all these things have happened I will return, and I will rebuild the house of David which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins and restore it, so that all the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles whom I have called to be My own. This is the declaration of the Lord, the One who is doing all these things.**^a

¹⁸“The Lord has known from eternity what He

suffer in our flesh when we refuse to satisfy our fleshly desires in a wrong way. Jesus suffered on the cross to remove our guilt, but when we accept God’s forgiveness of our sins thru Jesus we must then be willing and determined to suffer *in our flesh also*, by refusing to sin by satisfying the desires of our flesh in a wrongful way.

This is what being converted is all about. It is being converted from living to satisfy ourselves to living to please God, and to continually obey Him, with His help. John 3:36; Romans 2:1-11; 6:16; Hebrews 3:19; 4:6,11; 5:9.

15:8a 10:1-48.

15:17a Amos 9:11-12.

will do.

¹⁹“So it is my opinion that we should not put difficulties in the way of the Gentiles who are turning to God.

²⁰“But we should write to them to abstain from food that had been offered to idols, from sexual immorality, and from eating blood or the meat of strangled animals.

²¹“Because the Gentiles are familiar with these basic Laws of Moses that have been preached in every city for many generations. And they are read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

The Letter to Gentile Believers

²²It was then decided by the apostles and church leaders, and agreed to by the whole church, to appoint some of their own men to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch. They chose Judas, called Barsabas, and Silas. These were leading men among the Lord’s followers.

²³The following letter was sent with them:

From the apostles, leaders, and other followers of the Lord at Jerusalem, to the Gentile followers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.

²⁴We have heard that some men, coming from us but without any instructions from us, have troubled you by their teachings, and continue to upset you by insisting that, *You must be circumcised and keep the Law.*

²⁵So it seemed good to us after coming to full agreement on this matter to choose some of our men and send them to you with our much-loved Barnabas and Paul,

²⁶men who have risked their very lives to glorify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁷So we are sending Judas and Silas to assure you in person of the same things we are now writing you.

²⁸It seemed right to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything more than the following necessary requirements:

²⁹Abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from eating blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these things, you will do well. Farewell.

³⁰So the men were sent off, and in due time arrived in Antioch. When they had gathered all the Lord’s followers together, they delivered the letter.

³¹When it was read, the followers were overjoyed

by its encouraging message.

³²Judas and Silas were prophets too, so they taught the followers many things and strengthened them in the faith.

³³After they had been there for some time, they were sent back with words of greeting from the followers to the apostles.

³⁴But Silas decided it would be best if he stayed there.

³⁵Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, where together with many others they taught and preached the message of the Lord.

Paul and Barnabas Separate

³⁶Sometime later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let’s go back now and visit the Lord’s followers in every city where we preached His message, and find out how they’re getting along.”

³⁷Barnabas agreed, but he was determined that they take John Mark along too.

³⁸But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had deserted them in Pamphylia, and hadn’t gone on with them to the work.

³⁹The argument between them became so sharp that they broke off their partnership. So Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus.

⁴⁰Paul then chose Silas. They left, with the followers declaring their confidence that God’s favor and help would be with them.

⁴¹Paul first of all traveled thru Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Timothy Joins Paul and Silas

16 Then he went on to Derbe, then to Lystra. A follower named Timothy lived there, whose Jewish mother was a follower of the Lord, but whose father was a Greek.

²The followers in both Lystra and Iconium spoke well of Timothy.

³And Paul wanted to take him along with him. So he had him circumcised, because all the Jews living in those areas knew that his father was a Greek.

⁴As they went from city to city, they delivered to each church a copy of the decisions the apostles and elders had arrived at in Jerusalem, which the people were to obey.

⁵As a result, the churches were each strengthened in the faith, and they increased in number every day.

16:6a Which is now western Turkey.

16:18a Literally *that very hour*. This is an idiom Luke uses to mean *instantly*, as can be seen by

comparing Acts 9:18 and 22:13.

16:31a In order to have your sins forgiven you must first believe in Jesus as *Lord* (Lord means

The Macedonian Call

⁶Then, because they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the message in the province of Asia^a at that time, they traveled thru Phrygia and Galatia, and then on to the region of Mysia.

⁷They tried to go into the province of Bithynia from there, but the Spirit wouldn't let them go there either.

⁸So they traveled thru Mysia, and went down to the city of Troas.

⁹One night there, Paul saw a vision of a man from northern Greece standing and pleading with him, "Come over into northern Greece and help us!"

¹⁰Immediately after Paul saw that vision, we got ready to go to northern Greece. We were sure the Lord had called us to tell them the Great News.

Lydia's Conversion in Philippi

¹¹So we took passage on a boat at Troas, and sailed straight across to Samothrace. The next day we arrived at Neapolis.

¹²From there we went to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city in that part of northern Greece. We stayed there several days.

¹³On the Sabbath we went outside the city to the river, where it was customary to have a prayer meeting. There we sat down and talked to the women who had gathered.

¹⁴One woman who listened to us there was Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, who sold expensive purple cloth. She sincerely worshiped God. And the Lord so opened her heart to what Paul was saying that she responded.

¹⁵After she and her entire household were baptized, she begged us, "If you are convinced that I am truly faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my house." She insisted that we do so, and so we did.

Paul and Silas in Jail

¹⁶One day as we were on our way to prayer, a slave girl, possessed by an evil spirit claiming to predict the future, met us. Her fortune telling made her owners a good deal of money.

¹⁷She followed Paul and the rest of us, and kept shouting, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God. They are telling us how to be saved."

¹⁸She kept this up for many days. But finally Paul, becoming greatly annoyed, turned around

and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ, come out of her!" And instantly^a it left her.

¹⁹But when her owners realized that their means of making money thru her was gone, they grabbed hold of Paul and Silas and dragged them into court.

²⁰When they came before the judges, they charged, "Here are some Jews who are continually causing trouble in our city.

²¹"They are teaching the people to do things that are unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice!"

²²Then the whole crowd there joined in the attack against them, and finally the judges themselves tore off the robes of Paul and Silas and ordered that they be beaten with rods.

²³After being badly beaten and having their backs covered with stripes, they were thrown in jail. The jailer was then ordered to make sure they were locked up securely.

²⁴Upon receiving such an order, the jailer threw them into the inner cell and chained their feet between heavy blocks of wood.

²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, while the other prisoners listened.

²⁶Suddenly there was a great earthquake that shook the jail to its very foundations. Immediately all the doors flew open, and the shackles on all the prisoners fell off.

²⁷When the jailer woke up and saw the jail doors open, he pulled out his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.

²⁸But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We're all here!"

²⁹After calling for torches, the jailer ran in and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.

³⁰After bringing them out of the jail he said, "O Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

³¹They replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.^a This is also true for everyone in your household."

³²Then they told him and everyone in his home about the Lord.

³³That very hour, in the middle of the night, the jailer took them where he could wash their cuts and bruises. Then he and everyone in his home were immediately baptized.

³⁴After that, he brought them into his house and served them a meal. All the while he, and his

ruler), which means you must surrender yourself to Him with a deep desire and willingness that He

become the Lord and Ruler of your life. You must seek to do what is right, and obey His orders—and

entire household were rejoicing in what they now had come to believe about God.

³⁵When it was daylight, the authorities sent police to the jailer with the order, “Let those men go.”

³⁶So the jailer reported this to Paul, saying, “The authorities have sent word that I’m to release you. So you may leave now and go on your way in peace.”

³⁷“No, we’re not leaving!” Paul told the police. “Do they think they can condemn, publicly whip, and throw Roman citizens into jail without giving them a fair trial? And now they wish to have us leave jail secretly! Let them come themselves and talk to us about leaving.”

³⁸When the police reported this to the judges—that they were Roman citizens—they became alarmed.

³⁹So they came and released them and told them how extremely sorry they were. Then they asked them to please leave town.

⁴⁰But when they left the jail, they went to Lydia’s house. There they met with the Lord’s followers and encouraged and advised them. Then they left.

The Uproar in Thessalonica

17 After they had traveled thru Amphipolis and Apollonia, they arrived at Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue.

²So as usual, Paul went to their meetings, and on three Sabbath days he spoke to them.

³He explained and showed them from the Scriptures that the Messiah had to suffer^a and rise again from the dead.^b “This Jesus whom I’m telling you about is the Messiah!” he said.

⁴Some of the Jews were convinced, along with a great number of the God-fearing Greeks, including quite a number of the leading women. They all joined Paul and Silas.

⁵But the Jewish leaders who refused to believe were jealous, and got some of the worthless deadbeats who hung around the marketplace to form a mob and start a riot. Then they whipped the whole city into an uproar and attacked the home of Jason, looking for Paul and Silas. They tried to bring them out of the house so the people could deal with them.

⁶But when they couldn’t find them, they dragged Jason and several other followers of the Lord before the city authorities and shouted, “Those who have turned the world upside down have now come here!”

⁷“They all defy Caesar, saying there’s another king, called Jesus. Jason has even lodged them in his house!”

⁸The crowd and the city officials were extremely stirred up when they heard these charges.

⁹But after making Jason and the other followers post bail, they released them.

Paul and Silas in Berea

¹⁰As soon as it was night, the Lord’s followers sent both Paul and Silas away to Berea, where they went into the Jewish synagogue upon arrival.

¹¹The people in Berea were more noble and fair-minded than those in Thessalonica. They eagerly listened to the message, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out if these things were really true.

¹²As a result, many became believers. This was also true of quite a number of prominent women among the Greeks, and Greek men as well.

¹³But when the Jewish leaders in Thessalonica learned that Paul was now preaching God’s message in Berea, they came there too, exciting the masses.

¹⁴Immediately the Lord’s followers sent Paul away, pretending to take him to the coast. But both Silas and Timothy remained there.

¹⁵Those escorting Paul brought him down to Athens. And as they left him, he instructed them to have Silas and Timothy join him as soon as possible.

Paul in Athens

¹⁶While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he became greatly upset and concerned when he saw all the idols thruout the city.

¹⁷So he had earnest discussions in the synagogue with both Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and also every day in the marketplace with everyone he met.

¹⁸Then he came in contact with some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. Some of them questioned,

you must continue to do so. His orders are set forth thruout the entire New Testament.

Then you must believe on Him as *Jesus*. The name Jesus means Savior. You must believe that He died on the cross because of your sins, so that He might save you. The Bible calls Him the Lamb of

God, the Lamb that God gave in sacrifice so that He could forgive your sins.

And you must believe in Him as *Christ*, or *Messiah*. They mean the same. Messiah is the Hebrew word, and Christ is the Greek form of the same word. The name Christ means *the anointed One*,

“What’s this babbler trying to tell us?” Others said, “He seems to be promoting some foreign gods,” because he was telling them the Great News about Jesus, and that someday everyone would rise back to life again.^a

¹⁹ So they took him by the arm and brought him before the Areopagus Council on Mars Hill, saying, “Let’s hear now what you have to say about this new teaching you’re promoting.

²⁰ “Because you’re bringing some strange things to our attention. We’d like to know what it’s all about.”

²¹ (It should be explained here that all the Athenians and visiting foreigners who gathered there whiled away their time just telling about or listening to others tell about the latest new idea.)

²² So Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I can see that you are very religious in all respects.^a

²³ “Because as I was walking about and observing your various objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO AN UNKNOWN GOD

Well, I’m here to tell you about this One of whom you are ignorant, but still worship.

²⁴ “He is the God who made the world and everything in it! And since He is Lord of Heaven and earth, He doesn’t live in temples made by human hands.

²⁵ “He doesn’t need the helping hand of any man. Since He’s the One who gives life and breath and everything else to all of us, He doesn’t need anything.

²⁶ “Beginning with one man, He made the people in every nation, and caused them to inhabit every part of the earth. It is He who determines when each nation will rise and when it will fall, and what its boundaries will be.

²⁷ “God’s purpose in all His dealings with mankind is to cause them to look for Him—hoping they will reach out for Him and find Him, though He isn’t far from any of us.

²⁸ “He is everything to us. The fact that we’re alive and kept alive, that we have the ability to move, and the greater fact that we exist at all—all

of this is due to Him. What some of your own poets have said is true: ‘We are certainly His offspring!’

²⁹ “Since we are the children of God, we certainly shouldn’t think that the Divine One can be portrayed for us as being like some sculptured gold, silver, or stone idol, shaped by the skillful abilities of man.

³⁰ “True, in the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands that everyone everywhere turn from their evil ways and turn to Him.

³¹ “In fact, He has assigned a certain Day when the Man^a He has chosen will in an honest and right way judge every person on earth! He gave proof to everyone that this will indeed happen, when He raised this Man^a from among the dead.”

³² When they heard about the resurrection of someone who had been dead, some of them began to jeer at him, while others said, “We’d like to hear more about that sometime.”

³³ So Paul then left them.

³⁴ But some of the people believed, and they went with him. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus Council, and a woman named Damaris, and several others.

In Corinth

18 Then Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

² There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, (because Emperor Claudius had demanded that all Jews leave Rome). Paul went to visit them.

³ And because they worked at the same trade, making tents, he stayed and worked with them.

⁴ But every Sabbath, he was in the synagogue, reasoning with both Jews and Greeks, doing his best to convince them of the truth.

⁵ When Silas and Timothy arrived from northern Greece, Paul felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to spend all his time in telling the Jews that Jesus is indeed the Messiah.

⁶ But when they continued to firmly oppose him with abusive language and cursing, he finally shook the dust from his coat and said, “Your fate is now in your own hands! I am no longer responsi-

the One to whom God the Father has given all power and authority. God has given Jesus power to do everything that He Himself can do.

According to v 32, Paul and Silas no doubt explained all this and much more to the jailer and his family.

17:3a See Acts 13:27 references.

17:3b Acts 2:24; 13:32-37; Psalm 16:10. If He didn’t rise from the dead, He is still dead, and unable to save us.

17:18a 24:15; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:4-15.

17:22a ... and don’t take any chances.

17:31a Jesus Christ.

18:26a *The Way of God* evidently refers to all of

ble for you. From now on I will teach the Gentiles.”

⁷ So he left the synagogue and went right next door to the home of a godly man named Justus.

⁸ But Crispus, the president of the synagogue, together with everyone in his family, believed in the Lord. And many other people in Corinth who heard the Great News also believed and were baptized.

⁹ One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision. “Don’t be afraid,” He said. “Keep on speaking out! Don’t be quiet!

¹⁰ “Because I am with you, and no one will attack or harm you here. Many people in this city belong to Me.”

¹¹ So he stayed there and continued teaching God’s truths to them for a year and a half.

¹² But when Gallio was appointed governor of southern Greece, the Jews rose up in a united front against Paul and brought him to court.

¹³ “This man is persuading our people to worship God in ways that are against our Law,” they charged.

¹⁴ When Paul was about to answer this charge, Gallio said, “Listen, you Jews, if it were a matter of some wrongdoing or serious crime, there would be good reason for me to listen to you.

¹⁵ “But if you’re bickering about words and names relating to your own law, settle those matters yourselves. I flatly refuse to be a judge in such matters.”

¹⁶ Then he ordered that they be thrown out of the courtroom.

¹⁷ At this point, all the Greeks grabbed hold of Sosthenes, the president of the synagogue, and beat him up right in front of the judge’s bench. But Gallio did nothing, and had no concern about such matters.

Paul’s Return to Antioch

¹⁸ Paul stayed in Corinth for quite some time after that, but he finally said good-bye to the Lord’s followers there and sailed with Priscilla and Aquila for Syria. But before sailing, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, because of a solemn promise he had made to God.

¹⁹ Upon arriving in Ephesus, Paul left Priscilla and Aquila and went into the synagogue and had some serious discussions with the Jews.

²⁰ They begged him to stay on longer with them,

but he declined.

²¹ “I must make every effort to take part in the coming Feast in Jerusalem,” he said as he left them. “But I will return to you again, if God is willing.” Then he sailed from Ephesus.

²² After landing at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and had fellowship with the Lord’s followers there, and then went on to Antioch.

²³ After spending some time there, he left again for the region of Galatia and Phrygia, traveling successively from place to place, strengthening all the followers.

The Ministry of Apollos

²⁴ About this time, a Jew named Apollos, who had grown up in Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent speaker, with outstanding knowledge of the Scriptures.

²⁵ He had been taught the various truths about the Lord, and, with great enthusiasm, he accurately told the people about the Lord Jesus. But all he knew about baptism was what John had taught.

²⁶ So he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him more accurately the Way^a of God.

²⁷ When he decided to go across into southern Greece, the Lord’s followers wrote the followers there to welcome and encourage him. And upon arriving, he was enabled by God to greatly help those who had believed and accepted God’s great kindness.

²⁸ Because in front of everyone he continued to powerfully overthrow the arguments of the Jewish leaders, conclusively proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is indeed the Messiah.

Paul in Ephesus

19 Now while Apollos was in Corinth, Paul had traveled the mountain route thru the interior of the province of Asia, finally arriving at Ephesus, where he found some of the Lord’s followers.

² “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you were converted and became followers of the Lord?” he asked them.

“No,” they replied, “we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

³ “Well, what then did you profess to believe when you were baptized?” he inquired.

God’s plans for mankind thru Jesus Christ—dealing with His person, the reason for His coming to earth, His life, death, resurrection, and the way His people

are to follow Him.

19:6a See Luke 11:13; John 14:15-18; Acts 1:1 to 2:18; 8:14-24; 10:1-48.

“What John the Baptizer taught,” they responded.

⁴“John’s baptism did, of course, give testimony to God and others that the one being baptized was turning from his sinning,” Paul stated. “But John also told the people to believe in the One who would come after him. He was talking about Jesus, the Messiah.”

⁵When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

⁶And when Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they began to speak in other languages and to prophesy.^a

⁷There were about twelve of them.

⁸Then Paul went into the synagogue, where for three months he spoke out boldly, continually reasoning with them and trying to convince them of the truths about the Kingdom of God.

⁹But when some became completely stuck in the rut of their error and utterly refused to obey the truth, so that they publicly ridiculed the Way of the Lord, he left them. But he took those who believed with him, and taught them every day in the school of Tyrannus.

¹⁰This went on for two years, so that everyone living in the province of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the message of the Lord Jesus.

The Sons of Sceva

¹¹And during this time, God was working unusual miracles thru Paul.

¹²Even when handkerchiefs and aprons that Paul had handled were brought to the sick, they were cured of their diseases, and the evil spirits went out of them.

¹³Then some Jews who traveled about driving out evil spirits decided to use the name of Jesus over those possessed by demons, so they were saying, “We command you to come out of him in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches about.”

¹⁴Seven brothers, the sons of a Jewish chief priest named Sceva, were doing this.

¹⁵But when they gave this command to the spirit in a certain man, the evil spirit answered, “I know Jesus, and I know about Paul, but you, who are you?”

¹⁶Then the man possessed by the evil spirit jumped on them, and attacked them so fiercely that he overpowered them. They were beaten so badly that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

¹⁷Everyone in Ephesus heard about it, both Jews and Greeks, and they were all frightened. As a result, the name of the Lord Jesus came to be most highly respected.

¹⁸And many who had come to believe, now came forward, one after another, confessing their sins and revealing the evil lives they had lived.

¹⁹Also, many who had practiced black magic brought their books^a together and burned them in public. When they figured up the cost of all these books, they found the total came to 50,000 silver coins!

²⁰So the message of the Lord continued to go everywhere, with power that continued to conquer.

The Riot in Ephesus

²¹Right after all this happened, Paul decided to leave and go thru both northern and southern Greece, and then to Jerusalem. “After I’ve been there,” Paul said, “I must also visit Rome.”

²²But Paul stayed a while longer in the province of Asia, although he sent two of his assistants, Timothy and Erastus, into northern Greece.

²³About this time, a great disturbance erupted in Ephesus as a result of the Christian advance.

²⁴The man who started it all was Demetrius, a silversmith who made miniature silver shrine models of the temple of the Ephesian goddess Artemis. The profit made by these craftsmen was no small amount.

²⁵Demetrius called the silversmiths together, along with those in related trades, and said: “Men, you all know that we can continue to make good money only if we can continue to make and sell these shrines.

²⁶“And you’ve all seen and heard what this fellow Paul has done, how he’s preached, not only here in Ephesus, but thruout almost all of Asia. He’s persuading and convincing vast numbers of people that gods made by human hands are not gods at all!

²⁷“So not only is our trade in danger of becoming despised, but also the people will come to consider the temple of the great goddess Artemis as worthless. In that event, even Artemis, whom all in Asia and the world worship, will be stripped of all her glory!”

²⁸After listening to this blistering tirade, the men gathered there became furious, and began furiously shouting,^a “Great is Artemis, the goddess of the Ephesians! Great is Artemis, the goddess of the

19:19a Refers to books that contained spells, charms, and magical formulas.

19:28a Continuous shouting, indicated by imper-

Ephesians!”

²⁹This threw the whole city into an uproar, until the people made one mad rush for the theater, dragging along with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from northern Greece.

³⁰When Paul wanted to go in and speak to the people, the Lord’s followers wouldn’t let him.

³¹Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent word to him begging him not to venture into the theater.

³²Meanwhile inside, they kept on shouting, some one thing, some another. The whole place was in an uproar. In fact, most of the people didn’t even know what the meeting was all about.

³³Finally, the Jews brought Alexander out of the crowd and pushed him forward. He put up his hand, motioning for silence, as he wished to present his defense before the people.

³⁴But when the crowd realized he was a Jew, they all began shouting in unison, “Great is Artemis, the goddess of the Ephesians!” And they continued shouting this for about two hours.

³⁵When the city clerk was finally able to calm the crowd, he said, “People of Ephesus, who doesn’t know that the city of the Ephesians is the guardian of the temple of the great goddess Artemis, and of her image which fell down from Zeus?”

³⁶“Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you must calm down so you don’t take some foolhardy action.

³⁷“These men you have brought here are neither temple thieves nor have they heaped abuse on your goddess with foul language and cursing.

³⁸“If Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are judges. Let them bring their accusations there.

³⁹“If other matters need attention, they must be settled in a legal assembly.

⁴⁰“Because we are in danger of being accused by the Roman government of starting a riot as a result of today’s uproar. And there’s no good reason we can give for this disorderly gathering.”

⁴¹When he finished speaking, he dismissed the meeting.

Paul Goes to Macedonia and Greece

20 After the uproar died down, Paul sent out a call to the Lord’s followers to meet with him. After giving them words of encouragement, he bid them farewell and left for northern Greece.

²He gave many encouraging messages as he traveled thru northern Greece, and then went down to southern Greece, where he stayed for three months.

³But when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to return thru northern Greece.

⁴Several men accompanied him to the province of Asia^a: Sopater from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia,^a and Timothy.

⁵All of these went ahead, and waited for us at Troas.

⁶After the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we sailed from Philippi, Greece, and five days later, joined the others in Troas, where we stayed a week.

Paul’s Last Visit to Troas

⁷On Saturday evening,^a the followers came together for a communion service, and Paul spoke to them. And since he was getting ready to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight.

⁸There were many oil lamps burning in the upstairs room where they met.

⁹And as Paul kept preaching on and on, a young teenager named Eutychus, who was sitting in an open window, became very drowsy and began falling asleep. Finally he did fall asleep, and fell to the ground from the third story. He was dead when they picked him up.

¹⁰But Paul immediately went down and threw himself on the young man and embraced him. “Don’t be alarmed,” he then said. “He’s alive!”

¹¹After Paul went back upstairs and took part in a communion service, and then in a fellowship dinner, he again spoke at length—until daybreak—and then left.

¹²The family that was then able to bring the young man home alive was truly comforted in

fect tense.

20:4a Western Turkey.

20:7a The first day of the week for the Jews (Sunday) began on our Saturday evening at sundown.

20:12a Present participle—present, continuous action.

20:21b Is Paul actually saying here that one must obey God besides believing in Jesus as Savior in order to gain eternal life? See 26:18-20 and Appendix 211, page 476.

20:23a Present participle—present, continuous action.

great measure.

¹³We then went ahead and boarded the ship and sailed off to Assos, where Paul planned to join us. These were Paul's arrangements, as he intended to walk there.

¹⁴When he met us at Assos, we took him on board and continued on to Mitylene.

¹⁵We sailed on from there and the next day arrived offshore from the island of Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos Island, and stayed overnight at Trogyllium. The next day we reached Miletus.

¹⁶Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending any time during this trip in the province of Asia, as he was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem—hopefully, by the Day of Pentecost.

Paul's Farewell to the Ephesian Elders

¹⁷However, on reaching Miletus, he sent a message to Ephesus calling the elders of the church to meet with him.

¹⁸When they arrived, he said, "You know the kind of life I lived when I was with you, from the very first day I came into your province.

¹⁹"And you will recall how I served the Lord humbly, shedding many tears as a result of the trials that came my way by the plotting of the Jews.

²⁰"I never refrained from telling you anything that was for your good, both as I taught you publicly and in your homes.

²¹"To both Jews and Greeks, my earnest and emphatic message was always the same^a: 'You must both turn from your sinning and obey God, and believe in our Lord Jesus^b the Messiah as your Savior!'

²²"And now I am on my way to Jerusalem, strongly urged on by the Holy Spirit, but with a sense of foreboding, as I don't know what will happen to me there.

²³"All I know is that the Holy Spirit continues to testify solemnly and earnestly^a in every city, that jail and deep trouble are ahead for me.^b

²⁴"But none of these messages from the Holy Spirit cause me any real concern, as I don't look at my life as something to be selfishly guarded. My only concern is to finish my race with joy, by completing the assignment I received from the Lord

Jesus, that of most solemnly and earnestly announcing the Great News about the undeserved kindness and mercy of God toward man.

²⁵"I have spent much time with you, telling you about the Kingdom of God. But now I know that none of you will ever see me again.

²⁶"So I solemnly say this to you: If any of you should be lost, I am not the one responsible.

²⁷"I have held nothing back. I have given you God's complete message.

²⁸"So follow my example and keep a close watch on your own lives and on the lives of the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you the guardians. See to it that you continually shepherd^a the Lord's church, that He bought at such great cost with His own shed blood.

²⁹"Because I know this, that after I leave you, false teachers, like bloodthirsty wolves, will appear among you—and they won't spare the flock.

³⁰"Even from among yourselves some will rise up and twist and distort the truth in order to get the Lord's followers to break away and follow them.

³¹"So you are the ones who must now be constantly on your guard, always remembering that with tears, for three years, night and day, I never stopped advising and warning each one of you.

³²"And now, my dear beloved friends, I turn you over to God, and to the message of His mercy and goodwill, which can build you up and give you an inheritance along with all those who have in all sincerity and honesty given their whole hearts to God.^a

³³"I have never wanted any gold or silver or clothing belonging to anyone.

³⁴"In fact, you all know that I worked with my own hands to supply my personal needs, and the needs of those who were with me.

³⁵"All along I have offered you an example, to show you that we have a duty to help the weak. And we are always to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, when He said, 'You will receive greater happiness and success in every way when you give—much more so than when you receive.'"

³⁶After he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed.

³⁷They all cried a great deal as they hugged and kissed^a him good-bye.

20:23b The Holy Spirit was no doubt speaking to Paul thru other believers speaking in tongues and interpretation, and thru those with the gift of prophecy.

20:28a Present participle—present, continuous action. To tend, guard, watch over carefully, shelter,

protect, guide, preserve, look after, lead, oversee.

20:32a We must study and meditate often on God's word. And we must come often to God to take inventory, to make sure we haven't taken back from Him any of what we have given Him of ourselves.

20:37a The eastern custom is still to hug and kiss

³⁸His statement that they would never see him again especially grieved them. Then they walked with him to the ship.

Paul's Journey to Jerusalem

21 After we had torn ourselves away from them, our ship set sail and we put out to sea and headed straight for Cos. The next day we reached Rhodes, and from there we sailed to Patara.

²Upon finding a ship there that was crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and sailed with them.

³When the island of Cyprus came into view, we sailed south of it and continued on our voyage to Syria. We docked at Tyre, where the ship was to unload its cargo.

⁴When we found the Lord's followers who lived there, we stayed a week with them. Thru the Holy Spirit they kept telling Paul to give up his plan to visit Jerusalem.

⁵But when our time was up, we left and continued on our way. The entire congregation, including wives and children, went with us, until we were outside the city. There we knelt down together on the shore and prayed.

⁶When we had finally said our last good-bye, we boarded the ship, and they returned to their homes.

⁷Our voyage ended after we sailed from Tyre to Ptolemais. We brought greetings to the Lord's followers there, and stayed with them one day.

⁸The next day, Paul, and those of us who were accompanying him, left and went on to Caesarea. There we went to the home of Philip the evangelist, one of the seven original deacons,^a and stayed with him.

⁹He had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy.

¹⁰After we had been there several days, a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, came down from Judea.

¹¹When he arrived, he took Paul's belt, and tied his own hands and feet with it. Then he said, "This is what the Holy Spirit is saying, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will tie up the man who owns this belt. Then they will hand him over to the Romans.'"

¹²When we heard this, both we and those who lived there pleaded most earnestly with Paul to

abandon his visit to Jerusalem.

¹³"What are you doing here," Paul responded, "crying like this and breaking my heart? Not only am I willing to be bound, but I am also willing to die in Jerusalem for the sake of Jesus Christ."

¹⁴So when it became clear that we couldn't change his mind, we gave in, and said, "May the Lord's will be done."

¹⁵When our visit there was over, we got our things together and went up to Jerusalem.

¹⁶Some of the followers from Caesarea also went with us. They brought with them a man named Mnason, in whose home we were to stay. He was from Cyprus, and had been a follower since the early days.

Paul's Visit With James

¹⁷When we arrived in Jerusalem, the Lord's followers there warmly welcomed us.

¹⁸The next day Paul and the rest of us went in to see James. All the other elders were also there.

¹⁹After Paul had greeted them he gave them a complete, detailed report of what God had done among the Gentiles thru his witness.

²⁰When they had heard his report, they praised the Lord. But then they said, "You see, brother, how many thousands upon thousands of Jews have become followers—but all of them are also zealous about obeying the Law of Moses.

²¹"But they've been repeatedly told that you teach all Jews who live among the Gentiles to abandon the teachings of Moses, and that you tell them they should not circumcise their children or follow any of the Jewish customs.

²²"What should we do about this? The people will certainly hear that you have come, and they'll want to meet with you about this.

²³"So why not do this? Four of our men have made solemn promises to God.

²⁴"Go with them and join them in the ceremony of purification, and pay their expenses to have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know that these rumors about you are not true, but that you yourself live in accordance with the requirements of the Laws of Moses.

²⁵"But we have written the Gentile followers that in our judgment they do not need to observe these Laws, but that they refrain from eating food offered to idols, from eating blood or the meat of

on the cheek. The tense is imperfect active, denoting repeated kissing, or probably one after the other embracing and kissing him.

21:8a 6:1-6.

21:25a See Ephesians 5:3 note.

22:9a Acts 9:7.

strangled animals, and from sexual immorality.”^a

²⁶So the next day, Paul took the four men and was purified along with them. He then went to the Temple to announce the date when the purification would end. At that time, a sacrifice would be offered for each one of them.

Paul Arrested

²⁷But when the seven days had nearly ended, some Jews from the province of Asia saw him in the Temple courts, and they turned everyone there against him.

²⁸Grabbing hold of him they screamed, “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who’s going around speaking to everyone everywhere against our people and the Law, and against this holy place! And added to that he’s also defiled this holy place by bringing some Greeks into the Temple!”

²⁹(They said this because they had previously seen Trophimus from Ephesus with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the Temple as well.)

³⁰This aroused the whole city, and the people came running together from every direction. They grabbed hold of Paul and dragged him out of the Temple courts, and immediately the gates were shut.

³¹As they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman garrison that all Jerusalem was rioting.

³²He at once took some captains and soldiers and ran down to the mob. As soon as the rioters saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

³³The commander then took Paul from them, and gave orders that he be bound with two chains. Then he asked the people, “Who is this man? What’s the problem?”

³⁴In response the crowd began shouting, some one thing, some another. So when he couldn’t make out what the truth was because of the turmoil, he ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks.

³⁵When they reached the steps to the barracks, the mob became so violent that the soldiers had to carry him.

³⁶And still the mob followed, shouting, “Away with him! Away with him!”

Paul’s Defense before the Angry Crowd

³⁷As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, “May I speak to

you?”

“Do you speak Greek?” he replied.

³⁸“Aren’t you the Egyptian who stirred up a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the desert some time ago?”

³⁹“No, I am a Jew from Tarsus, an important city in Cilicia,” Paul replied. “May I have your permission to speak to the people?”

⁴⁰Upon receiving permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned with his hand to the crowd. When there was a great hush, he spoke to them in Hebrew, saying,

22 “Brothers and fathers, please allow me to explain what has happened.”

²When they heard him speaking to them in Hebrew, they became even more quiet.

³“I am indeed a Jew,” he said, “born in Tarsus in Cilicia. But I was brought up in this city, and educated under Gamaliel, who taught me the Law of our Fathers with uncompromising exactness. And I was just as zealous and fired up to obey God as all of you are today.

⁴“I persecuted to death those who followed the Way of Jesus, arresting both men and women, and throwing them in jail.

⁵“The High Priest and the whole Council can tell you that this is true, because they are the ones who gave me letters of introduction to our Jewish leaders in Damascus. With those letters in hand, I was on my way to Damascus to arrest these followers of Jesus and bring them to Jerusalem in chains to receive their punishment.

⁶“About noon, as I was on my way and approaching Damascus, a most brilliant bolt of light from the sky suddenly blazed all around me.

⁷“I fell to the ground, and then I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you so cruel to Me?’

⁸“Who are you, Sir?” I asked.

‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, the One you are persecuting,’ He answered.

⁹“The men with me also saw the light, and were frightened. But they didn’t understand what the One speaking was saying to me.”^a

¹⁰“What do You want me to do, Lord?” I asked Him.

‘Get up and go into Damascus,’ the Lord replied. ‘There you will be told about all the things you have been assigned to do.’

¹¹“But since I had been blinded by the brilliance of the intense light, the men with me had to take

me by the hand and lead me into Damascus.

¹²“Then a man by the name of Ananias came to see me. He was a devout man by the standards of the Jewish Law, and highly respected by all the Jews living there.

¹³“He came and stood by my side and said, ‘Brother Saul, look up here.’ And the moment I turned my eyes toward him I could see again!^a

¹⁴“Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you to know how He wants His people to live and serve Him. You will see the Righteous One and receive understanding and instructions directly from His own mouth.

¹⁵‘You will be His witness to everyone, telling them what you have both seen and heard.

¹⁶‘And now, what are you waiting for?’ Ananias continued. ‘Get up and be baptized, and wash your sins away by calling on the name of the Lord.’^a

¹⁷“When I went back to Jerusalem, I was praying in the Temple one day when I had a vision.

¹⁸“I saw Jesus, and He said to me, ‘Hurry! Get out of Jerusalem immediately! Be quick about it, because the people here will refuse to listen to what you have to tell them about Me!’

¹⁹‘But Lord,’ I said, ‘they know I went into every synagogue, imprisoning and beating those who believe in You.

²⁰‘And when your witness, Stephen, was killed because he boldly spoke out for You, I was standing there, agreeing that he should die. I was even guarding the clothes of those who were killing him!’

²¹‘Leave this place!’ He then said to me, ‘because I’m going to send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

Paul and the Roman Commander

²²The mob listened to Paul until he said he had been sent by the Lord to the Gentiles. But then they roared their disapproval, shouting, “Away with such a fellow! Kill him! He’s not fit to live!”

²³As they continued screaming, they tore off their coats and threw dust into the air.

²⁴Whereupon the Roman commander ordered the captains to have Paul brought into the barracks. He also ordered that he be whipped, in order to force a confession from him. He wanted to find out why the mob was so violently against him.

²⁵But as he was being tied with leather thongs and stretched out for the whipping, Paul said to the captain standing by, “Is it legal for you to whip

a Roman citizen before he’s been found guilty?”

²⁶When the captain heard this, he went to the commander and said, “Do you realize what you’re about to do? This man is a Roman citizen.”

²⁷The commander then went to Paul and asked, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?”

“Yes,” he replied.

²⁸“It took a large sum of money for me to get my citizenship,” the commander said.

“But I was born a citizen,” Paul responded.

²⁹As a result, those who were about to force a confession from him simply vanished. Even the commander was afraid, once he realized that he had taken Paul, a Roman citizen, and tied him up to be whipped.

Paul’s Trial before the Council

³⁰However, he still wanted to know what charges the Jews were making against Paul. So the next day, he ordered the chief priests and their entire Council to assemble. Then he had Paul’s chains taken off, and brought him in before them.

23 Then Paul, looking straight into the eyes of the Council members, said, “Men and brothers, up to this moment I have a clear conscience about the way I have lived to please God.”

²Immediately the High Priest, Ananias, ordered those standing near him to strike him in the mouth.

³“God is about to strike you, you whitewashed wall!^a!” Paul retorted. “There you sit, intending to judge me according to the Law, but at the same time you are breaking the Law by commanding these men to strike me.”

⁴“How dare you insult God’s High Priest?” challenged those standing near him.

⁵“Brothers,” Paul replied, “I didn’t realize he was the High Priest, because the Scriptures tell us, ‘You shall not speak disrespectfully about a ruler of your people.’”^a

⁶But then Paul remembered that the Jewish Council was made up of both Pharisees and Sadducees, so he shouted, “Men and brothers, I am a Pharisee, and my father was a Pharisee. The reason I am being judged here today is because of the confident assurance I have that the dead will be resurrected to live again!”

⁷That statement caused an argument between the Pharisees and Sadducees, causing a split in the Council.

22:16a ... our Savior for pardon and the new birth (a new beginning, and a new life lived in fel-

lowship with God, and in obedience to Him).

23:3a A hypocrite, fraud, deceiver.

⁸Because the Sadducees claim there will be no resurrection, and that there are no angels or spirits, while the Pharisees believe in all of them.

⁹So a lot of shouting was the result. The teachers of the Law who were Pharisees stood up and fiercely argued, “We don’t find anything wrong with this man! If a spirit or an angel has spoken to him,” they said, “let’s not fight against God!”

¹⁰The argument became so heated that the commander feared Paul would be torn apart by them. So he ordered his soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and return him to the barracks.

¹¹But that night, the Lord stood beside him and said, “Keep up your courage, Paul! Because in the same way that you have courageously and earnestly taken a stand for Me here in Jerusalem, you must also tell others about Me in Rome.”

The Plot to Kill Paul

¹²The next morning, however, some of the Jews got together and asked God to curse them if they ate or drank anything until they had killed Paul.

¹³More than 40 men were involved in this conspiracy.

¹⁴Then they went to the chief priests and elders and said, “We have bound ourselves by an oath, asking God to send a curse upon us if we eat anything before we kill Paul.

¹⁵“Now then, we ask that you, together with the Council, ask the Roman commander to bring Paul down to you tomorrow so you can further study his case. We are prepared to kill him before he ever gets near this place.”

¹⁶But the son of Paul’s sister heard of the plot, so he went into the barracks and told Paul.

¹⁷Paul then called one of the captains over to him and said, “Please take this young man to the commander. He has a very important message for him.”

¹⁸So the captain brought the boy to the commander and said, “Paul, the prisoner, called me over and asked that I bring this young man to you. He has an important message for you.”

¹⁹The commander then took the boy by the hand and brought him aside. There he asked him privately, “What is it you wish to tell me?”

²⁰“The Jewish leaders have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to again appear before the Council,” he said, “pretending they want to question him some more.

²¹“But please don’t do it, because more than 40

men will be waiting to attack him. They have put themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they kill him. They are ready right now, just waiting for you to promise you’ll send him.”

²²The commander said, “Don’t tell even one person that you told me this,” after which he dismissed him.

Paul Is Sent to Governor Felix

²³Then he called for two particular captains and ordered them, “Get 200 soldiers ready, as well as 70 horsemen and 200 soldiers armed with spears. You are to leave with them for Caesarea at nine o’clock tonight.

²⁴“Also have horses ready for Paul to ride, and bring him safely to Governor Felix.”

²⁵Then he wrote the following letter:

²⁶From Claudius Lysias,
To His Excellency, Governor Felix:
Greetings!

²⁷This man was mobbed by the Jews, and was about to be killed by them. When I learned that he was a Roman citizen, I rushed in with my troops and rescued him.

²⁸I wanted to know what they had against him, so I brought him down to appear before their Council.

²⁹I found he was being accused in some controversy involving their religion, but it certainly wasn’t anything that would require the death penalty or even jail.

³⁰When I learned that the Jews are still plotting to kill him, I immediately sent him on to you. I have also ordered his accusers to state their charges against him before you. Farewell.

³¹So the soldiers took Paul, as they had been ordered, and brought him that night as far as Antipatris.

³²The next day, they let the soldiers on horses continue on with him, and the foot soldiers returned to the barracks.

³³When the horsemen arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and turned Paul over to him.

³⁴When the governor had finished reading the letter, he asked Paul what province he was from.

“From Cilicia,” Paul replied.

³⁵“I will give your case a full hearing when your accusers also arrive,” he said. Then he ordered that he be kept in jail at Herod’s palace.

The Trial before Felix

24 Five days later, Ananias the High Priest arrived with the elders and a certain lawyer named Tertullus, to present their case against Paul before the governor.

² Paul was sent for, and after he arrived, Tertullus began his accusations:

“Thanks to Your Excellency we have enjoyed a long period of peace,” he said, addressing the governor. “Because of your insight, our nation is becoming prosperous everywhere and in every way.

³ “We are most grateful and thankful for these blessings, Most Excellent Felix.

⁴ “But I don’t want to take up too much of your time, so I beg you to listen kindly to us for just a few minutes.

⁵ “We have found this man to be a most dangerous troublemaker, a real pest. He has constantly been stirring up riots among the Jews thruout the world. He’s a ringleader of the Nazarene sect.

⁶ “He even tried to desecrate the Temple. We arrested him and wanted to judge him according to our Law.

⁷ “But Commander Lysias came along and violently took him out of our hands. Now he has ordered his accusers to come before you.

⁸ “By questioning him yourself, you can verify these accusations.”

⁹ Then the other Jews also joined in the attack, insisting that all this was true.

¹⁰ The governor then motioned to Paul to speak. “I am very happy, your Honor, to defend myself before you,” Paul began, “as I know you have administered justice in the affairs of our nation for many years.

¹¹ “You can easily verify that it was no more than twelve days ago that I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

¹² “My accusers didn’t find me arguing with anyone, or stirring up a riot, neither in the Temple, the synagogue, nor anywhere else in the city.

¹³ “Nor can they prove the charges which they are now making against me.

¹⁴ “I confess that I do serve the God of our fathers by following the Way of Jesus, which they call a sect. But I still believe everything that is written in the Law and in the Prophets.

¹⁵ “I have the same hope in God that these men

have—that there will be a resurrection of the dead, of both those who have lived pure and honest lives, and of those who have lived in sin.^a

¹⁶ “Because of this, I do my best to keep my conscience clear at all times, by living honorably in my dealings with both God and man.

¹⁷ “And now, after many years of absence, I returned to bring gifts to the poor in my nation and to offer sacrifices.

¹⁸ “It was while I was doing this that some Jews from the province of Asia found me in the Temple after I had completed the ceremony of purification. I hadn’t gathered a crowd, and there was no riot.

¹⁹ “It is those Jews who ought to present themselves before you and accuse me, if they have anything against me.

²⁰ “Or let these who are here speak up, if they found me guilty of any crime when I stood before their Council,

²¹ unless it was the one statement I made when I cried out, ‘I am being judged by you today for only one reason, because I believe in the resurrection of the dead!’”

²² After hearing both sides, Felix, who was well informed about the Way of Jesus, put the Council off by saying, “I will make a thorough examination regarding your case when Commander Lysias comes down.”

²³ He then ordered the captain to keep Paul under guard, but to allow him some freedom and to allow his friends to visit him and bring him whatever he needed.

Paul before Felix and Drusilla

²⁴ Several days later Felix sent for Paul. His wife Drusilla, a Jewess, was with him, and they listened as Paul explained what it meant to believe in Christ Jesus.^a

²⁵ But as Paul told him about the absolute necessity of living a life of purity, goodness, and self-control,^a as well as about the coming Day of Judgment, Felix became frightened, and said, “That’s all for now. When I find a convenient time I’ll call for you again.”

²⁶ He was also hoping that Paul would offer him money to release him, so he called him in quite often and talked with him.

²⁷ Two years later, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. But because Felix wanted to gain favor

selfish, forbidden, immoral gratification, or, complete joy and pleasures forever. See Psalm 16:11.

24:24a What does it mean to believe in Jesus? See

Luke 14:26-33; John 3:36; Acts 16:31; Galatians 3:11, and the notes there.

24:25a ... *if one is to escape God's judgment*

with the Jews, he left Paul in jail.

Paul Asks to be Tried by the Roman Emperor

25 Three days after Festus arrived in the province, he left Caesarea and went up to Jerusalem.

²There the High Priest and other Jewish leaders brought their charges against Paul before him.

³They also asked him to order Paul's transfer to Jerusalem, because they were still plotting to ambush and kill him on the way.

⁴But Festus said, "Paul should stay in Caesarea, and I'll be returning there soon.

⁵"So let your leaders go with me and press charges if he has done any wrong."

⁶He stayed more than ten days in Jerusalem, and then returned to Caesarea. The next day, he took his place on the judge's bench and ordered that Paul be brought in.

⁷When Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around making many serious charges against him. But they couldn't prove any of them.

⁸In his defense, Paul continued to insist, "I am not guilty. I have committed no crime against the Jewish Law or the Temple or against the Emperor."

⁹But Festus, who wanted to please the Jewish leaders, asked Paul, "Would you be willing to go up to Jerusalem and be tried on these charges before me there?"

¹⁰"I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I should be tried," Paul replied. "I have not wronged the Jews in any way, as you well know.

¹¹"But if I had committed a crime deserving death, I would not beg to escape the death penalty. But the charges these men are bringing against me amount to nothing, and no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal for a hearing before Caesar!"

¹²On hearing this, Festus talked the matter over with his legal advisers. Then turning to Paul he said, "You have appealed to Caesar, so to Caesar you will go!"

Paul Before Agrippa and Bernice

¹³Several days later, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay official respects to Festus.

¹⁴They had been there several days when Festus told the king about Paul's case. "There's a man

here," he said, "who was left in jail by Felix.

¹⁵"When I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews talked to me about him, insisting that I condemn him.

¹⁶"I, of course, reminded them that Roman law does not allow a man to be condemned before he's been allowed to meet his accusers face to face so that he can defend himself against the charges being made.

¹⁷"So when they came here with me from Jerusalem, I convened the court the next day without delay, and ordered that the accused be brought in.

¹⁸"But when his accusers got up to speak, they didn't accuse him of anything I had supposed they would.

¹⁹"Instead, they brought up some trivia about their own religion in which Paul didn't believe as they did. They also differed about someone named Jesus who had died, but whom Paul kept insisting was alive.

²⁰"Perplexed as to how to handle such a case, I asked him if he would go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these charges.

²¹"But when Paul appealed his case to the Emperor, I ordered that he remain in custody until I could send him to Caesar."

²²"As a matter of fact," Agrippa said, "I've been wanting to hear^a the man myself."

"I'll arrange for you to hear him tomorrow," Festus agreed.

²³So the next day, after Agrippa and Bernice had entered the audience hall with great pomp and ceremony, along with the army commanders and prominent men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in.

²⁴Then Festus addressed those assembled: "King Agrippa, and all of you present here with us, you see this man standing here. The entire Judean community has brought charges against him before me, both while I was in Jerusalem, and also after I returned here. They continue to loudly demand that he should not be allowed to live any longer.

²⁵"But I haven't found him guilty of anything deserving death. And since he has himself requested that his case be tried before the Emperor, I've decided to send him to Rome.

²⁶"But I have nothing that amounts to anything that I can write to His Majesty concerning the

and gain eternal life ... (Note Paul's concern about his own living in vss 15-16.)

25:22a Imperfect tense—action in past time that

continues.

26:1a ... as orators were prone to do in that day

charges against him. So I've brought him out to appear before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after this inquiry I may have at least something to write.

²⁷“After all, it seems rather senseless to me to send a prisoner to the Emperor without stating valid charges against him.”

Paul's Defense before Agrippa

26 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You may speak for yourself.” So extending his right hand,^a Paul presented his defense, saying:

²“I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I may stand before you here today, in order to defend myself in regard to all the things that I am accused of by my own people.

³“The main reason for my confidence is because you are so well acquainted with all the customs and concerns of the Jews. So I ask you to listen to me patiently.

⁴“All the Jews know the kind of life I've lived from my earliest youth, because I lived from the very beginning among my own people, the Jews, in Jerusalem.

⁵“They know first of all, if they would admit it, that I lived in full obedience to the most demanding branch of our religion, as a Pharisee.

⁶“And now I stand here on trial because of the hope I have in the promise God made to our people long ago.

⁷“In fact, it is the hope of the fulfillment of this very promise that keeps our twelve tribes devotedly serving God day and night. And yet, O King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that I am accused by the Jews.

⁸“Why should any of you think it incredible to believe that God raises the dead back to life?

⁹“But I myself once thought it my duty to take extreme measures and do everything in my power to fight the cause and influence of Jesus, the Nazarene.

¹⁰“And that's exactly what I did in Jerusalem. I jailed many who were dedicated to Jesus, having been authorized by the chief priests to do so. And when they were put to death, I agreed, and cast my vote against them.

¹¹“I often went from one synagogue to another to have them punished and to do my best to compel them to renounce their faith and curse this Jesus. And because of my extreme hatred for them, I even went to foreign cities to hunt them down.

¹²“It was on just such a trip, as I was on my way to Damascus, after having been authorized and commissioned by the chief priests,

¹³that about noon, O King, as I was traveling the highway, I saw a bolt of light from the sky more brilliant than the sun. It blazed all around me and around those traveling with me.

¹⁴“We all fell to the ground. Then I heard someone say to me in Hebrew, ‘Saul! Saul! why are you so cruel to Me? It is hard on you to continually kick against the prods^a of your Master.’

¹⁵“So I said, ‘Who are you, Sir?’ And He replied, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

¹⁶“But get up on your feet now. Because I have appeared to you for the very purpose of making you a minister and a witness of the things you have seen, and also of things I will reveal when I appear to you later on.

¹⁷“I will continually rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles to whom I am now sending you.

¹⁸“You are to open their eyes to the truth, so they may turn from living in Satan's darkness to living in God's Light, and so they may turn from allowing Satan to rule their lives to allowing God to rule. They must do this in order to receive forgiveness of their sins and a share in the inheritance that will be theirs together with all others who are made holy by believing in Me.”^a

¹⁹“And King Agrippa, I did not disobey the command I received in that vision from Heaven.

²⁰“First, I spoke to the people in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and thruout the entire province of Judea, and finally to the Gentiles. I preached that they must have a complete change of mind and heart, and turn from their sinning to obedience to God. And they must then prove they have truly been changed by continuing to live in obedience to God.”^a

²¹“That's why the Jews mobbed me in the Temple courts and tried to kill me.

...

26:14a Actually a goad, a stick with a pointed end for driving cattle.

26:18a Notice again that repentance comes first. We must first turn from our sins to obey and serve God. Then He will grant forgiveness. But still, both occur at the same moment. The moment you com-

mit yourself wholly to God, in all sincerity, God will forgive you thru Jesus Christ.

It's true, we are not saved by works. But obedience is not works. Every sensible father expects and demands obedience on the part of his children. An obedient child will also do the work his father assigns him.

²²“But with God’s help and protection, I have continued to this day to take my stand. To both small and great I preach nothing except what Moses and the prophets said would happen.

²³“I pointed out to them how the Scriptures prophesied that Messiah would suffer,^a and that, by His resurrection^b from the dead, He would be the first to bring light and understanding to both Jews and Gentiles.”

²⁴At this point in Paul’s defense, Festus shouted, “Paul, you’re crazy! All your great education is driving you insane!”

²⁵“I am not crazy, Most Excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I’m saying is reasonable. What’s more, it is true.

²⁶“The king before whom I am freely speaking is well informed about these matters. I’m sure that none of these events has escaped his attention, because they did not take place in some dark corner.

²⁷“King Agrippa, do you believe what the prophets said? I know you do.”

²⁸The king replied, “In a short while you’ll convince me to become a Christian.”

²⁹“Whether in a short while or a long while,” Paul replied, “I pray God that not only you but also all who are listening to me today may become the same as I am—except, of course, for these chains.”

³⁰When Paul finished that statement, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and all who sat there with them.

³¹After they left, they spoke among themselves in agreement, saying, “This man hasn’t done anything to warrant the death sentence or even jail.”

³²Agrippa then said to Festus, “He could have been set free if he hadn’t appealed to Caesar.”

Paul Sails for Rome

27 When it was finally decided that we were to sail for Italy, they put Paul and several other prisoners in the custody of a man named Julius, a captain of the Augustan Regiment.

²So, after boarding a ship from Adramyttium, we put out to sea, intending to sail along the coast of the province of Asia. Aristarchus from Thessaloni-

ca, in northern Greece, was with us.

³The next day we docked at Sidon. Captain Julius was very kind to Paul, even letting him go ashore to visit some of his friends and accept their hospitality.

⁴When we put to sea from Sidon, we encountered strong westerly winds blowing against us. So we sailed on the sheltered side of Cyprus.

⁵After sailing along the coasts of the provinces of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we crossed the open sea and landed at Myra in the province of Lycia.

⁶There the captain found a ship from Alexandria that was sailing to Italy, so he put us on board.

⁷For many days we made very slow progress, but with great difficulty we finally arrived off the town of Cnidus. Since the wind wouldn’t allow us to continue our course, we sailed along the sheltered side of Crete, offshore from Cape Salmone.

⁸The sailing was difficult here too, but we finally came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea.

⁹We had lost a lot of time by now, and sailing had become dangerous because it was already past the Day of Atonement.^a

¹⁰So Paul advised them, “Men, from what I can see, this voyage will end in disaster and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our own lives.”

¹¹But the captain paid more attention to the pilot and the owner of the ship than to what Paul said.

¹²Also, because the harbor was not a good one to winter in, most of the men were in favor of putting out to sea and try, if possible, to reach Phoenix, a harbor in Crete which faced both northeast and southeast, and spend the winter there.

The Storm at Sea

¹³And when a gentle southern breeze began blowing, they believed they had gotten what they had hoped for. So they pulled up anchor and began sailing close to the shore of Crete.

¹⁴It wasn’t long, however, before a fierce gale of hurricane proportions, called a Northeaster, hurled violently down upon us from the island.

¹⁵It hit the ship so hard that they couldn’t keep it headed into the wind. So they just allowed us to be

Remember, if you are not wholly committed to God, to obey and serve Him, you are not yet converted (born again). And Jesus said that unless you are born again you will never see Heaven and the Kingdom of God. John 3:3.

26:20a ... *if they are to escape God’s judgment, and gain eternal life with Him.*

26:23a See Acts 13:27 the note.

26:23b 1 Corinthians 15:4, and the note.

27:9a Presently called *Yom Kippur* by the Jewish community. It occurs in late September or early October.

27:28a Or 37 meters.

driven along.

¹⁶As we sailed along the southern coast of a small island called Clauda, we pulled the lifeboat aboard and tied it down. We even had a hard time doing that.

¹⁷Then they put cables underneath the ship to hold it together. Then fearing they would run aground on the quicksands off the coast of Libya, they finally lowered the sail and let her drift.

¹⁸The next day, because we were being so violently battered by the storm, they began throwing some of the ship's cargo overboard.

¹⁹On the third day, we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands.

²⁰When we hadn't seen the sun or stars for many days, and the violent storm continued to rage, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

²¹After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not sailed from Crete; then you would have avoided all this damage and loss.

²²"But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because no one here will lose his life. Only the ship will be lost.

²³"Because last night an angel of the God whom I serve and to whom I belong came and stood by me and said,

²⁴"Don't be afraid, Paul, because you must stand before Caesar. In fact, God has given you a safe arrival for all who are sailing with you."

²⁵"So cheer up, men, because I'm convinced that God will do exactly what He told me.

²⁶"But, we must run aground on some island."

²⁷Well, about midnight of the fourteenth night, as we were still being carried here and there on the Adriatic Sea, the sailors began to sense that we were approaching some land.

²⁸So they dropped a line overboard with a weight on it, and found that the water was 120 feet^a deep. A short while later they did it again, and it was only 90 feet deep.^b

²⁹Then, fearing we would run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and then anxiously waited for daylight.

³⁰But then the sailors tried to leave the ship. Pretending they were preparing to drop more anchors from the prow, they lowered the lifeboat into the water.

³¹"Unless these men stay in the ship, you can't be saved!" Paul warned the captain and the soldiers.

³²Immediately the soldiers cut the rope to the lifeboat and let it fall away.

³³It was then about daybreak, so Paul encouraged everyone to eat something. "Today is the 14th day that you've been so concerned that you haven't eaten a thing," he said.

³⁴"So take some nourishment now. You need it in order to survive. Don't worry any longer, because not a one of you will lose as much as a single hair from your head."

³⁵After saying this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all of them. Then he broke it and began to eat.

³⁶The rest were then all encouraged, and they also took food for themselves.

³⁷We were a total of 276 people on that ship.

³⁸After they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship further by throwing the wheat overboard.

The Shipwreck

³⁹Even when daylight came, they couldn't recognize what land they had come to, but they noticed a bay with a beach, so they decided, if possible, to run the ship aground there.

⁴⁰So they cut the ropes attached to the anchors, leaving them in the sea. At the same time, others untied the ropes holding the rudder. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and headed for shore.

⁴¹But the ship got caught in cross-currents and ran aground on a sandbar. The prow stuck firmly and remained immovable, while violent waves kept smashing into the stern and pounding it to pieces.

⁴²The soldiers decided to kill the prisoners to keep them from swimming away and escaping.

⁴³But Captain Julius wanted to save Paul, so he kept them from carrying out their plan. Instead, he ordered that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land.

⁴⁴The rest were to get ashore on planks and other broken pieces of the ship. And that's how they all escaped safely to land.

All Safe on Malta

28 When we were safe on shore, we learned we were on the island of Malta.

²The local people were unusually kind to us. And because it was raining and cold, they built a fire and made us all feel welcome.

³Paul helped by gathering a bundle of sticks.

27:28b Or 27 1/2 meters.

28:11a These were twin sons of Jupiter and Leda

in Roman mythology, said to be patrons of sailors and athletes. Their figures were evidently painted

But when he placed them on the fire, a poisonous viper was forced out by the heat, and latched onto his hand.

⁴When the local people saw the snake hanging there from his hand, they said to one another, “This man must be a murderer, and even though he escaped death at sea, divine justice won’t allow him to live.”

⁵But Paul just shook the snake off into the fire and wasn’t harmed at all.

⁶The people, however, expected to see him swell up or drop dead. But after they’d watched him for a long time and saw that he hadn’t been harmed in any way, they changed their minds and exclaimed, “He’s a god!”

⁷The governor of the island was a man named Publius. He welcomed us to his estate, which was in the area, and for three days he graciously fed and housed us.

⁸Now it happened that the father of Publius was sick in bed, suffering from recurring attacks of fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him.

⁹When this happened, the rest of the sick people on the island came and were healed.

¹⁰In return they honored us with many gifts. And when we set sail, they gave us all the supplies we needed.

Paul Arrives at Rome

¹¹Three months after our shipwreck, we sailed in an Alexandrian ship, decorated with the figure-heads of Castor and Pollux,^a a ship that had wintered in the island.

¹²We landed at Syracuse, and stayed there three days.

¹³Then after some tacking^a we arrived at Rhegium. The next day the south wind started blowing, and a day later we arrived at Puteoli.

¹⁴There we discovered some of the Lord’s followers, who invited us to stay with them a week. From there we went on to Rome.

¹⁵When the followers in Rome heard we were coming, some of them came as far as the town of the Market of Appius^a on the Appian Way to welcome us, while others came as far as the Three

Hotels.^b Paul thanked God when he saw them, and was greatly encouraged.

¹⁶When we arrived in Rome, Captain Julius turned the prisoners over to the captain of the guard. But Paul was permitted to live wherever he wanted, with a soldier guarding him.

Paul Witnesses for Jesus in Rome

¹⁷After only three days, Paul invited the local Judean leaders to meet with him. When they arrived he said, “Men and brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, still I was handed over to the Romans in Jerusalem and have become their prisoner.

¹⁸“After the Jewish leaders had cross-examined me in court, the Romans wanted to release me, because they couldn’t see any reason why I should be put to death.

¹⁹“But when the Jews objected, I had no choice but to appeal to Caesar. But I did not do this in order to level counter-charges against my own people.

²⁰“I called for you because I wanted to meet you and explain to you that I am chained because of the hope of Israel.”^a

²¹“We haven’t received any correspondence from Judea about you,” they replied, “nor have any who have come from there given a bad report or spoken against you.

²²“But we would like to hear what your views are in regard to these Christians. All we know is that people everywhere are speaking against them.”

²³So they set a date, and a large number showed up that day at the place where Paul was staying. Then from morning until evening he went into a very intensive and earnest explanation as he taught them about the Kingdom of God. He also did his best to convince them about Jesus by pointing out the many places in the Law of Moses and the Prophets that refer to Him.^a

²⁴Some were convinced by what he said, but others continued to disbelieve.

²⁵So on that note of disagreement among themselves, they began to leave, but not before Paul had made one final statement, saying, “The Holy Spirit certainly spoke the truth to our ancestors thru

on the prow of this ship, or they may have been carved figures.

28:13a Literally *after going around*.

28:15a About 40 miles from Rome.

28:15b About 30 miles from Rome.

28:20a The *hope of Israel* is the Messiah, the

Christ, and resurrection to eternal life thru Him.

28:23a Paul may have ponted them to Genesis 3:15; 49:10; Deuteronomy 18:15; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; 53:1-12; Daniel 7:13-14; 9:24-26; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 9:9, etc.

28:26-27a Isaiah 6:9-10.

Isaiah the prophet, when he said:

²⁶ Go to these people and tell them, ‘On the matter of listening, you will indeed continue to listen, but you won’t understand. And in regard to looking, you will continue to look, but you won’t gain knowledge.’

²⁷ This is true because their hearts have become calloused. They can scarcely hear with their ears, and they’ve closed their eyes. They’ve done this so they won’t be able to see with their eyes or hear with their ears or understand from their hearts and be changed, and thereby be healed by Me.^a

²⁸ “So I want you to know that God’s salvation has now been offered to the Gentiles, and they will

listen.”

²⁹ After he finished his remarks, the Jews left, arguing intensely among themselves.

³⁰ For two whole years Paul lived in his own rented house, and always welcomed everyone who came to visit him.

³¹ He openly taught them about the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, and the Kingdom of God, and no one tried to stop him.

The last time He was with them, He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem. “You must wait here now,” He said, “until you receive the gift I told you about, the gift My Father promised you.

⁵ “It’s true that John baptized the people in water, but in a few days you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit!”

⁶ And while they were together there, they asked Him, “Lord, is this the time when You will free us from Rome and give the Kingdom back to Israel?”

⁷ “It is not for you to know the dates and periods of time that God has set. He alone has the right to decide such matters,” He replied.

⁸ “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you will then be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and throughout all Judea and Samaria, and even to the most remote parts of the earth.”

³⁸ “Each one of you must now turn from all your sinning and surrender in obedience to the Lord, and be baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah, so that your sins may be forgiven,” Peter replied. “Then you too will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

³⁹ “Because God’s promise is to you and to your children, and even to all those in distant lands and times, to all whom the Lord our God will call.”

—Acts 1:4-8; 2:38-39

Paul's Letter to the ROMANS

A letter from Christ's messenger, Paul, to all those in Rome who love God.

Greetings, from Paul, a slave-servant^a of Jesus Christ, who called me to be His messenger,^b taking me away from all other pursuits to broadcast God's Great News—

²the same Great News that God had long ago promised in the Holy Writings thru His prophets.

³And the Great News is about God's incomparable Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. He was born as a human being into the royal line of King David.

⁴That He was indeed the Son of God was clearly proven by His miraculous power, by the perfectly sinless life He lived, and by the fact that God raised Him from the dead.^a

⁵Yes, it was Christ^a who gave me the undeserved privilege of representing Him as His messenger of this Great News, calling people in every nation to believe in and obey Him.

⁶You in Rome are also included among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

⁷I am writing this to all of you there, because you are all dearly loved by God, and called to be fully devoted to Him. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ grant you undeserved favor and give you great peace of mind and heart.^a

Paul's Burning Desire To Visit Rome

⁸Let me say first of all, I thank my God thru Jesus Christ for every one of you, because people everywhere thruout the world are talking about your genuine faith.

⁹And God, whom I serve with everything that's

in me by preaching the Great News about His Son, is my witness that I continually talk to Him about you in my prayers,

¹⁰always pleading that somehow He will finally clear the way for me to visit you, if He is willing.

¹¹I want so very much to see you, in order to share with you some spiritual gift that will help you to become even more firmly grounded in the faith.

¹²That is, that thru each other's faith and faithfulness—both yours and mine—we can encourage each other as we spend time together.

¹³Now I don't want you to be unaware, my brothers and sisters, that I had often planned to visit you, but until now something has always come up to keep me from doing so.^a I've wanted so much to enjoy some results from working among you also, just as I've experienced among the other Gentiles.^b

¹⁴I am under obligation to reach out to all people, both to the cultured Greeks and the uncivilized, to the educated and the uneducated.

¹⁵So now, with all that's in me, I'm ready and eager to preach the Great News to you in Rome as well.

The Powerful Great News

¹⁶Because in no way am I ashamed of the Great News^a that Christ came to bring us and be to us!^a In fact, that amazing news is God's powerful way of saving everyone who believes.^b This is especially true for the Jew, but also for everyone else.

¹⁷Because the Great News reveals how God is now able, in a just and righteous way, to offer us for-

1:1a The word means one who is totally subject to the will and wholly at the disposal of another. It expresses the condition of one who has a master and is in every respect under his control. By using the word, Paul expresses such absolute subjection and devotion to the Lord Jesus, such as he would never have yielded to a mere human.

1:1b Or *apostle* which means *messenger*.

1:4a God certainly would not have raised Him from the dead if He had been an imposter.

1:5a ... and not any human agency ... 1

Corinthians 15:1-8; Galatians 1:12; Ephesians 3:1-3.

1:7a ... as you give Him your total dedication in trust, worship, obedience, and service.

1:13a In 15:18-24, he tells what prevented him.

1:13b Anyone who is not a Jew.

1:16a The Great News—the Son of God died for our sins, and rose back to life again, that we too might rise and live forever!

1:16b ... believes and puts into practice what Jesus taught, and believes that Jesus, the Son of God, died as a sacrifice for our sins.

giveness for our sins.^a So we are now to progress from faith and obedience to God's previous commands and sacrifices, to faith and obedience to Christ's commands, and to faith in the great sacrifice He made for us.^b Because as the Scripture says,

The one who gains right standing with God will receive eternal life because he believes both what God has promised and commanded.^c

The Guilt of Mankind

¹⁸Because even now, God is revealing His fierce anger from Heaven against all who oppose what is right, and live in sin.^a And in their sinfulness they continually try to suppress^b the truth,

¹⁹in spite of the fact that what is clearly plain to understand about God is right there in their hearts and consciences. In fact, God is the One who put the evidence there in the first place.

²⁰Because God's invisible qualities—His great everlasting power and all the other things that prove that God does indeed exist—have been clearly seen ever since He created the world. They are understood by the things God has made! So sinners everywhere are without any excuse.

²¹But even though they knew about God, they didn't honor and glorify Him as God, nor were they thankful. But they became foolish in their speculations. Then their irresponsible hearts and minds became darkened.

²²Even though they claimed to be wise, they

became utter fools instead.

²³Instead of worshiping, obeying, and rejoicing in our glorious and ever-living God, they carved images made to look like mortal man, birds, animals, and crawling creatures, and worshiped them.

²⁴So, because of their inflexible determination to do only what they themselves wanted to do, God stopped holding them back and abandoned them to the filthy desires of their hearts, allowing them to dishonor and shamefully degrade their bodies among themselves.

²⁵So they threw overboard the truth about God in exchange for the lie, and worshiped and served created things instead of the Creator, who is to be praised forever! And may He indeed ever be praised.

²⁶That's why God finally gave them over to freely indulge their shameful passions. Then even their females^a perverted the natural use of their bodies and became lesbians.

²⁷The males^a also abandoned natural sexual relations with females and burned with passion for each other. Males committed filthy homosexual acts with other males, and as a result they brought upon themselves the continuing punishment they so justly deserved for such filthy perversion.

²⁸And because they didn't want to continue knowing what they so definitely knew about God, God gave them over to a morally corrupt mind. The result was that they continued indulging in

1:17a ... and bring us to Heaven.

1:17b God could not simply say, "I forgive you." His entire Kingdom would fall unless He dealt severely with all rebellion. So God did what was necessary and *right* when He punished sin on the cross in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior. We are now saved from God's judgment by believing on Christ as our Savior and obeying Him as our Lord. See Acts 16:31 note.

1:17c Habakkuk 2:4. See also Romans 2:1-11; 6:16; 10:10; Galatians 3:11 note; Hebrews 5:9. This verse is an expanded translation, in order to bring out the full meaning of the Greek text.

1:18a Galatians 6:7-8.

1:18b Present participle, indicating ongoing action.

1:26-27a Paul so abhorred the lives these people were living that he recoiled at even using the words "women" and "men", but used words that merely denoted the female and male sex, which could also refer to animals in a different context.

Don't Blame God!

Many homosexuals claim they were born this

way. They say, "If God made me this way, what's wrong with my living as I do?" The answer is, God never made anyone homosexual. The God who calls homosexual acts *an abomination* (Leviticus 18:22,28) would never create anyone to live this way. See also Deuteronomy 23:17-18.

In *Barnes' Notes*, Albert Barnes says in regard to Romans 1:26-27, "Perhaps there is no sin which so deeply shows the depravity of man as this; none which would so much induce one to hang his head, and blush to think himself a man."

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, the Apostle Paul lists homosexuality along with many other sinful acts condemned by God.

Someone says, "But I've had these homosexual urgings ever since I was a little kid." Well, the same is true with the rest of us concerning wrong heterosexual urgings, and other sins. Many can say, "I have lied to cover up my actions, and to get what I wanted, ever since I was a little kid." Another can say, "I've had the urge to steal what belonged to others, and to take whatever I could lay my hands on from the time I was a little kid." And the rest of

those acts that should never be indulged in.

²⁹Their lives have become glutted with all kinds of wicked thoughts and actions—sexual immorality, desire for what belongs to others, envy, desire to harm others, quarrels and fights, even murder, lies, and malicious hatred.

³⁰They gossip and speak evil of one another. They hate God. They are violent, proud, arrogant, and boastful. And they're always thinking up new ways of sinning, and added to that, they're disobedient to their parents.

³¹They have no conscience, so they can't be trusted. They don't even love their own family members. They are unforgiving and unmerciful.

³²Even though they know very well that God will do the right thing and fearfully punish all who indulge in such sinning, and that their punishment is living death,^a they not only continue in their sins, but they also applaud and cheer others who continue in the same sins.

The Fairness of God's Judgment

2 But consider now, all you who are passing judgment on others—you are inexcusable, because when you pass judgment on others and then practice the same thing yourself, you are condemning yourself!

²Yes, we all agree that God is just and unerring in His judgment against those who do such things.

³But listen, man, do you actually believe that

when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things, and then continue doing them yourself, that you will escape the unbiased and unerring judgment of God?

⁴Or do you think you can get away with your contemptible attitude toward the abundance of God's kindness, tolerance, and patience toward you? Don't you realize that God, *in giving you all this time*,^a is showing His kindness toward you so that you'll turn from your sinning and turn to Him in faith and obedience?

⁵But the way you're going now, in your hardness, and stubborn, unrepentant attitude, you are piling up a mountain of anger that will be released upon you on the Day when God's great anger is revealed in righteous judgment.

⁶*Don't be fooled!*^a **God will reward each person according to what his actions deserve.**^b

⁷There are some who continue to live for the glory, honor, and everlasting life that God has promised. With patient endurance, they continue doing what is good and right. God will reward these people with eternal life.

⁸But those who live to please themselves and refuse to obey the truth,^a who resist what's good and right and yield to what's wrong—they will most definitely receive the fullness of God's wrath and indignation in great suffering and anguish.^b

⁹This will be true for every person who practices doing evil, especially for the Jew, but also for everyone else.

us have had other strong temptations since we were kids. The reason such things happen is because we have an enemy. His name is Satan. And Satan is allowed by God to test us, and he does so from the time we are very young.

God Is Your Answer!

The answer to your problem and the problem of all other sinners is that you must be born again, as Jesus said. See John 3:1-21 and the notes. And to be born again means to unconditionally surrender all that you know of yourself to all that you know of God, and to aim from this time on to please and obey Him fully. This must be your sincere aim even if you are not always able to perfectly fulfill your intention. No, you can't do that in your own strength. But God has promised to be with you to help you overcome. See Philippians 2:12-13. He has also promised to forgive your past sins thru the suffering and death Jesus suffered and died for you on the cross when He, the Son of God, came to this earth in the form of man, to be your Savior.

God has no desire to condemn you to Hell. He wants to save you from your sin and forgive you, so

that He might bring you to be with Himself forever. *God loves you so very much.* He has been so good to bring you into existence as one of His children, made in His image and likeness. He has such great plans for you, both for this life and for all eternity. But as a homosexual, you must deal with your sin just as the rest of us must deal with any and all temptations that Satan sends our way. Don't settle for defeat when God has made such great provisions for your victory thru Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!

1:32a Revelation 20:10,15.

2:4a Implied.

2:6a Implied.

2:6b Psalm 62:12; Proverbs 24:12.

2:8a ... *about how God has told them they are to live* ... See Hebrews 5:9.

2:8b ... *in an awful Hell, and then the lake of fire.* Revelation 19:19-21; 20:1-15; 21:8. And remember, God will not accept partial obedience. Such a person is a rebel still. None of us are perfect, but our aim and intention must nevertheless be absolute obedience.

¹⁰ But everyone who practices doing what is good and right will receive glory, honor, and great peace. Again, this is especially true for the Jew, but also for everyone else,

¹¹ because God doesn't have any favorites.

¹² All who have sinned without knowing God's written laws will perish just the same, in spite of not knowing the written laws.^a And all who have sinned in spite of knowing God's laws, will be judged by those very laws.

¹³ Because no one is made free of guilt before God by just hearing what God commands. It's those who do what God commands who are free of guilt.

¹⁴ In fact, when Gentiles, who don't have God's written laws, still instinctively obey their own conscience and thereby do what God has commanded, they are in effect obeying God's commands, even though they don't have the Law of Moses.

¹⁵ They give evidence that the requirements of God's laws are actually written in their hearts. Their conscience, which sometimes accuses them and other times defends them, also shows that this is true.

¹⁶ *God will take all these things into consideration^a on the Day when thru Jesus Christ, God's appointed Judge,^b He will judge the secrets of all people, according to the Great News I preach.*

The Jews and the Law

¹⁷ Yes, you are called a Jew, and you're relying upon the fact that you have the rules and regulations given you by Moses. You boast that you are God's chosen people.

¹⁸ You claim you know how God wants you to live—having superior standards of morality, and knowing right from wrong because you've been taught from the Law.

¹⁹ You are, you insist, a guide for the blind—a light for those in spiritual darkness—able to correct the foolish and teach the ignorant.

²⁰ That's how sure you are that in the Law you have all knowledge and truth.

²¹ You, then, who teach others, don't you teach yourself? You who teach that it's wrong to steal, do you steal?

²² You who teach, "You must not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor the worship of idols, do you rob God of tithes, offerings, and the passionate worship you owe Him?^a

²³ You who boast about having God's Law, are you bringing shame on God by breaking the Law?

²⁴ As the Scripture says,

"The name of God is being scorned by the Gentiles because of your actions."^a

²⁵ Circumcision is indeed profitable if you obey the Law, but if you break the Law, your circumcision is of no more value than if you had never been circumcised!

²⁶ So, if a man who is not circumcised obeys what the Law requires,^a won't God regard him as good as circumcised, even though he isn't?

²⁷ And won't the uncircumcised person, who obeys what the Law requires, condemn you, when you still break the Law, although you have the written code and are circumcised?

²⁸ Because one is not truly a Jew just because of visible evidence, nor is true circumcision a visible, physical thing.

²⁹ No, the evidence that one is a real Jew is on the inside. And true circumcision is a circumcision of the heart. Such a person obeys because of a changed heart attitude,^a not because of written laws. And he will be praised by God, even if not by others.

God's Faithfulness

3 What's the advantage then of being a Jew? And what's the benefit of being circumcised?

² There are all kinds of advantages! First of all, it was thru the Jews that God gave His messages to mankind.

³ True, some in Israel refused to believe and obey God, but God's faithfulness^a certainly won't be cancelled out by their unfaithfulness, will it?

⁴ Certainly not! In fact, God will keep His word even if every one of us is discovered to be a liar. As David wrote concerning God:

It will indeed be proven that You spoke the truth, and You will be cleared of all charges when You are judged.^a

2:12a ... *because they have not even lived up to the light and the laws of conscience they do have.* See following verses, also 1:18-25; Luke 12:47-48.

2:16a Implied.

2:16b Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Timothy 4:1,8.

2:22a ... *by worshiping money, things, pleasures, creature comforts, and security here, etc.*

2:24a Isaiah 52:5; Ezekiel 36:22.

2:26a ... *in regard to morals ...*

2:29a See 10:9-10 note.

3:3a ... *to His promises and warnings ...*

3:4a Psalm 51:4. David, speaking to God.

3:11a ... *to learn how to please Him.* Not one of us searched for God. It was He who made the first move and searched us out.

3:12a Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20.

⁵But if our sinning causes people to become more aware of how good God is, what about that? Isn't it then unfair of God to punish us? (I'm just repeating how some people reason.)

⁶Certainly not! If that were so, how could God then judge any who have rebelled and sinned against Him?

⁷Still others might argue, "If God's glory becomes more obvious when His truthfulness is contrasted with my lies, why then am I still condemned as a sinner?"

⁸Well, if that's the case, we might as well say, "Let's live it up in sin so that good may come from it," as some falsely charge that we believe and live, and as others firmly declare that we teach. Such people are justly being condemned by God!

We Are All Guilty

⁹What's the answer then? Are we Jews better than others? Not at all! We've already shown that Jews and all others are alike, under the firm grip of sin.

¹⁰As the Scriptures say:

No one lives like he ought to, not even one person!

¹¹**Not one of them really understands the wisdom of serving and obeying God, and not one earnestly searches for God.^a**

¹²**Every one of them has turned aside to other pursuits. All of them, together, have become worthless. None of them practice true goodness and kindness, not even one!^a**

¹³**Their throats are like stinking, open graves,^a and snake poison is under their lips,^b from which their tongues discharge lies.^a**

¹⁴**Their mouths are open, running sewers of curses and bitter cynicism.^a**

¹⁵**They murder for any reason.**

¹⁶**They leave a trail of ruin and misery wherever they go.**

¹⁷**They know nothing about pursuing peace.^a**

¹⁸**They have no real concern about respecting God or fearing Him.^a**

¹⁹Now we know that whatever God's Law says, it says to those who are under its authority. The result is that we find ourselves with absolutely no

argument—because everyone in the whole world is found guilty before God.

²⁰And we can't become free of our guilt before God by merely reforming now and obeying God's laws, because God's laws can't cancel the sin we've already committed. They only reveal what we should be doing and haven't done.

God's Way of Making People Right

²¹But now God's way of freeing people of guilt before Himself has been clearly revealed. It has nothing to do with obeying the Law, although the Law of Moses and the Prophets spoke about it.^a

²²We can now make peace with God by believing in Jesus Christ^a! Right standing with God is now available to everyone, and will be given to all who become true followers of the Lord.

²³Because there's no difference,^a for all of us have sinned, and we all fall far short of God's perfect standard and character.^b

²⁴But now we can all make peace with God because of what Christ Jesus did to redeem us.^a And it's a free gift—a favor from God that we don't deserve.

²⁵It was God who designed the plan to have Jesus make amends for us by suffering and shedding His blood for us on the cross, so that He could look upon us with kind approval when we believe and accept His gift by faith. He did this to show how altogether right, fair, just, and honorable He is.

²⁶Although in the past God was tolerant, and left sin unpunished, He has now demonstrated His high standards of always doing what is altogether right—by being altogether just in dealing with our sin, and at the same time being the One who forgives all who come to Him, believing and trusting in Jesus. And God Himself declares that they now have right standing with Him.

²⁷So who can boast? No one! Boasting is excluded. Thru what principle, then, can you be pardoned? Is it by some good works that you do? No, but by means of your faith in what Jesus did for you.

²⁸So we conclude that a person is declared to be in right standing with God by means of his faith,

3:13a Psalm 5:9.

3:13b Psalm 140:3.

3:14a Psalm 10:7.

3:17a Isaiah 59:7-8.

3:18a Psalm 36:1.

3:21a Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19; Isaiah 45:24-25; Jeremiah 23:5-6.

3:22a What does it mean to believe in Jesus

Christ? See Luke 14:26-33; John 3:36; Acts 16:31; Galatians 3:11, and the notes there.

3:23a ... *between the Jew and everyone else ...*

3:23b Or short of *the glory of being like God in righteousness.*

3:24a ... *from our sins and the consequences of their just penalty, when He suffered and died on the cross to redeem us.*

and not by obeying the Law.^a

²⁹Is God only the God of the Jews? Isn't He also the God of everyone else? Of course He is.

³⁰Since there's only one God, it is He who will bring Jews to right standing with Himself as a result of their faith, and everyone else to right standing by means of their faith.

³¹Does that mean that because we are now freed from guilt by means of our faith, we no longer need to be concerned about obeying God's laws? Never! On the contrary, we confirm the fact that God's laws must be honored and obeyed.

The Example of Abraham

4 What shall we say then about Abraham, the father of our Jewish nation? What did he discover about this?

²Because if Abraham obtained right standing with God by something he did, he had something to brag about. But he couldn't brag before God!

³Because what does the Scripture say?

Abraham believed what God had promised him.

And because of that he was credited with right standing with God, because he believed.^a

⁴Now when a man works, his wages are not a gift, but the payment of what his employer owes him.

⁵But when a person does no work to become right with God, but believes the One who makes ungodly people right with Himself, he obtains right standing with God because of his faith.

⁶David said the same thing when he wrote about the happy state of those who were declared "not guilty" by God, even though they hadn't worked to obtain this pardon. He wrote:

⁷**How happy are those whose rebellion is forgiven, whose sins are pardoned.**

⁸**Yes, how extremely happy and blessed is the person whose sins will never be charged against him by the Lord.^a**

⁹Does this blessing of forgiveness apply only to the Jews, who have been circumcised, or to the uncircumcised Gentiles as well? Remember, we discovered that right standing with God was credited to Abraham because he believed what God

promised him.

¹⁰Now think: What were the circumstances when he believed and was given right standing with God? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was before he was circumcised, not after.^a

¹¹It was later^a that he was circumcised. This was a seal, as it were, an outward indication of the right standing he already had, because he believed God while he was still uncircumcised. So he is actually the spiritual father of all uncircumcised people as well, who believe and are made right with God because of their faith.

¹²Of course, he is the father of the Jews—but only of those who are not only circumcised, but who also live the same obedient life of faith that Abraham lived even before he was circumcised.^a

¹³Because God did not promise to give the whole world to Abraham and his descendants because Abraham had obeyed His laws, but because Abraham believed what He promised him. That's how he came to be declared right with God.

¹⁴After all, if they had become God's heirs by obeying His laws, then our faith has no value and God's promise to Abraham is worthless,

¹⁵because God's laws only bring His angry judgment.^a But where no law is involved, there is no breaking of any law.

¹⁶So, in order to guarantee His promises to all of Abraham's spiritual children,^a God forgives us by granting us favor we don't deserve when we believe Him. This applies not only to those who had the Laws of Moses, but also to everyone else who lives by the kind of faith that Abraham had. Indeed, Abraham is the spiritual father of all of us.

¹⁷God told Abraham,

I have made you the father of many nations.^a

This is how God sees the matter—the God whom Abraham trusted—the God who raises the dead to life and speaks of those things not in existence with as much certainty as though they existed already.

¹⁸And Abraham lived in hope when there was absolutely no logical reason to hope. He believed he would have a son and become the father of many nations, just as God had promised when He

3:28a But two things are necessary for salvation. This Scripture concerns our justification, our right standing with God, but we must also be regenerated (born again). See Galatians 6:8; 1 Timothy 6:18-19; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:2; Revelation 16:15, and the notes on these Scriptures.

4:3a Genesis 15:6.

4:8a Psalm 32:1-2.

4:10a Genesis 15:1-6.

4:11a Genesis 17:1-27.

4:12a Hebrews 11:8-10, 17-19. Abraham not only believed the facts God revealed about Himself, and His instructions, but he also obeyed Him. All other belief is counterfeit.

4:15a The only function of any law is to warn and inform us of what we must do or not do, and what

said,

Your children will be as numerous as the stars in the heavens. It will be impossible for you to count them all.^a

¹⁹When Abraham was almost 100 years old, he knew his body was dead, as far as fathering children was concerned, and that Sarah was much too old to have children.^a But his faith was still strong.

²⁰He didn't doubt that God would still fulfill His promise.^a He didn't stop believing. In fact, his faith increased as he praised and thanked God for what he knew God would do.

²¹He was absolutely sure that God was able to do what He had promised.

²²And so, because of his faith, God credited him with right standing with Himself.

²³But those words, "God credited him with right standing," were written not only for him.

²⁴They were also written for us, to whom right standing will be given, if we believe the promises made to us by the One who raised our Lord Jesus from among the dead.

²⁵Jesus was handed over to die for our sins. And He was raised to life again in order to grant us right standing with God.

Peace with God

5 So we too have been made right with God by believing what He promised us. And the great peace we are now enjoying with Him is a result of our believing what He promised regarding what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us.

²Having gained this peace by faith in Jesus, we are now in a position of undeserved favor with God. As a result, we are now continually in high spirits in the hope we have of sharing God's glory.^a

³Not only that, but we are also highly elated even as we endure all kinds of severe trials, because we know that these trials produce in us patience to remain true to the Lord to the end.

⁴And patient endurance builds character that is approved by God; and when we have a character that is approved by God, we can hope with great certainty.

⁵We know we will never be disappointed in the hope we have, because God has already poured out His love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given us.^a

⁶Because at the right time, while we were still utterly helpless, Christ died for those who were living in complete disregard for God.

⁷It's rare that anyone is willing to die, even for a good, honest person. But someone might be willing to die for someone truly good.

⁸But God reveals how intensely and deeply He loves us, because Christ died for us when we were still living in rebellion against obeying or pleasing Him in any way.

⁹Since we have now been made right with God by the blood Jesus shed when He died for us, it is even more certain that we will be saved thru Him from God's fierce punishment of sinners.

¹⁰Because if God made it possible for us to become His friends by means of the death of His Son while we were still His enemies, how much more certain we can be—now that we have been won over to friendship with Him—that Jesus will save us, now that He's a living, exalted, and triumphant Redeemer!

¹¹But that's not all; we now also rejoice in the extreme in our glorious relationship with God as a result of our restored friendship with Him, which all came about thru our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adam and Christ Compared

¹²Here's what had happened: Sin entered the world because of what one man did,^a and the result of sin was death. Therefore death strikes everyone, because everyone has sinned.^b

¹³So sin was in the world even before the Law of Moses was given, but a person is not charged with committing sin where there is no law.

¹⁴Just the same, death still reigned over everyone from the time of Adam until Moses appeared on the scene, even over those who hadn't sinned in the same way that Adam had.^a

¹⁵In some ways, Adam was like Christ, who was to come later. But what a huge difference there is between the results of the sin of Adam and the free

the penalty will be if we break the law.

4:16a Abraham's spiritual descendants are those who practice the same obedient faith that Abraham did. Hebrews 11:8,17-19; James 2:20-24.

4:17a Genesis 17:5.

4:18a Genesis 15:5.

4:19a Literally *Sarah's womb was dead*.

4:20a ... and give him a son.

5:2a Romans 8:18; 1 Corinthians 15:43; Colossians 3:4; Hebrews 2:10; 1 Peter 5:10.

5:5a John 14:17c; 20:19-22; Luke 11:13; 24:49; Acts 1:7-8; 2:1-21.

5:12a Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-24.

5:12b Romans 3:23; 6:23.

5:14a ... by disobeying a direct command from God. They had no direct commands from God, but

gift offered thru Christ. Because death came to many thru Adam's sin, but now in a much greater way, God's mercy has come in overwhelming measure to many thru the gift of mercy offered us thru the other Man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁶There's another great difference between Adam's sin and God's gift: The one sin of Adam resulted in judgment and condemnation to death for everyone. But the free gift offered thru Christ, even after we had been guilty of so many sins, has resulted in right standing with God being offered to everyone.

¹⁷Yes, God allowed death to rule because of the action of one man, because he sinned. But how much greater are the results from what the other Man, Christ Jesus, did. Just think: Those who follow Him receive God's abundant mercy, and the gift of right standing with Him, and the promise that they will live and reign with Him in a life that is unimaginably glorious, and everlasting!

¹⁸So just as one sin resulted in all people being condemned to death, in the same way, one morally right action^a resulted in life-giving peace with God being offered to everyone.

¹⁹So just as everyone came under judgment as sinners because of one man's disobedience, now everyone can be made right with God because of one Man's obedience.

²⁰In fact, the Law was given so that everyone could see how much sinning was actually going on. But while sinning was shown to be taking place everywhere, God's mercy has been shown to be rich and overflowing in far greater superabundance.

we do.

5:18a ... *the Son of God dying for us* ...

6:2a "What Paul is saying is, 'How shall we, who have become aware of the evil of sin, and have renounced it by solemn declaration, continue to practice it? It is therefore abhorrent to the very nature of the Christian pledge.'

"It is just as senseless to suppose that a Christian should want to live in sin as it is that a dead man should show actions of life. A dead man is uninfluenced and unaffected by the affairs of this life. He is insensitive to sounds and tastes and pleasures. They have all lost their influence over him. Christians are, in fact, dead to sin. They do not live to sin; nor does sin have rule over them."—*Barnes' Notes*

By becoming Christians, we profess that we are dying to sin. It is our understanding when we con-

²¹So while sin ruled over us, it caused our death! But God's mercy was triumphant by means of His plan which enabled Him to offer us right standing with Himself and eternal life, all thru Jesus Christ our Lord.

Dead to Sin, Alive to God

6 What shall we say then? Shall we keep on sinning now so God can show kindness and mercy to us in ever greater ways?

²Never! It just can't be! How can we now continue to wallow in sin, if it was sin that we died to?^a

³Don't you know that when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus, we were baptized into union with Him in His death?

⁴Realize this: Our baptism in water pictured the fact that we had died to our old life of sin, and that the old life was now being buried with Christ. But then, just as Christ rose from the dead thru the power of the Father, we too, by that same power, are raised from death to live in the freshness of a new life.

⁵Because if we have become joined with Christ in a death like His,^a we will certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.^b

⁶Also realize that our old evil self was nailed to the cross with Him, so that the sinful person we were would be destroyed, and we would no longer be slaves to sin.

⁷Because sin has no power over anyone who is dead.^a

⁸Now if we died to sin with Christ, we believe we will also live an altogether new life with Him.^a

⁹We know that Christ was raised from the dead.

vert to Christ that we are to resist all of sin's temptations, and thru the help of God to overcome them. So how then can we continue in the practice of that which we have so solemnly renounced?

Our very baptism into Christ implies and pictures a baptism into His death. We are still tempted to sin, but Christ gives us the power to overcome. Philippians 2:12-13; Revelation 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21.

6:5a As He died and was laid in the grave, so have all true Christians, by faith in Him and dedication to Him, died to sin.

6:5b "This does not mean that we will resemble Him when we are raised up at the last day—which may be, however, true—but that our rising from sin will resemble His resurrection from the grave. As He rose from the tomb and lived, so shall we rise from sin and live a new Life."—*Barnes' Notes*.

6:7a "It's like, when a slave dies he is liberated

He won't die anymore. Death no longer has any power over Him.

¹⁰Because in regard to the reason He died, He died once, and only once, in order to make amends for the sins of all of us. But now that He's alive, His only concern is to live to please God.

¹¹The same must now be true of all of you! You must recognize yourselves to be dead and unresponsive to the influence and control of sin over you, but alive to the will and desires of God for you because of your union with Christ Jesus our Lord.

¹²So don't allow sin to continue any longer to reign as king on the throne in your mortal body, making you obey it and fulfill its various passions.

¹³This means you must refuse to surrender any part of your body as a tool of wickedness, to be used for sinning. Realize that you are now alive after being dead! Therefore, surrender yourselves completely to God, so that all the parts of your body may become tools for God to use in a right and honorable way.

¹⁴So you must refuse to allow sin to lord it over you any longer! Remember, you are now under the sway and influence of God's undeserved kindness, and not under the Law of Moses.

Be Slaves Now to Righteousness

¹⁵And what does that mean? Does it mean we are free to sin, because we are no longer under the Law, but under the mercy of God's undeserved kindness? Never!

¹⁶Don't you know that you are the slaves of the one to whom you make a practice of obeying?^a

Either you are slaves of sin, which ends in death,^b or you are slaves sincerely dedicated to obeying God,^c resulting in right standing with Him.^d

¹⁷I thank God that although you were slaves of sin, now you've become obedient with all your heart to the truths you were taught.

¹⁸And upon being set free from sin, you became slaves to doing what's right and honorable and pleasing to God.

¹⁹I'm using these common, everyday terms because of the weakness of your spiritual understanding. Just as you once offered the various parts of your bodies as slaves to immoral conduct and to ever-increasing vile actions, now, in the same way, give yourselves wholeheartedly as slaves to doing what's right and good, resulting in pure, blameless lives.

²⁰When you were slaves of sin, you were free of any desire or concern to do what was right and pleasing to God.

²¹But honestly now, what good did you gain from doing those things of which you are now ashamed? Because the end result of such living is death!^a

²²But now, after being set free from slavery to sin, and becoming slaves of God, the benefits you gain are all the blessings that result from a life wholly dedicated to God. And the end result is everlasting life.^a

²³Because the wages paid for sinning is death,^a but the gift that God offers us is forgiveness and everlasting life in close personal fellowship with^b Christ, when we trust in Him as our Savior^c and obey Him as our Lord.^d

from the power and dominion of the one who formerly dominated his life ... It is evident that he who is not freed from this bondage here, will not be in the future world with Christ ... Paul is not saying that the Christian is perfect, but that sin has ceased to have dominion over him, as a master ceases to have power over a slave when he is dead."—*Barnes' Notes*.

6:8a 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:10; 4:21-24.

6:16a Romans 2:1-10; John 3:36; 2 Corinthians 10:6; Hebrews 5:9; 2 Peter 2:10.

6:16b The second death, which is the Lake of Fire. Revelation 20:6,14; 21:8.

6:16c ... *which is evidence of a life born again* ... 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 2:3 and 17, and many others.

6:16d "The meaning is that by our conduct we show which master we are under; and we cannot

serve two (Matthew 6:24)."—*Pulpit Commentary*. Loyalty to Christ does not permit one to practice selective obedience, and make even occasional crossings to Satan's side. True, there are times when we may fail. Read 1 John 1:8-10, and the note there, as to what we must do if we fail.

6:21a Actually, the second death—in the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15.

6:22a The implication is that if you continue living in sin there will be no eternal life for you, only Hell, and then the second death, the lake of fire.

6:23a Note carefully, that the warning here is addressed, not to outsiders only, who make no profession of faith in Christ, but to Christians as well, to whom Paul is writing. Paul states here that they will continue toward eternal life with Jesus Christ only as they continue to submit to His rule, as opposed to the rule of sin. See Colossians 1:21-23, and note. See also Romans 7:15-23 note.

An Illustration From Marriage

7 All of you know something about law. So surely, my brothers and sisters, you know that the law has power over a person only as long as he's alive.

²For example: A married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives. But if he dies, she is free to marry someone else.

³If she lives with another man while her husband is still living, she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, the law no longer considers her married, and she does not commit adultery if she marries another man.

⁴For that reason, my dear friends, when the Messiah suffered and died on the cross for your sins, you were released from your marriage to the Law of Moses.^a So now you can be married to another—to the One who was raised from the dead, so that thru your marriage to Him, you might produce the fruit of faithfulness and obedient service to God.

⁵When we lived mainly to satisfy the various appetites of our flesh, our corrupt desires became rebellious and inflamed when the Law challenged our actions, and we kept on bearing fruit that would result in death.

⁶But now we've been set free from the Law, because that which once controlled our lives is

now dead. Now we joyfully serve God with new understanding and a new heart, no longer hoping to get right with God in the old way by performing the rites and ceremonies of the Law.

Our Fight Against Sin

⁷What shall we conclude then? Is the Law sinful? Of course not! In fact, I wouldn't have known what sin was unless the Law had revealed it to me. For example, I wouldn't have known that it's wrong to eagerly desire what belongs to someone else if the Law hadn't said, "You shall not covet."^a

⁸But sin, pouncing upon the opening it had when I began thinking about the things the Law said were wrong, caused me to have all kinds of evil desires. When there was no Law, sin was dormant.

⁹I was once alive when I knew nothing about the Law. But when I came face-to-face with God's commands, sin came alive in me, and I soon realized I was doomed to death!

¹⁰So I found that the very commands that should have led me to life, resulted in death instead.

¹¹My sinful nature seduced me to sin because of the very rules and commands of the Law. So it was really my sinful nature that put me to death by the demands of the Law.

¹²Still, there is nothing wrong with the Law. What the Law demands is altogether right, just,

6:23b This is the primary meaning of *in* in the Greek in this context and grammatical setting.

6:23c The name *Jesus* means *Savior*.

6:23d To say there is nothing in the text here regarding obedience is erroneous, because obedience is fully and clearly expressed in the name *our Lord*. See Hebrews 5:9, and the note there.

7:4a This doesn't mean we are released from our obligation of obedience to the moral law of God, which Christ and the apostles taught.

7:7a Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21.

7:14a Implied.

7:15-23a Does this mean that Paul was living a defeated life at the time he wrote this? This is what some claim. But what Paul was actually doing was putting himself in the shoes of the Jews who were not converted to Christ, showing how dominated they still were by sin.

To say that this was describing Paul's present life is to say that it's natural for a person claiming to be a Christian to continue living in sin. But in the previous chapter (chapter 6), Paul so clearly states the fact that those who live in sin will not receive eternal life, but will be consigned to death—the second death.

Paul says the same thing in chapter 8. Notice how emphatic Paul is about the fact that a true Christian lives a life that is pleasing to God. It's true that we cannot live to please God in our own strength. We need God's constant help. And God has promised thruout His word that He is always present with us to give us that help. Philippians 2:13; et al.

No one can walk in two directions at the same time. No one can go toward eternal life, living for God, and at the same time live in sin, headed toward destruction. One can walk in only one direction! If he lives for God, even though imperfectly, he is a Christian. He may stumble at times, and even have a bad fall. But if his heart's true desire and determination is to live to please God, he is walking in one direction.

* * *

God is patient and understanding. *In the same way that a good father is tenderly compassionate towards his children, that's how compassionate God is toward those who are greatly concerned about pleasing Him, because He knows where we've come from—that we are from the dust.* Psalm 103:13-14. God takes pity on His children

and good.

¹³ So has something good been the cause of my death? Not at all! But it was sin, revealed for what it really is, that brought death to me thru what is good. It was by means of God's commands that sin was exposed as the horrible and deceitful thing that it really is.

The War Within Us

¹⁴ Because we know that the Law is pure. But *when I'm living as a Jew under the Law:*^a I act like a slave who's been sold for wicked purposes. I continue to obey my lower nature.

¹⁵ In fact, I can't explain why I do what I do, because the good I'm determined to do, I don't do. But I keep doing things I hate.

¹⁶ So then, I must consent to the fact that the Law is good, especially when it condemns those wrong things I really don't want to do, but still keep doing.

¹⁷ But I'm really not the one doing the wrong; it's the sinful nature within me.

¹⁸ Yes, I know full well that nothing good is living within me—that is, within my unrenewed nature—because even though I want to do what's good, I can't follow thru and do it!

¹⁹ Because the good I want to do, I don't do, but I keep on doing the evil things I don't want to do.

²⁰ So if I keep on doing what I don't want to do,

this means I am no longer the one doing it, but it's the sinful nature within me that's doing it.

²¹ So I've discovered the rule, that, when I want to do what's right, evil is always there to pull me down.

²² In my heart, I take delight in the Law God has given us thru Moses.

²³ But I find another law working within me, fighting against what my mind wants. It's the sinful nature within me, bringing me into captivity to do what it wants me to do.^a

²⁴ Oh, what a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that's taking me to death?

²⁵ Thank God! There is abundant deliverance thru Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, to sum up what I've just said: As for myself, my mind is set and determined to obey God's laws, but if I depend on my own strength to do so, I will buckle under and serve the law of sin.^a

Living By the Power of God's Spirit

8 So there is now no longer any judgment of the second death^a awaiting those who belong to Christ Jesus. Because they no longer seek to live right solely by means of their own will and determination, but with the powerful help and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

² Because the power of life thru Christ Jesus has not only granted me forgiveness and the promise

who have fallen, and helps them up again. His true children want to be lifted up so they can live to please their Heavenly Father. They are not constantly being overcome by sin. *Don't you know that you are slaves of the one to whom you make a practice of obeying? Either you are slaves of sin, which ends in death, or you are slaves sincerely dedicated to obeying God, resulting in right standing with Him.* Romans 6:16.

"It is hard to understand how the opinion ever crept into the Church, and continues there, that Paul was speaking here of his experience as a Christian, and that Paul's experience must be true of all other Christians. This shameful teaching has lowered the standard of Christianity and destroyed its influence in many places."—*Adam Clarke's Commentary*.

Remember, *Unless you are living a holy life you will never see God!* Hebrews 12:14. And preacher, unless you are living this truth yourself, and are most earnestly preaching it to your people, you have denied the faith!

* * *

Actually, this opinion came into the Church because some theologians misinterpreted and mis-

applied this 7th chapter to Christians. But this chapter is addressed to Jews, possibly Christian Jews who were still trying to add to their justification by Mosaic Law keeping, as vss 1-4 clearly indicate.

In v 9 Paul takes himself back to his "bar mitzvah" (son of the Law or Commandment) experience at age 13. Before the Law was applied to him he was alive in the sense of having no guilt or condemnation. But when he became morally responsible before God under the Mosaic Law, his sin nature rebelled and brought guilt and condemnation.

Paul then goes on to describe his struggle and failure as a Jew, under the Law, trying to keep its spiritual and moral meaning. He is not describing the conflict of two natures in the Christian. He is describing the conflict that a Jew has with the sin nature when trying to live for God under the Law of Moses, as vss 7-8 clearly state.

Paul so clearly states in v 25 that he, at this writing, as a Christian, was no longer living the defeated life he described in the previous verses.

7:25a See Galatians 5:16-17; this is where the struggle between the sin nature and the Holy Spirit in the Christians is set forth by Paul.

8:1,2 & 6a The second death. Revelation 20:6,14;

of eternal life, but also power thru Him to be set free from the power that the law of sin had over me, which if I had continued in, would have sent me to the second death.^a

³Because what the Law could not do, God did. The Law was powerless to change the natural passions and selfishness of our evil hearts, but God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful man as a sin offering for our sins. He thereby condemned to death the sin in our flesh in the human body of Jesus.

⁴God did this so that the right actions which the Law demands could now be carried out by us, who no longer try to live right only by means of our own will and determination, but by the powerful help and guidance of the Holy Spirit.^a

⁵Because those who are unrenewed, who still live as their sinful nature dictates, are always thinking about how they can further please their corrupt desires. But those who have been renewed by the Holy Spirit have firmly set their minds on pleasing God.

⁶The mind-set of sinful man leads to death, but peace and everlasting life are the promised possessions of those whose minds are firmly set on pleasing God.

⁷Because the one whose mind is set on giving supreme attention to satisfying the desires of the flesh is at war with God! He is not living in obedience to the will of God. In fact, it's impossible for him to do so.

⁸So then, those who are still controlled by the desires of the flesh are unable to please God.

⁹But if the Spirit of God is indeed living within you,^a you will not be living to gratify fleshly desires, but to please God. On the other hand, if the Spirit of Christ is not allowed to effectively live within you, to influence and guide you, you don't belong to Him at all.

¹⁰But even if Christ is living within you, your body will still die because of its corrupt passions and desires, but your spirit will live forever because you have right standing with God, and are now living as God would have you live.

¹¹And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead is indeed living within you,^a then the God who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies back to life again by means of^b His Spirit who lives within you.^c

¹²So then, my dear friends, we have a duty to fulfill—but not a duty to obey what our flesh begs us to do.

21:8.

8:1-4a God not only judged our sin on the cross in Jesus our Savior, enabling Him to now offer us forgiveness for our sins when we come to Him in true repentance, Christ's death also weakened Satan's power over those who trust in Christ to save them, by destroying the strangle hold he had on us. Now with God's help (vss 13, 26, 37; John 15:1-5; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Jude 1c) we can do what we couldn't do when Satan controlled us.

8:9,11a John 14:23.

8:11b Or *because of* ...

8:11c 1 Corinthians 15:40-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18.

8:13a The second death. Revelation 20:11-15. See Matthew 7:13-14, and note.

8:13b Romans 6:21-22. If you do not kill the sinful desires of your flesh, they will kill you!

8:12-13c In regard to God's helping us to live a holy life, see also John 15:1-5; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Jude 1, as given in note for 8:1-4.

8:14a All others are still lost, and will go down to Hell. Psalm 9:17; Isaiah 55:7.

8:16a Are you truly born again? Have you allowed God to change your life from selfishness and sin to a life lived to truly please and obey God?

Does the Spirit of God witness with your spirit that all is well? If not, you have no sure evidence that you belong to Him.

8:16-17a What a wonder it should be to all humanity to consider that God created mankind in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27), to be like Him, to be His children. Even more wonderful is the knowledge that even though we fell into sin and rebelled against our Father, Jesus, God's Son, thru whom the Father created all things (John 1:2-4; Ephesians 3:9c; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2), suffered and died to redeem us so that we might become *children of God* by adoption. Galatians 4:4-7.

And as *children of God* we become His *heirs*. In this case, the inheritance is available without the death of the donor. Ordinarily an inheritance is not received until the one who makes the will passes away. But God will never die. God's last will and testament, however, did require a death. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died, that we might live and receive so great an inheritance. Hebrews 9:15-17.

* * *

But the test of sonship here is *suffering*. Those who are truly Christians are persecuted both by those who definitely oppose God and by those who wish to appease God, but not obey Him. *And everyone who determines to live for Christ Jesus in a way that will truly please God will be persecuted.*

¹³Because if you are living for the purpose of gratifying the passions and appetites of your body in a wrong way, you are on the road to death^a! But if by means of the power and help which the Holy Spirit will give you, you smash to death the wrong desires your flesh begs you to satisfy,^b you will live!^c

¹⁴Because it is only those who make a practice of submitting themselves to the influence and control of the Spirit of God who give proof that they truly are children of God.^a

¹⁵When you were converted to the Lord you certainly didn't feel like you were in slavery again, causing you to fear; but you sensed that you had been adopted. For that reason we cry out, "Father! My Father!"

¹⁶Then we experience God's Spirit warmly witnessing with our spirit, assuring us that we are indeed His children.^a

¹⁷And if we're God's children, we're also His heirs! Think of it! Heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ! However, if we are to be glorified with Christ, we must also be willing to suffer with Him.^a

Our Wonderful Future Glory

¹⁸But I don't regard the sufferings of this present

time worthy of even being considered when we think of the amazing glory that will soon be revealed in us.^a

¹⁹Because all of creation is waiting with eager anticipation, longing for the curtains to be drawn aside to reveal the children of God in all their glory!

²⁰In fact, all of God's creation has been subjected to hopelessness, not by their own choice, but by the decision of the One who put them under subjection.

²¹But they look forward in hope that they too will be freed from their slavery to decay, and share in a glorious liberty together with the children of God.^a

²²Because we know that all of creation groans together in birth pangs up to this very moment.

²³And it's not only God's creation in general that's in that condition. But even those of us who have been given a small taste by the Holy Spirit,^a of what it will actually be like to be with the Lord, groan within ourselves as we wait for the finalizing of our adoption, that is, the changing of our bodies into immortal, glorified bodies.^b

²⁴Because we were given this hope when we were saved, but hope that's been fulfilled is no longer hope. No one hopes for what he already has and

2 Timothy 3:12. You may say that you love the Lord but that you have never suffered persecution for Him. Then you had better examine the feeble stand you have taken for the Lord and his truth..

When you take a definite stand for the Lord and live as God commands in His word, you will find the opposition very keen. Most people do not love light, they love darkness, because their deeds are evil. And they will be quick to persecute the one who endeavors to turn on the light.

Persecutions may not necessarily come in the form of bodily harm, but will surely include mocking, ignoring, criticizing, slandering, belittling, and disassociating.

But the persecutions we suffer as a Christian strike no deeper than the things of time, and last no longer than the present time. It is a "light affliction" and lasts for only a moment, compared with the frightful and everlasting punishments in store for the ungodly and the hypocrite.

But we shall not be treated as co-heirs with Christ unless we give undeniable proof that we are truly united to Him, by being willing to take our stand with Him and suffer with Him. 2 Tim 2:12. You face the possibility of being wounded in some way every time you speak out for Christ (Romans 10:9-10) and every time you take a stand for the full truth in God's word. What does your witness and stand for

Christ say about you?

Are you demanding that the whole truth be preached in your church, no matter how tough the opposition? If you're the preacher, are you preaching the whole truth, as it is, or are you compromising in order to satisfy those unregenerate ones who don't want you to meddle with their sin? Remember, the Lord is always listening and watching.

8:18a ... *when we become like Jesus*, 1 John 3:2, *and discover the great and everlasting adventure God has planned for us*. See 1 Corinthians 2:9.

8:21a All of nature was affected by the fall of man (Genesis 3:17-19), and all of nature will share in the glorious redemption of man, when Christ returns to rule and make things right. Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25; Hosea 2:18.

8:23a Luke 11:13.

8:23b Even those of us who have this hope and have *been given a small taste by the Holy Spirit of what it will actually be like to be with the Lord*, groan and are dissatisfied. And this dissatisfaction will continue until Christ *transforms our weak bodies that die, into bodies just like His own glorious, incorruptible body*. Philippians 3:21.

No matter how much joy or satisfaction we may receive in this life, something is always missing. But that something will be supplied in all of its fullness when Christ claims us as His redeemed ones.

is enjoying.

²⁵ But if we keep on hoping for what we don't yet have, that means we are continuing to wait for it with patient endurance.^a

²⁶ And it's also at this point^a that the Holy Spirit comes to our aid and helps us in our weak efforts, because at times we don't even know what we should pray for, or how we should pray. But then the Spirit Himself prays for us and thru us with such intensely deep feelings that we cannot express them in our own words.

²⁷ Now the One who searches out and takes note of everything that's in our hearts also knows what's in the mind of the Holy Spirit as He prays, because He pleads with God for His people in perfect harmony with God's will.

²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for our good, if we love Him and are fitting into His plans.

²⁹ Because God always knew who would sincerely accept His invitation to eternal life,^a and He had decided way back then that they would become just like His incomparable Son,^b so that He would be the firstborn of many children of God.

³⁰ And those whom He decided would be like His Son, He also called to Himself; and those He called, He brought into right standing with Himself; and those He brought into right standing, He also glorified.^a

God's Great Love for Us

³¹ What can we then conclude about all these

things? Obviously, if God is so much in favor of us, who can ever win out against us?

³² Surely,^a if God didn't even spare His own dear Son, but delivered Him up for the sake of us all, how can we ever think that along with Christ, He won't also give us everything else He has promised us?^b

³³ Who can ever successfully condemn us and bring a valid charge against us when God has declared us not guilty, and has chosen us as His very own? God won't, because He's the One who brought us into right standing with Himself.

³⁴ So just who is it that's condemning us? Christ isn't, because He's the One who died for us.^a But what's even more important, He rose from the dead^b and is right now in Heaven in the place of highest honor and power at God's right hand, pleading before God for us.^c

³⁵ Who then can ever come between us and the love that Christ has for us? Those who persecute us and cause us all kinds of misery and suffering can't; nor can any distress, famine, lack of clothing, nor danger of any kind, nor even the threat of death.

³⁶ They only remind us of what King David wrote:

"For Your sake we are in danger of being killed all day long. We are treated like sheep on their way to be slaughtered."^a

³⁷ But every time we are attacked by these things we can keep on winning overwhelmingly glorious victories, by means of the help we receive from the One who loved us so.^a

8:24-25a *We were saved in hope.* We have the promise, and the assurance, because we know that God cannot lie. So one day, finally, we will have the reality. Therefore, let us *continue to wait for it with patient endurance!*

8:26a ... *when we continue to wait on God in prayer, with patience,* ... Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8; Hebrews 11:6.

8:29a ... *on His terms* ... See Matthew 22:14; Acts 20:20-21; 1 Peter 1:2, and the notes.

8:29b John 3:16.

8:30a The *glorification* is yet future, but our eternal God sees the end of His plan from the beginning, as though it were already accomplished. What a glorious, incomprehensible future is promised us!

8:32a This emphatic particle in the original Greek must not be left out, as so many translators do.

8:32b When God gave us His Son He gave us His greatest treasure. Nothing else in all of God's great Kingdom can be compared to His Son. So, if He has already given us His greatest treasure, surely He will

give us everything else He has promised us.

8:34a What can separate us from love like that?

8:34b Romans 4:25. See 1:4 note.

8:34c ... *as our defense attorney and Savior.*

8:36a Psalm 44:22.

8:37a Philippians 2:13.

8:39a But we must be careful to distinguish between all the foes that Paul mentions (every possible foe) and the believer himself. There is no possibility that some power or circumstance may snatch from Christ's hand even the weakest one who trusts and obeys Him. There is perfect safety and security in the Savior and in the Father for the weakest sheep who follow the Good Shepherd and pay attention to what He tells them. John 10:27-29.

The only peril is that we ourselves may fail to listen to His voice and follow Him obediently.

Many translations imply that the moment we receive Christ as Lord and Savior, we are suddenly made conquerors for all time to come, without further difficulty, and regardless of any and all possible occurrences or circumstances. They strongly

³⁸ So I'm firmly convinced that neither death, nor any circumstance in life, nor fallen angels, nor governments, nor powers of any kind, nor present or future situations,

³⁹ nor anything above or below us, nor any other created thing of any kind, can ever separate us from the love that God has for us because of Christ Jesus our Lord!^a

God's Choice of Israel

9 As a Christian, I'm telling you the truth. I am not lying. The Holy Spirit also bears witness in my conscience that this is so, as I tell you:

² My heart is broken and I am in great and continual sorrow for my people, for those related to me by flesh and blood.

³ I've even wished that it were possible that I myself could be doomed to Hell and separated from Christ for the sake of my brothers and sisters.

⁴ I'm speaking of the people of Israel. God adopted them as His people, and then revealed His glory to them in so many ways. He gave them His Law, and came very close to them in their Temple worship. He also made them many promises.

⁵ The Jews of today are the descendants of the great fathers of the faith, and it is thru them that Christ came and received His earthly body of flesh. May God, who rules over all, be praised forever! Yes, so may it indeed ever be.

⁶ However, I'm not saying that God hasn't kept His promises to Abraham, because not all the people of Israel are the true Israel.

⁷ Nor are all the descendants of Abraham children of God. Because God's promise was,

The children I promised you will come thru Isaac.^a

⁸ What I'm saying is: It's not the descendants of Abraham by natural birth who are the children of God. But it's Abraham's descendants thru the promise God made to him,^a who are regarded by God as Abraham's true descendants.

⁹ For this is what God promised:

At the appointed time for life to be conceived, I will return and Sarah will have a son.^a

¹⁰ And not only that, but years later Rebecca also conceived and had twins by our forefather Isaac.

¹¹ But even before the twins were born, before they had done anything good or bad, so that God's plan would work out as He had decided, and thru whom He chose, and not because of what anyone had done,

¹² God told Rebecca,

The older one will serve the younger.^a

¹³ That's why the Scripture records that God said, **I have loved Jacob, but I have rejected Esau.^a**

¹⁴ What shall we conclude then? Was this action by God unfair? Certainly not!

¹⁵ Because God told Moses,

I will be merciful to whomever I wish. If I wish to show kindness to someone, I will.^a

¹⁶ This shows that it was not we who had intense desire and put forth great effort to be saved, but it was God, who continually shows how merciful He is.^a

suggest that the conflict is immediately resolved in glorious victory, and the conqueror's garland is placed upon our brows as we recline in ease and splendor.

But the text does not teach this! Our conflict only begins the moment we accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior! It is unfortunate that what Paul sounded as a battle cry has been regarded by many as a lullaby. We cannot be excused from "fighting the good fight that must be fought in living the Christian faith." We are to be active, not passive, in the conflict.

And the conflict, in which we are called to be engaged, is real. The issues are life and death!

"The eighth chapter of Romans," as someone has said, "begins with no condemnation and ends with no separation." It is well to observe, however, that it is punctuated with sharp warnings such as *If you are living for the purpose of gratifying the passions and appetites of your body in a wrong way,*

you are on the road to death! But if by means of the power and help which the Holy Spirit will give you, you smash to death the wrong desires your flesh begs you to satisfy, you will live (v 13); that it is only those who make a practice of submitting themselves to the influence and control of the Spirit of God who are truly children of God (v 14); that only if we suffer with Christ will we be glorified together with Him (v 17); and that, in spite of our weaknesses, but helped by the Holy Spirit, we must continue in the faith (Colossians 1:23) and wait in patience and hope (vss 24-27) for the ultimate realization of salvation and the full manifestation of our divine sonship. See also 2 Timothy 2:12.

9:7a Genesis 21:12.

9:8a The promised son—Isaac.

9:9a Genesis 18:10,14.

9:12a Genesis 25:23.

9:13a Malachi 1:2-3.

9:15a Exodus 33:19.

9:16a All the good that happens has its real origin

¹⁷ For instance, in the Scriptures it's recorded that God said to Pharaoh, King of Egypt,

The reason I raised you up as King of Egypt was that I might display My power in My dealings with you, and so that as a result, I might be praised thruout the whole earth.^a

¹⁸ So God shows mercy to anyone He wishes; and according to His desire, He further hardens the stubborn hearts of others.

God's Anger and Mercy

¹⁹ So you will very likely ask me, "Well, why does He still find fault then? Because who can resist God Almighty?"

²⁰ And just who are you, that you would dare to challenge God's judgment? What created thing would ever say to its creator, "Why did you make me like this?"

²¹ Doesn't a potter have the right to make a distinctive bowl and a common one from the same lump of clay?

²² God really wanted to show how angry He was and reveal how powerfully He could destroy these rebels^a who were fit only to be destroyed. But instead He patiently put up with them.

²³ He did this in order to reveal the immeasurable greatness of His kindness in showing mercy to those He had earlier created to share His glory.^a

²⁴ This includes us, whom He has also called—

and accomplishment from and thru God.

9:17a Exodus 9:16.

9:22a ... *who rejected and crucified Christ* ...

9:23a See references for 5:2.

9:25a Hosea 2:23, referring to Gentile followers of the Lord.

9:26a Hosea 1:10, again referring to Gentile followers.

9:27-28a Isaiah 10:22-23.

9:29a Isaiah 1:9.

9:33a Isaiah 8:14, 28:16.

10:4a ... *by His death for our sins and by His resurrection to make us right with God* ... See 4:25.

10:4b And what does it mean to believe in Christ? See Galatians 3:11; Luke 14:26-33; John 3:36; Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9-10, and the notes there.

10:5a This would mean perfect and continuous obedience. Galatians 3:10; 5:2-3.

10:5b Leviticus 18:5.

10:6-8a The quotations are from Deuteronomy 30:11-14. Paul says the same now in regard to salvation by faith in Christ. You don't have to look any further, just believe it with your heart and confess it with your mouth.

not only if you are a Jew, but also if you're not.

²⁵ As God says in the book of Hosea:

I will call them My people even though they were not my people. And the one whom I did not love, I will now call "The one I love."^a

²⁶ And the time will come when in the very place where people were told, You are not my people, the people there will be called Children of the living God.^a

²⁷ Isaiah also cried out concerning Israel:

Even if the people of Israel are as many as the grains of sand of the sea, still, only a few of them will be saved.

²⁸ The Lord will finish His work and cut it short in righteous judgment, because He will do a quick work upon the earth.^a

²⁹ Before that Isaiah had said:

Unless the Lord of vast multitudes had left at least a few of us, we would have ended up as utterly destroyed as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.^a

Israel and the Great News

³⁰ What does all this mean? Just this—that the Gentiles, who were not trying to make peace with God, obtained right standing with Him just the same, a right standing which they obtained by faith.

³¹ But Israel, while working to obtain right standing with God by obeying the Law of Moses, did not

10:10a Belief that saves is not mere belief in facts, going no deeper than the mind. Belief that saves must come *from the heart*, as well as from the mind, resulting in appropriate life dedication and action. Notice Jesus' warning in Luke 9:26, and His promise and warning in Matthew 10:32-33 and Luke 12:8-9.

10:10b If your heart is full of love for Christ, will your mouth speak only of things pertaining to this world? Jesus said, *Whatever fills a man's heart comes out in what he says*. Matthew 12:34. Your head and heart are both involved in your salvation, and so is your mouth.

A person must first believe in his heart that God has indeed raised Jesus from the dead before he can honestly confess it to others. But if God has not raised Christ from the dead, then there is no truth in the Bible about sin and the need of a Savior, nor about Heaven or Hell nor the judgment, nor our own resurrection to eternal life. If Jesus Christ has not been raised from the dead, then all is lost!

But if Jesus Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, then the teachings of God's word are true, and we have a hope that is absolute, and one which should so overflow from our hearts that we cannot

receive God's approval.

³²Why not? Because they were not seeking it by faith, but by what they did in obedience to the Law. That's the stumbling stone they stumbled over.

³³As God says in Scripture:

Look, I am placing a Stone in Zion that will cause many to stumble. It is a Rock that will cause violent opposition. But no one who is truly believing in Him will be ashamed of Him.^a

10 Dear friends, my heart so earnestly desires and cries out for—and I pray most intensely for—my people of Israel to be saved.

²Yes, they indeed have great zeal for God, but a zeal that is not based on a right understanding of the truth.

³Because they are ignorant of God's great plan for them to become right with Him. So instead of accepting God's wonderful plan, they keep trying to become right with Him by their own efforts.

⁴But Christ^a has put an end to any need to try so hard to get right with God by obeying the Laws and customs of Moses. All anyone needs to do is to truly believe in Him.^b

Anyone Can Be Saved

⁵This is what Moses wrote about getting right with God by obeying God's Laws:

The person who obeys^a these laws will live forever by doing so.^b

do anything else than share the Great News with others, everywhere.

* * *

If Jesus has been raised from the dead, then all is true. Then it is true that He came from God, that He died for our sin, that God approved and accepted His work. Then it is true that He ascended into Heaven, and is exalted to rule over the universe, and that He will return to judge the living and the dead. So to profess that Christ is our Lord and that we believe that God raised Him from the dead is to profess virtually all the truths of the Christian faith.

And our confessing Christ as our Lord is not to be merely a one-time confession. It is to be the very overflow of our lives.

We are to confess Christ to a lost world at every opportunity. And our duty lies in the opportunity that is nearest us, whatever and whoever that may be at the time. Confessing Christ with the mouth is always an important duty. The present moment is most important, because we have no promise of another opportunity.

The Apostle Paul shows here that our confessing Christ as our Lord and Savior to others is just as

⁶But right standing with God by means of faith says this: "You don't need to ask yourself, 'Who will go up to Heaven?'" (That is, "Who will go up to Heaven and bring the Messiah down to save us?")

⁷"And don't wonder, 'Who will go down among the dead?'" (That is, "Who will go down among the dead and bring the Messiah up to save us?")

⁸But notice what that Scripture says next: "The prescribed means by which you can be saved is with you right now. It's in your own mouth and in your heart."^a And that's the message we preach in regard to obtaining salvation by faith. It's this:

⁹If you will open your mouth and share with others what you know and believe about the Lord Jesus, and if you truly believe in your heart that God has indeed raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

¹⁰Because it's when you are sincerely believing with your heart^a that you gain right standing with God. So when as a result of true heart-belief, you make a practice of opening your mouth to share with others what you know about the Lord,^b the results will include your own salvation.

¹¹Because as the Scripture says,

No one who is truly believing in Him will be disappointed, or be ashamed^a to talk to others about Him.^b

¹²This also applies to everyone, both to Jews and to those who are not, because we all have the same Sovereign Lord, and He richly blesses everyone

important as our believing in our mind. One cannot say he has been born again if he is unwilling to share with others what he knows about Jesus.

Many believe all the truths set forth in the Bible, but they are still not saved. They love the approval of others more than the approval of God. So their pride keeps them from taking these truths into their hearts and confessing them. And only heart-belief overflows in a confession that saves. See Matthew 10:32.

If you needed to know about Jesus as Lord and Savior in order to be saved, so do others. If you withhold the Bread of Life from them, how can you say you love Jesus and that you love those whom He loved enough to die for? See Ezekiel 33:1-9; Matthew 10:32-39; 12:30; 16:24-26; Mark 8:34-38 and notes; Luke 12:8-9; 14:34-35; John 15:8; Colossians 4:5-6; Hebrews 3:6-19, and the notes there; Revelation 3:14-16; 21:7-8.

* * *

Some may justify their failure to talk to others about the Lord Jesus by claiming that not many Scriptures teach us that we must. And perhaps you've never heard your preacher say that we are

who calls on Him.

¹³ So you see,

Everyone who calls on Him and acknowledges Him as his Sovereign Ruler will be saved.^a

¹⁴ But how can they call on Him if they haven't come to believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they haven't even heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them the Great News?

¹⁵ And how can they speak about the Lord to those who need to hear unless they are sent out? That's what the Scripture is talking about which says:

What a beautiful sight it is to see those who are going forth to preach the Great News about peace with God, who bring Great News about so many good things!^a

¹⁶ But not everyone who has heard this Great News has been glad to hear it. Because Isaiah says,

Lord, who has believed what we told them?^a

¹⁷ So then, faith can only come by sincerely listening—that is, by listening to what God wants to tell you.^a

¹⁸ But I ask you: Didn't they hear God's message? Of course they did. Because the Scripture says:

The sound of their voices as they witnessed has been heard all over the world. And their message has been given wherever there are people.^a

¹⁹ Again I ask you: Didn't Israel know this would happen?^a Yes, first of all, Moses prophesied:

I will provoke you to jealousy by a people who are not a nation. I will make you angry by a people who have no understanding.^b

²⁰ And without hesitation Isaiah boldly reported

that God said:

I was found by those who were not looking for Me. I revealed Myself to those who were not even asking about Me.^a

²¹ But about Israel God says thru Isaiah:

All day long I have stretched out My hands to you, a disobedient people who continually oppose Me.^a

God Has Not Rejected Israel

11 But listen: Has God now disowned His people? No, He certainly has not! After all, I'm an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham thru the tribe of Benjamin.

² God hasn't rejected His people whom He had previously chosen. Don't you remember what the Scripture says about Elijah, how he cried to God about Israel?

³ Elijah said,

Lord, they have killed all your prophets and torn down your altars. I'm the only one left, and they're trying to kill me too.^a

⁴ And how did God answer him? God said,

I still have 7,000 men who have not kneeled in front of the idol of Baal.^a

⁵ It's the same today as then. There are still a few who remain true as a result of God's undeserved kindness in choosing them.

⁶ The point is, if we benefit by a favor from God that we don't deserve, we can't claim that we earned it by working for it. Otherwise the promise that our salvation is by God's grace doesn't really mean that it's "by God's grace." Because if our salvation is obtained by working for it, it's no longer a gift from God. In that case the word work would-

duty bound to do so. Well, not many Scriptures warn about Hell, either; just enough to let us know for sure that Hell is certain and awful and calamitous, and will be the judgment for all who refuse to believe and obey the Lord. How many times must the Lord state a truth before you will believe and act upon it?

Most preachers don't preach that it's imperative that you witness to the lost because they don't do so themselves. But by failing to do so they are blatantly disregarding and disobeying Jesus' command to teach *everyone* to follow Him. Matthew 28:18-20. How can they teach others to follow and obey Jesus when they are not doing so themselves.

As we stated in our Matthew 10:33 note: When Heaven or Hell are at stake, silence is worse than treason!

* * *

Do realize this: The message in these two verses is not directed to unbelievers, but to you who say you

believe, telling you what you must be willing to do to ensure your own salvation. If you are cowardly (Revelation 21:8) and are not willing to obey the Lord and make yourself vulnerable to persecution by sharing your faith in Christ with others, who need God's forgiveness as much as you do in order to be saved, you are not yet born again!

If your only real concern is salvation for you and yours, you are still selfish, uncaring, and unconverted. Wake up! And Live! And bring life and joy to all others you can possibly reach, whatever the cost. Yes, give, so that others may go with the message, but God expects you to use every power you have, and that includes your mouth. Do it! And you will be surprised at what God will do thru you.

* * *

Be sure to read Appendixes 212, p 477, and 226, p 486; also Matthew 28:18,19,20, and the notes.

10:11a Isaiah 28:16. The Greek word Paul uses here means to either be ashamed or disappointed.

n't really mean work either.

⁷ So what are the facts? Most of the Jews haven't found what they're looking for. But the chosen ones have,^a while the hearts and understanding of the rest have become calloused and hardened.^b

⁸ The very thing that was written about them has happened:

God has caused them to become drowsy, so that they can't see with their eyes or hear with their ears. And that's true to this very day.^a

⁹ And David said:

May even the abundant food on their table become a snare and a trap to them. May it become a stumbling block^a and the reward for their hard hearts.

¹⁰ **May their eyes become so darkened that they can't see,^a and their backs continually bent down with troubles.^b**

¹¹ But again, listen: Have they stumbled so badly that their fall puts them beyond recovery? Certainly not! But their fall has resulted in salvation being offered to people everywhere, and this in turn will make the Jews want it for themselves.

¹² Now then, if the sinful mistake they made has resulted in the rest of the world being enriched by it, and if their loss has enriched people in all other nations, think how much greater the results will be when Israel fully recovers and recognizes Christ as their Lord and Savior.

¹³ I'm saying all this to you Gentiles,^a because I'm a messenger of Christ to everyone who is not a Jew.

¹⁴ If I make a big thing of the assignment given me, it's only to provoke my own people to envy, so

that some of them might be saved.

¹⁵ Now then, if the temporary throwing aside of Israel has resulted in many thruout the world being reconciled to God, isn't it the same as a resurrection from the dead when Jews accept Christ?

¹⁶ Also, if the first fruits^a were dedicated to God, the same is true of the entire harvest, and if the root was dedicated to God, so are the branches.

¹⁷ Now then, if some of the branches have been broken off, and you, being just a wild olive branch, have been grafted in among the remaining branches, you are now being nurtured by the rich sap coming from the root of this olive tree.

¹⁸ But don't ever boast that you are better than those broken-off branches. If you do, just remember that you are not giving nourishment to the root, but the root is giving nourishment to you.

¹⁹ "But," you might say, "these branches were broken off so I could be grafted in."

²⁰ True, but they were broken off because of their unbelief, and you are standing firm only because of your faith.^a But don't be proud about that! Instead, stand in awe and reverent fear.^b

²¹ Because if God didn't spare the natural branches, take heed, or He may not spare you either.

²² Seriously consider then, both God's kindness and His severity—His severity toward those who had fallen away, and His kindness toward you. This kindness will continue if your faith and conduct make it proper for God to continue His kindness toward you.^a Otherwise, you too will be cut off.

²³ As for those who were cut off, if they turn from

In the context in which he uses it here, it means both.

10:11b Implied.

10:13a Joel 2:32.

10:15a Isaiah 52:7.

10:16a Isaiah 53:1.

10:17a And God will speak to you in various ways: By what you read in His word, by the preaching of it, by a testimony from someone, by the happening of circumstances, by His marvelous creation (both far and near), and by various other means.

10:18a Psalm 19:4.

10:19a In other words, *Didn't Israel know from their own Scriptures, of God's intention to include the Gentiles in His plans?* Paul then refers to some of those Scriptures.

10:19b Deuteronomy 32:21 ... no understanding about the true God.

10:20a Isaiah 65:1.

10:21a Isaiah 65:2.

11:3a 1 Kings 19:10,14.

11:4a 1 Kings 19:18.

11:7a 8:28-30; 1 Peter 1:2, and the notes.

11:7b *Hardened* by their own willfulness and stubborn desires.

11:8a Deuteronomy 29:4; Isaiah 29:10.

11:9a In other words, may their false sense of God's blessing upon them prove to be a curse.

11:10a From the fulfillment, we know this refers to *ability to discern mentally, to perceive the truth*.

11:10b Psalm 69:22-23. Be sure to read these two verses in Psalm 69 in their context.

11:13a Literally *to the nations*, meaning to *every-one who is not a Jew*.

11:16a The first fruit offerings of Israel acknowledged that the entire harvest belonged to God. The reference here is likely to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob being dedicated to God, and therefore all of Israel belongs to God.

11:20a Or *faithfulness*.

11:20b Luke 12:4-5; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Philippi-

their unbelief they will be grafted back in, because God is well able to graft them in again.

²⁴ Think about it: If you've been cut out of a wild olive tree, and have been grafted against your nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will God want to take these, who are the natural branches, and graft them back into their own olive tree?

All Israel Will Be Saved

²⁵ Now, my brothers and sisters, I don't want you to be in the dark about this previously unrevealed truth, and come to your own conclusions. The truth is, part of Israel has been hardened, but only until all other nations have had ample opportunity to receive God's mercy.

²⁶ Eventually, all of Israel will be saved. This is what the Scriptures say about this:

The Savior^a will rise up out of our own nation, and will turn the descendants of Jacob away from all their ungodliness.

²⁷ **Then My promise to Israel will have been fulfilled, when I have forgiven their sins.^a**

²⁸ So it's for your benefit that they are now so violently opposed to the Great News about Jesus the Messiah. But, because they are the descendants of those chosen by God, they are dearly loved by Him because of their forefathers' unshaken faith in His promises.

²⁹ Because God never takes back a gift,^a nor does He change His mind about any assignment or promise He has given anyone.

³⁰ In the past, you were rebels when it came to obeying God. But when the Jews rejected God's gift of life thru Jesus, He was merciful to you instead.

³¹ Now the Jews are the rebels, refusing to have anything to do with the mercy you have accepted. But this is your chance to now show them kind-

ness, and explain God's mercy to them.

³² Because God has allowed all of us to be imprisoned by a rebellious spirit, so that He might show mercy to all of us.

To God be the Glory

³³ Oh, how immeasurably deep are the riches of both God's wisdom and knowledge. It's impossible to even begin to probe into and understand why He makes the decisions He makes. And His ways of doing things are way beyond our present ability to even begin to look into and understand. As the Scripture says,

³⁴ Who has ever understood how the Lord's mind works? Or who has ever been able to give Him advice?^a

³⁵ And who has ever given anything to God, that would put God under obligation to pay him back?^a

³⁶ Because everything has been created by God, and it all comes to us thru Him and for His purposes. May He forever be glorified! Indeed, so be it!

Give Your All to God

12 For that reason, my brothers and sisters, because God has been so very merciful toward us, I plead with you: Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, dedicated to be lived in a manner totally pleasing to Him. This should be the intelligent, faithful response of your whole being.

² So don't blindly and obediently run with the pack and allow the world crowd to force you to conform to their low standards. Instead, you must now allow God to continually transform you by the renewing of your mind,^a so that you may be able to examine and choose what is good, acceptable, and altogether pleasing to Him.

³ Now, by authority of the undeserved assign-

ans 2:12; Hebrews 4:1; 12:28; 1 Peter 1:17.

11:22a Colossians 1:23.

11:26a This is *Jesus*, which means *Savior*.

11:27a Isaiah 59:20-21.

11:29a It's true, God never takes back a gift He has given. But you can lose a gift for various reasons—even the gift of life. See verses 21 and 22; 1 Corinthians 15:1-2; Galatians 5:4; and many more.

11:34a Isaiah 40:13.

11:35a Job 41:11.

12:2a ... *by daily reading His word, and meditating on it* ...

12:3a ... *as a messenger of Christ* ...

12:3b "We are to know that whatever we are or have of good or excellence, we have it from God; and that the glory belongs to the Giver, and not to

the one who has received the gift."—*Adam Clarke*

12:5a ... *as the head*, Ephesians 1:22-23. Compare John 15:1-7.

12:6a But your prophecy must be in agreement with God's printed word, otherwise it is suspect. From *Albert Barnes' Notes on the New Testament* for Romans 12:6 and 1 Corinthians 14:1 is this explanation of the gift of prophecy:

"The word properly means to predict future events. But it also means to declare the divine will; to interpret the purposes of God; or to make known in any way the truth of God, which is designed to influence men. Its first meaning is to predict or foretell future events; but as those who did this were messengers of God, and as they commonly connected with such predictions, instructions and exhorta-

ment God has given me;^a I have something to say to every one of you: Do not think more highly of yourself than you ought to think.^b Instead, look at yourself as you really are, and judge yourself in regard to how you have responded by faith and action and laid hold of the knowledge and spiritual gifts that God offers you for the good of all.

⁴We all have one body with many parts, and the parts don't all have the same work to do.

⁵In the same way, although we are many, we are one body in union with Christ,^a and we are all joined to each other as different parts of the one body.

⁶Each of us have different gifts, according to how God has blessed us. If your gift is prophecy, you should faithfully prophesy according to what you are confident that God has revealed to you.^a

⁷If your gift is to serve and help others, you should do so with all the ability and opportunity God has given you. If you are gifted to teach, teach God's word faithfully, without any compromise.^a

⁸If you have the gift of preaching, you should be most diligent in your preparation and in your preaching. The one who gives should give generously, but not in a way that will bring praise to himself.^a If you have the gift of leadership you should lead with earnest diligence and enthusiasm. And when you show mercy, do so cheerfully.

Rules to Live By

⁹Your love must be genuine, with your whole heart. Always turn away from what is evil with real hatred for it, but continue to cling to what is good.

¹⁰Love each other like brothers and sisters, and honestly desire that others be honored instead of yourself.

¹¹Don't be lazy or haphazard about your work^a

or business. Serve the Lord in every situation, burning with fervent zeal.

¹²Continually rejoice in the sure hope we have, and always be patient when you are going through severe trials and persecution.^a In regard to prayer: Keep praying earnestly until you receive the answer.^b

¹³Always share what you have with God's people who are in need. And always be delightfully hospitable, sharing your home and blessings there with others.

¹⁴Also keep helping and encouraging those who are persecuting you.^a Don't ask God to curse them, but sincerely keep asking Him to bless them.

¹⁵Rejoice with those who are rejoicing,^a and weep with those who are weeping.^b

¹⁶Have the same interest and concern for everyone. Don't cater to the rich, the intelligent, the beautiful, and other so-called important people, but show equal interest in the common people. And don't get puffed up with your own importance.

¹⁷Never harm anyone in repayment for the harm they did to you. Others are always watching you, so for their sake make it a matter of fixed principle and practice to always be open about doing what is right.^a

¹⁸Whenever possible, when the decision is yours, live at peace with everyone.

¹⁹The main reason you should not take revenge and give vent to your anger, my friends, is because you should allow God to handle the situation. God has said,

Revenge for wrongdoing is my responsibility. I will repay him.^a

²⁰**So if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink. Because in so doing, it**

tions in regard to the sins, and dangers, and duties of men, the word came to denote any who warned, or threatened, or in any way communicated the will of God; and even those who uttered devotional sentiments or praise ...

"While the one with a gift for teaching spoke in a calm, connective, didactic discourse adapted to instruct and enlighten the hearers, the prophet spoke more from the impulse of sudden inspiration, from the light of a sudden revelation at the moment, and his discourse was probably more adapted, by means of powerful exhortation, to awaken the feelings and conscience of the hearers."

12:7a The implication might well be ... *should teach the whole truth, simply and honestly so that all may understand, realizing that one day you must give an accounting before God for every*

word you have taught, or have failed to teach.

12:8a Original word means both *generously* and *with simplicity*.

12:11a This certainly includes the work of the ministry of our Lord.

12:12a Always remember: The future for the true follower of Christ is bright, exceedingly bright. See 8:18-28.

12:12b Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8; 17:6, and the note.

12:14a Continue to bless them, no matter how long or intense the injury may be.

12:15a Don't be jealous and wish you were the one who had reason to rejoice. Be genuinely glad for them.

12:15b You can diminish the sorrow of others by genuinely sorrowing with them.

12:17a 2 Corinthians 8:21.

will be the same as heaping coals of fire on his head.^a

²¹Never allow evil to conquer you. Instead conquer evil by doing good.

Obey Those in Authority

13 Everyone must obey the civil authorities that are over him, because there is no government except that which God has established, and the persons in authority have been placed there by God.

²So anyone who rebels against the government is actually rebelling against what God has established, and those who do so will be punished.

³Those who do what's right have no reason to fear civil authorities, but those who do wrong have very good reason to fear. Do you wish to be unafraid of those in authority? Then practice doing what's right, and you will have praise for doing so.

⁴Because the police are servants of God, working for your good. But if you're doing wrong, then you have good reason to be afraid, because they don't carry their weapons for no reason. They have been placed where they are by God as His servants, to bring His avenging anger against those who do wrong.

⁵So you must put yourself under the authorities, not just to avoid punishment, but because you know it's the right thing to do.

⁶That's why you pay taxes, because the governing authorities are God's servants, devoting full time to His work.

⁷So pay what's due to everyone: taxes, where taxes are due, customs, to those collecting customs, respect, to those you should respect, and honor, to those whom you should honor.

Show Genuine Love for Others

⁸Don't be in debt to anyone for anything. But do

remember the debt of love we owe to one another, because the one who practices loving others has fulfilled the Law.

⁹Because God's commands, **You must not commit adultery, you must not murder, you must not steal, you must not lie about others, you must not wrongfully desire what belongs to someone else,^a** and all other such commands of God are summed up in the one rule that states, **Love others in the same way that you love yourself.^b**

¹⁰Love does no wrong to others in any way; so the law that we are to love others is the only law we really need.

Wake Up to What Time It Is

¹¹Also think of this: Since you know what time it is, you know it's high time that you rouse yourself from your sleep! Because the moment when we will finally be saved and taken to be with the Lord is much nearer now than when we first believed.

¹²The dark night is almost over, and the great Day is about to break. So we must throw aside all deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.^a

¹³We must live honorable lives, as we do in broad daylight, not indulging wild parties and getting drunk, not indulging in sexual immorality or other wrong indulgences to gratify our various appetites, nor in fights and jealousies.

¹⁴Instead, live as our Lord Jesus Christ would live if He were in your place. Don't even think about satisfying the desires of your sensual appetites in a wrong way.

Do Not Judge Your Brother

14 Welcome the one who is weak in faith; but not for the purpose of arguing with him about what he allows or refuses.

²One person believes he may eat everything, but the one who is weak in knowledge and doesn't understand the facts eats only vegetables.

12:19a Deuteronomy 32:35.

12:20a Proverbs 25:21-22. Kenneth Wuest in *Word Studies From The Greek New Testament* says, "In Bible times an Oriental needed to keep his hearth fire going all the time in order to insure fire for cooking and warmth. If it went out, he had to go to a neighbor for some live coals of fire. These he would carry on his head in a container, Oriental fashion, back to his home.

"The person who would give him some live coals would be meeting his desperate need and showing him an outstanding kindness. If he would heap the container with coals, the man would be sure of get-

ting some home still burning. The one injured would be returning kindness for injury, the only thing a Christian is allowed to give back to the one who has injured him. This act of kindness God could use to soften the heart of the person and lead him on to repentance and the offering of a recompense for the injury sustained. In this way the Christian would overcome evil with good."

13:9a Exodus 20:13-17; Deuteronomy 5:17-21.

13:9b Leviticus 19:18.

13:12a See Ephesians 6:11-18.

14:10a ... *where we will all be judged regarding our acts and motives in everything we have done*

³The one who eats everything must not despise the one who doesn't. And the one who doesn't eat meat must not judge the one who does, because God has accepted him.

⁴Who do you think you are, judging someone else's servant? It's his Master's responsibility to tell him if he's doing right or wrong. And he will be made to do what pleases the Lord, because God is able to help him do it.

⁵One person considers one day more sacred than other days. A second person considers every day to be of equal importance. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

⁶The one who considers a certain day as sacred, honors that day for the Lord. And the one who does not consider that day as special, considers that day no more sacred to the Lord than any other day. The one who eats anything, eats to please the Lord, and gives God thanks. And the one who refuses to eat certain food, abstains for the purpose of pleasing the Lord, and he gives God thanks.

⁷Because no true follower of the Lord lives to please himself, and none of us even dies to certain things for our own advantage.

⁸So whether we live or die to these things, we do so for the Lord. In either case, we belong to the Lord.

⁹That's why Christ both died and rose to live again. It was so that He might be our Lord and Ruler in all circumstances, both when we live in regard to these things and when we die to them.

¹⁰Why, then, do you continue to judge your brother? And you, the other one, why do you continue to look down on your brother? After all, we will all stand before Christ at His judgment seat and be judged by Him.^a

¹¹For the Scripture declares:

As surely as I live, the Lord says, every knee will bow before me, and every tongue will confess to God.^a

or said, or have failed to do or say.

14:11a Isaiah 45:23.

14:17a A Christian recognizes God as his King, both now and forever. *The Kingdom of God is within you*, with God enthroned as King. Luke 17:21. One day soon, God's visible Kingdom will cover the earth, with Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. 1 Timothy 6:14,15.

14:17b Righteousness refers to the right standing a Christian has with God, and the promise of eternal life by believing on Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. It also refers to the right living that God expects of His children.

14:17c Peace refers to the peace there is now

¹²So then, each of us must give an account to God about what we have done.

Do Not Cause Others to Sin

¹³So we shouldn't be judging each other anymore. But we should also make up our minds never to do anything that may cause a fellow follower to stumble and fall into sin.

¹⁴As for myself, I'm fully convinced by all that the Lord Jesus has taught me, that nothing in the way of food, in itself, is wrong to eat. But if a person believes that something is wrong, then for him it is wrong.

¹⁵If you put pressure on someone by the food you eat, your actions are no longer motivated by love. Christ died for this brother. Don't tempt and destroy him with the food you eat!

¹⁶So don't do what you believe is good, in such a way that people will speak against you for it.

¹⁷Because what you eat and drink is not the important thing in the Kingdom of God.^a What is important is all that's implied by the words **righteousness,^b peace,^c and joy in the Holy Spirit^d**

¹⁸When you serve Christ in this way you truly please God, and you will also be well regarded by others.

¹⁹So let's keep emphasizing the things that result in peace,^a and the things that enable us to build each other up in the faith.

²⁰Don't destroy the work of God in a person's life simply for the sake of exercising your freedom to eat certain food! Even if all food is acceptable, it is sinful for you to eat that food if by eating it you cause a fellow believer to fall into sin.

²¹It is best that you don't eat certain meat, or drink wine, or do anything else that may cause a follower of the Lord to be offended, or weakened, and even fall.

²²Do you have confidence in what you are doing? Have it between yourself and God. Happy is the

between God and His children. It also refers to the wonderful peace of mind His children have. We are winners, no matter what happens. All the great adventure of God's great eternity is ahead of us.

14:17d Joy in the Holy Spirit is ours now in the degree that we draw near to God in praise, worship, obedience, and service. And the joy we will soon experience in the presence of God is beyond anyone's ability to even imagine. 1 Corinthians 2:9.

14:19a Peace with God, and also peace with our fellow men. *When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.* Proverbs 16:7.

15:3a Psalm 69:9. In other words, Christ was will-

one who does not continue to doubt what he has carefully looked into and is honestly convinced is proper action.

²³ But if you doubt the rightness of eating certain food, you are condemned if you eat it, because you are not eating it with the assurance that it is right and proper to do so. Whatever is not done in confident assurance is sin!

Please Others, Not Yourself

15 So those of us who are strong in our assurance ought to be patient with the frailty of those who are weak, and not insist on pleasing ourselves.

² Each of us should do what pleases others, for their good, to build them up in the faith.

³ Even Christ didn't live to please Himself, but as the Scripture says of Him,

The insults of those who ragged at You have now fallen on Me.^a

⁴ This and everything else that was written in former times was written that by means of these Scriptures we might learn to patiently continue faithful, and that we might receive encouragement by the continuing hope they give us.

⁵ Now may the God who Himself is patient and long-suffering, who constantly encourages us, help each of you to have this same attitude toward one another, as you seek to live for Christ in a way that is pleasing to Him.

⁶ And may all of you in a united way, with one voice, continue to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.^a

⁷ So accept each other in the same way that Christ has accepted each of us, and as a result, God will indeed be glorified.

The Great News Is for Jews and Everyone Else

⁸ What I'm saying is that Jesus Christ became a servant of the Jews, bringing them God's truth, in order to fulfill the promises God had made to their forefathers.^a

⁹ And this has also caused even many who are not Jews to praise God for His mercy. As the Scripture declares,

This is why I will tell even those who are not Jews about You, and I will continually sing praises to

Your name.^a

¹⁰ Another Scripture says,

Listen, all you other people, rejoice with God's chosen people!^a

¹¹ And another,

Praise the Lord, all nations. All of you people, praise Him!^a

¹² And still another, where Isaiah says,

The Descendant of Jesse^a will rise up to rule the nations, and they will put their hope in Him.^b

¹³ Now may the God who offers hope fill all of you with supreme and unsurpassed joy and peace as you continue to believe, causing you thru the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to receive most joyous and ever-enlarging views of the hope that is ours.

Paul's Reason for Writing So Boldly

¹⁴ But I also have an inner conviction, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are also filled with earnest desire to do what is right, and that you have also been given all the knowledge necessary to be able to urgently warn, counsel, and instruct one another.

¹⁵ Just the same, dear friends, I've been very bold in what I've written you. I did this partly to remind you that, because of a favor from God that I certainly don't deserve,

¹⁶ He called me to be a servant of Jesus Christ to the whole world, to act as His minister in giving out His Great News to everyone. And I've been very concerned that the offering I make to God, of people from all nations, be one that has been thoroughly purified by the Holy Spirit, so that they will be accepted by God.^a

¹⁷ So I have good reason to boast about what Christ Jesus has enabled me to accomplish in God's service.

¹⁸ And for that reason, I wouldn't think of speaking about anything except about what Christ has accomplished thru me in leading people everywhere to obey God by what I have both said and done.

¹⁹ Thru the power of miracles and wonders, performed thru the power of the Holy Spirit, the Great News was proclaimed and so emphatically proven to be true. So from Jerusalem to Illyricum, and everywhere in between, I have preached the full

ing to suffer or be inconvenienced in order that others might live. Are we?

15:6a ... *even though you do not agree on all things.*

15:8a Deuteronomy 18:18-19.

15:9a 2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49.

15:10a Deuteronomy 32:43.

15:11a Psalm 117:1.

15:12a Jesse was the father of King David. Jesus was their descendant.

message of the Great News about Christ.

²⁰ I have always made it my aim to not preach the Great News where people already know about Christ, so that I would not be building where someone else had already laid the foundation.

²¹ Instead, as the Scripture declares:

Those who had not yet been told about Him will now see,^a and those who had not heard before will now understand.^b

Paul's Plan to Visit Rome

²² So it's been my pioneer work for the Lord that has hindered me so many times when I wanted to get out to visit you.

²³ But now I have no more areas to cover in this region, and since I've had such great desire for so many years to see you, I'll do so whenever I make my trip to Spain.

²⁴ So I hope to see you on my way there, and hopefully I'll have your help in making that trip, after I've first had the pleasure of enjoying your company for awhile.

²⁵ But right now I'm on my way to deliver a relief offering to the Lord's followers in Jerusalem.

²⁶ His followers in both northern and southern Greece have taken pleasure in giving toward this offering to help the poor among the followers there.

²⁷ They have, in fact, taken great pleasure in doing so. But they actually owe this to them, because if the Jews shared their spiritual blessings with those who are not Jews, their duty is certainly now to share their material blessings with the Jews.

²⁸ So when I've completed my mission there, safely delivering these gifts of love, I will head for Spain and visit you on the way.

²⁹ And I know that when I do come your way, I will come with a full measure of Christ's blessing to minister His Great News.

³⁰ But I beg of you, please, my brothers and sisters, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ and by means of the love given you by the Holy Spirit, that you most fervently and earnestly work together with me by means of your prayers to God for me.

³¹ Pray that God will protect me from those in Judea who are not obedient to our Lord. And pray that the gifts I bring to Jerusalem will be willingly and gladly accepted by the Lord's people.

³² That would bring me to you, if God is willing,

filled with joy and ready for a refreshing visit with you.

³³ May the God of peace be with all of you. And may that always be true.

Personal Greetings

16 And now, I can't speak too highly to you of Phoebe, our sister who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea.

² Please extend to her, when she comes your way, a warm Christian welcome, in a manner worthy of those who truly love the Lord. Assist her in whatever ways she may need your help, because she has been such a help to so many, including me.

³ Greetings to Priscilla and Aquilla, my fellow workers in the service of Christ Jesus.

⁴ They risked their own lives to save mine. I'm not alone in giving them thanks; all the Gentile churches join me in doing so.

⁵ Also my greetings to the church that meets in their home. And greetings to my very dear friend Epänetus. He was the first convert to Christ in southern Greece.

⁶ Greetings to Mary, who worked so hard for us.

⁷ And greetings to Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me. They are highly regarded by the apostles, and became Christians before I did.

⁸ My best regards to Amplias, whom I love so deeply in the Lord.

⁹ My greetings to Urbanus, our fellow worker in the service of Christ, and to my dear friend Stachys.

¹⁰ Greetings to Apelles, who has proved himself faithful to Christ. And greetings to all who belong to the household of Aristobulus.

¹¹ Greetings to my relative, Herodion, and to all who are followers of Christ in the household of Narcissus.

¹² Greetings to Tryphena and Tryphosa, who are working so very hard in serving the Lord. And greetings to much loved Persis, who has also worked so diligently in the Lord's service.

¹³ Greetings to Rufus, one of the Lord's choice people, and to his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.

¹⁴ Extend my greetings to Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and all the brothers and sisters who are with them.

¹⁵ Greetings to Philologus and Julia, to Nereus

15:12b Isaiah 11:10.

15:16a 2 Corinthians 11:2.

15:21a ... see *Christ for who He really is*. See

Just Who is Jesus Christ? Appendix 246, page 512.

15:21b Isaiah 52:15.

16:17a He is no doubt referring to what he taught

and his sister, to Olympas, and to all of God's people who are with them.

¹⁶Greet one another with sincere Christian affection and love. All the churches of Christ here send you their greetings.

¹⁷Now, my brothers and sisters, I urge you to be on the lookout for those who cause divisions and cause believers to stumble by means of teachings contrary to what you have been taught. Have nothing to do with them.^a

¹⁸Such people are not serving our Lord Jesus Christ, but only the cravings of their own appetites. By smooth arguments and flattery they continually deceive the minds of unsuspecting people.

¹⁹Everyone has heard about your obedience to Christ. I'm very happy about that. But I want you to be very wise in your understanding about what is good, and inexperienced in things that are evil.

²⁰The One who is the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. May our Lord Jesus Christ give you wisdom and strength to be obedient and steady in your devotion to Him. Indeed, may it ever be so.

²¹Timothy, my fellow worker, sends you his greetings, and so do my relatives, Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater.

²²And I, Tertius, the one writing this letter for Paul, greet you in the Lord.

²³Gaius, my host, who has opened his home to the whole congregation, sends you his greetings. And Erastus, the city treasurer, and Quartus, a brother in Christ, send you their greetings.

²⁴Again, may God's richest blessings thru our

Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. So be it.

²⁵And now, according to the Great News which I preach, God is able to establish and confirm you in the faith by means of the preaching of these truths about Jesus Christ. These are truths that have just recently been revealed, having been concealed since the world was created.

²⁶But now they have been revealed, and we discover them even in the prophetic Scriptures! Now the eternal God has commanded that these truths be revealed to people in every nation, in order to bring them to obedience to Him thru faith in Jesus Christ.

²⁷So now to God, who alone is wise, may all praise and honor be given forever, as we worship Him because of all we have and are thru Jesus Christ. And so may it ever be.

Sincerely in Christ Jesus,
Paul

them in 14:1-23 and 15:1-7.

For that reason, my brothers and sisters, because God has been so very merciful toward us, I plead with you: Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, dedicated to be lived in a manner totally pleasing to Him. This should be the intelligent, faithful response of your whole being.

²So don't blindly and obediently run with the pack and allow the world crowd to force you to conform to their low standards. Instead, you must now allow God to continually transform you by the renewing of your mind, so that you may be able to examine and choose what is good, acceptable, and altogether pleasing to Him.

—Romans 12:1-2

Paul's First Letter to the CORINTHIANS

A letter from Christ's messenger, Paul, to the Christians at Corinth, in Greece.

Dear Friends at Corinth:

This is from Paul, whom God singled out and called to be a messenger^a of Jesus Christ.

²Together with our brother Sosthenes, I am writing to those of you in Corinth who have been rescued from lives of sin and made holy by means of^a Jesus Christ, and who gather together there now as God's people. You have been called by God^b to this total separation from sin; and the same is true of everyone everywhere who is worshiping Jesus Christ our Lord. He is now to be honored and obeyed as their Lord, and He's our Lord too.

³My prayer is that God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord will be most compassionate and merciful toward you and give you great peace of mind and heart.

⁴I continually thank God for the many ways He has blessed you thru Christ Jesus.

⁵You have been enriched by Him in every way—in all phases of knowledge about God, and in your courage and willingness to speak out and share that knowledge with others.^a

⁶And because your testimony for Christ has been so constant and unwavering,

⁷you are not lacking in even one gift of the Spirit, while you eagerly and patiently wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed from Heaven.^a

⁸And He will continue to strengthen you to the very end, so that you may be blameless on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns.

⁹You can indeed depend upon God, who has called you into this wonderful companionship

with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, to be altogether faithful.^a

Divisions in the Church

¹⁰Now I beg you, my brothers and sisters, on behalf of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all work at being in agreement with one another, not allowing anything to divide you. May you be closely knit together in all your reasonings and conclusions.

¹¹But, my dear friends, some of the members of Chloe's household have told me that you are quarreling among yourselves.

¹²I'm told that some of you are saying, "I follow Paul"; others, "I follow Apollos"; and others, "I follow Peter"; and still others, "I follow Christ."

¹³Has Christ been split apart? Paul wasn't nailed to the cross for you, was he? Or were you baptized as a follower of Paul?

¹⁴I thank God now that I didn't baptize any of you, except Crispus and Gaius.

¹⁵So no one can say that I baptized you as my followers.

¹⁶Oh yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. But I don't know that I baptized anyone else.

¹⁷Because Christ didn't send me to baptize,^a but to tell the Great News. And I don't rely on complicated arguments in telling it, so that the simple message about Christ dying on the cross to save us from our sins is not robbed of its effectiveness.

God's Wisdom and Power Revealed

¹⁸Many of those dying in their sins believe that the message about Christ dying on the cross to make amends for our sins and save us is utter nonsense. But those of us who are being saved know

1:1a Or *apostle*, which means *messenger*.

1:2a ... *the suffering, death, and resurrection of* ...

1:2b Romans 8:28-30.

1:5a The Corinthians were eager both to gain all the knowledge God would give them, and to share that knowledge with others. Romans 10:9-10.

1:7a Matthew 24:29-31; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

1:9a God can be fully relied upon to always do what He has said He will do. He does not deceive

anyone. You can count on Him to do His part in helping you to make it all the way home to Heaven. John 15:1-5; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 12:13; Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Jude 1.

1:17a Paul did not say this to downgrade baptism. He exalts it in Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12. He baptized some of the first converts, and then left the rest of the baptizing to his co-workers and the new converts whom he had already baptized. But his main work was to preach and to look after the churches.

that it is indeed Christ's death for us that now empowers God with the moral and legal authority to save us.

¹⁹Because God has said:

I will bring to absolute nothingness the wisdom of the wise. And the intelligence of the intellectual giants will be shown to be utterly worthless.^a

²⁰Just what has the wisdom of even the world's wisest men accomplished in saving us from ultimate destruction under God's judgment? The brightest scholars and the most elite philosophers don't have any solutions at all. God looks upon all their "wisdom" as thick-headed foolishness.

²¹So in His wisdom, God made it impossible for people of the world to get a true knowledge and understanding of Him and His ways of dealing with mankind by means of their own wisdom and reasonings. Instead, it pleased Him to save those who believe the so-called "foolish" message we preach.

²²The Jews want proof by a miracle, and everyone else wants a logical solution.

²³But we continue to preach, simply, that Christ was crucified in order to enable God to forgive our sins. Most Jews have a big problem with this, and most Gentiles^a call it nonsense.

²⁴But for those of us whom God has called^a to salvation (both Jews and all others), Christ has become for us both God's power to save and God's wisdom in the way He is saving us.

²⁵Because that which seems to some to be stupidity on God's part,^a is greater wisdom by far than the wisest plans that any men could ever come up with. And that which appears to be weakness on God's part,^a is able to do far more than anything that the greatest powers of men could ever do.

²⁶Just look back on what you were, brothers and sisters, when God called you. By the standards of the world, not many of you were considered wise, nor financially powerful, nor high in social standing.

²⁷But God purposely chose people whom the world considers dull and stupid, to put to shame those whom they consider so very wise. And He chose those whom the world considers weak, to put to shame those whom they consider so very powerful.

²⁸Those whom the world looked down on and despised, and those whom they considered as even less than nothing, God chose, to bring to nothing those who are held in such high regard,

²⁹so that no one could stand before God and brag about what he did to save himself.^a

³⁰Your right standing with God, your freedom from compulsion to continue living in sin,^a and your ultimate salvation, have all become yours thru Jesus Christ by means of God's great wisdom.

³¹So, as the Scripture says,

Let the one who wants to brag, brag about what the Lord has done!^a

The Message Paul Preached

2 When I came to you dear friends to tell you what God has done, I did not come with carefully chosen words packed full of human wisdom.

²Because I had made up my mind that while I was with you I wouldn't talk to you about anything except Jesus Christ, and about how He had died on the cross for you.

³I was with you in weakness, and trembling with great fear that I might fail.^a

⁴Neither in my private talks with you nor in my

1:19a ... *when it comes to creating an effective plan to save mankind.* Isaiah 29:14. God's ways totally confound the wise people of this world. His ways are so much higher than ours. See Isaiah 55:8-9.

1:23a All who are not Jews.

1:24a Romans 8:28-30.

1:25a ... *allowing men to nail Christ to the cross to die* ...

1:29a See Ephesians 2:8-9.

1:30a See Acts 20:32, and the note.

1:31a Jeremiah 9:24.

2:3a Paul was fearful and concerned about the results of his preaching. When a preacher or teacher has little or no real concern about results, he has little or no results!

2:5a O Lord, do it again! Give us humble and faithful men who will preach only to please You,

under the powerful anointing of Your Holy Spirit.

2:7a Proverbs 3:35; Romans 8:30; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; Hebrews 2:10; 1 Peter 5:10.

2:9a Isaiah 64:4. See 2 Corinthians 4:17; 12:4; Ephesians 3:8.

Nothing is as good as we had expected or hoped for in this brief life. But what God has prepared for us in His presence in Heaven will so far surpass anything you had expected or could have even imagined, that you will continually glory in His greatness and goodness thruout eternity.

But notice that this great promise is to *those who love Him*. Do your actions, ambitions, and words to others tell God that you truly love Him? What does all of the above say about your future? See 2 Peter 1:5-10.

2:12a Not only is God's gift of life thru Christ Jesus necessary, but it is also necessary that He grant us

preaching did I ever rely on convincing words of human wisdom, but on the demonstration of the work of the Holy Spirit and the power of God,

⁵so that you would not place your faith in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.^a

⁶But we do use words of wisdom when speaking to those who are mature in the faith. But not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are all coming to nothing.

⁷Instead, we speak about God's wisdom, about how He drafted a plan before the beginning of time that would result in our glory,^a and how He wisely hid His intentions.

⁸None of the rulers of this age knew anything about this plan. If they had, they never would have nailed our glorious Lord to a cross.

⁹But as the Scripture says:

"No eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and no person has ever even begun to imagine the amazing and wonderful things that God has prepared for those who love Him."^a

¹⁰But by His Spirit God has revealed them to us. Because the Spirit probes into everything, even into the deepest depths of God's divine thoughts and plans.

¹¹Because what man knows what's in the mind of another man? Only the spirit of that other man knows what his thoughts and plans are. The same is true with God: Only the Spirit of God knows what's in the mind of God.

¹²And we haven't received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, which He gave us so that we might fully understand and appreciate the things that God has so freely given us.^a

¹³So this is what we talk about, not using information that human wisdom would use, but telling

what the Holy Spirit has revealed, explaining spiritual truths by means of the things God's Spirit has revealed to us.

¹⁴But the person who is not a follower of the Lord, who doesn't have the Holy Spirit living within him, doesn't accept the amazing revelations made by the Spirit of God. They're foolishness to him. In fact, he can't understand them, because only the Holy Spirit makes them understandable.

¹⁵But those of us who have the Holy Spirit are able to closely examine and make judgments on all these matters, while others can't understand how we arrived at our conclusions.

¹⁶Because as the Scripture says:

"Who has ever understood the thinking processes of the mind of the Lord, so that he could teach Him?"^a

But we understand what Christ is thinking, and what He desires from us.^b

Divisions in the Church

3 So, my dear friends, I haven't been able to speak to you as I would to those who are spiritually mature, but as to those who still strongly tend toward selfishness and pride—as to mere babes in Christ.

²I've had to feed you milk, not solid food, because until now you couldn't receive anything solid. In fact, you still can't!^a

³You still think and act like people of the world. When you are envious and bitterly quarrel, and divide into cliques, aren't you immature and worldly, behaving like people who have never been converted to be like Christ?^a

⁴Because when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," aren't you acting just

the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13), so that we might fully appreciate that gift of life, and also see and understand everything else that now becomes ours thru Christ.

2:16a Isaiah 40:13.

2:16b The true Christian is vitally influenced by God. He has His Spirit. He has the mind of Christ, who has the mind of God. He sympathizes with Christ; he shares His feelings, desires, purposes, and plans.

3:1-2a Paul had been the first pastor of these people in Corinth. Many had been converted to Christ under his teaching, but he charges them here with still behaving as babes in Christ. It's a pastor's duty to lead his people into deeper truths as fast as they can take it in Christian growth.

But it is also the duty of Christians themselves to learn these truths as rapidly as possible and to put

to work what they've learned. Some people seem to want to be spoon-fed spiritually all their lives. They seldom read or study the Bible themselves.

It is especially vital in these days of the end time to know by your own personal research the true teachings of the Lord, and to act upon them! Also, how can you know your pastor is preaching the truth, unless you seriously study God's word yourself?

3:3a Paul implies here that they must under no excuse remain like the world. The sharpness of some of his rebukes and warnings show his intense concern for them. They are on dangerous ground if they imagine they can continue in this degenerate state.

If they don't repent and correct the situation in their lives, they are in danger of being condemned with the godless world. See 11:31-32.

like the people of the world?

⁵ So who is Paul? And who is Apollos? Only servants of God thru whom you came to believe, each of us doing the job the Lord gave us.^a

⁶ I planted the seeds. Then Apollos came along and watered them. But it was God who made them sprout and grow!

⁷ So then, the one who plants isn't anyone special; neither is the one who does the watering. Only God is really important, because He's the One who makes things grow.^a

⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters are working together in harmony, and each will

receive his own reward, depending on how diligently and wisely he has worked.

⁹ So because both Apollos and I are employed by God, we are working together to accomplish what He wants done. You are God's field that has already been cultivated. You are also God's building under construction.

The Foundation and Superstructure

¹⁰ Thru kindness and mercy from God that I certainly don't deserve, I have been given the privilege of being the wise master builder who laid the foundation for your Christian lives. Now someone

3:4-5a Paul's great concern for their spiritual welfare sprang from the many signs of disagreement among them, causing them to take sides in the church. Some called themselves by the name of *Paul*—maybe calling themselves Paulists. Others took the side of *Apollos*, claiming he was the better preacher.

Paul scolds them for dividing the church in this way. He shows them that both he and Apollos are simply ministers to them from the Lord, having received various gifts and abilities from God to do the work of the ministry.

3:6-7a Paul compares the hearts of the Corinthian Christians to a field. He says that he *planted* the word of God in that field of their hearts. Then Apollos, by his preaching, came along and *watered* the seed that Paul had sown. But it was *God who made it grow!* It was God who gave life to that word in their hearts and gave them opportunity to be converted and to grow in the faith. *So then, the one who plants isn't anyone special; neither is the one who does the watering. Only God is special, because He's the One who makes things grow.* Arguments over personalities are absolutely fruitless. God was the One who should receive all of their praise. He is the One to be followed.

3:9-11a The Greek indicates a field that is already cultivated. Some work had already been done in each life. Paul had already compared the hearts of the Corinthians to a fertile field—both Apollos and himself being the *laborers* in that field. Now he likens their lives to a *building*.

He states that he *had been the wise master builder who had laid the foundation for their Christian lives*. He had been faithful in teaching them that Christ and the new birth experience is the *only foundation* on which they can build. He also states here that there is *no other* lasting *foundation* that any man can lay, except *the foundation* he had laid—which is who Jesus Christ is, what He taught, and what He accomplished.

Notice that the last sentence of v 10 warns every

minister to be very careful *how he builds* upon any good foundation that has been laid in any life. And also he must be careful and sure that when he is laying the foundation that he lays the *right foundation*, and the *full foundation*.

TO PREACH THAT CHRIST IS NECESSARY AS SAVIOR BUT NOT AS LORD FOR SALVATION, IS FALSE TEACHING! SUCH A FOUNDATION IN THE LIFE OF A SOUL WILL NOT HOLD THE SUPERSTRUCTURE! There cannot be salvation without *the full foundation* being laid. Our rewards will be given to us by the Lord in accordance with how solidly we have laid the foundation in lives, and as to the materials used in the later building upon that foundation. vs 12-15.

3:12-13a We are all to faithfully minister God's message to others (Romans 10:9-10), and Paul warns here about the judgment which all Christians will face concerning their labors for God, at the Judgment Seat of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:10-11. No unsaved people will be included in this judgment. They will appear at another judgment. Revelation 20:5, 11-15.

Paul speaks of the various types of building materials which can be built into lives. Then he states that these works for the Lord will be *tested by fire* at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Sermons, Sunday school lessons, etc., which have been ill-prepared, or have not been intended to really encourage, warn, teach, or cut, as the word of God ("the sword of the Spirit") should, are likened to *wood, hay, and straw*.

But work for the Lord that has been truly thoughtful, where the full truth has been presented without fear or favor, and where the warnings have been given as well as the promises, with sufficient time having been given to study and prayer—this is the kind of work that Paul likens to *gold, silver, and precious stones*.

Notice that Paul is not speaking here about whether a Christian has lived a life of sin or a life of righteousness, or whether he has lived partly in sin

else is building on that foundation. But let each builder be intensely concerned as to how he builds on it.

¹¹God will accept no other foundation than the one which has already been laid, which is Jesus Christ.^a

¹²Now the various materials that can be used in building upon that foundation are either gold, silver, and precious stones; or wood, hay, and straw.

God's Test by Fire

¹³When the fire hits on Judgment Day it will become very easy to tell what quality of materials

each builder used, because every man's work will be tested by fire, to reveal just what quality of work it was.^a

¹⁴If anyone's work on these buildings is still standing after the fire, he will receive a reward.

¹⁵But if anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer great loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one barely escaping thru the flames.^a

¹⁶Don't you know that each of you are a house of God, and that the Spirit of God is living within you?^a

¹⁷If anyone corrupts and destroys God's house,^a God will destroy him! Because God's house is

and partly for the Lord. Other Scriptures warn about the so-called "Christian" who lives in sin and will not be numbered among true Christians, even if he is a preacher. Matthew 7:21-29. Paul is not speaking about deeds of sin being burned up. He is dealing strictly with the matter of service to the Lord, making mention of both his and Apollos' labor in the Lord's work.

This applies to every servant of the Lord. Since the Lord's call and command to service is to every Christian (Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:9-10, etc.), all true Christians will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Each Christian has capabilities and opportunities. The Lord expects us to make the very best use of every one of these gifts so that others may also make it to Heaven. Even Paul's works for the Lord will be *tested by fire*. He states that *every man's work will be tested by fire*. The works and service for the Lord of all true Christians will be *tested by fire*, to show whether that work will be rewarded, or whether it will be considered worthless.

3:14-15a Those who have labored faithfully will *receive a reward*. But notice that there will be true Christians who will find that all of their works for the Lord have been in vain. Their *work will be burned up!* Paul says that this person *will suffer great loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one barely escaping thru the flames*. It is not our salvation that will be tested by fire. Rather, the fire will test the true Christians' works and service for the Lord.

However, notice that these will barely escape the flames themselves. If that's the case, what about those who refuse to even make a real effort to faithfully serve the Lord? Romans 10:9-10.

Preacher, you had better beef up those sermons of yours with some Scriptures that will bring real conviction in the hearts of your people. And Sunday school teacher, you had better prepare for the lesson as well as you expect your pastor to prepare—and don't pull any punches.

Time is short. The unsaved need to hear the full truth so they may be truly born again. Christians need to be given a clear challenge to faithful service, so they may live lives of service that will truly count toward a rich and sure eternal reward.

It would appear that the line between the person whose *works will be burned up* and the person who has never actually been converted to the Lord, (or has not *continued in the faith*—Colossians 1:23), is a fine one, indeed. Only the Lord will be able to define that line.

Certainly every person who names the name of Christ as Lord needs to take heed to himself, making sure that his life is dedicated to Christ and to righteousness, and to faithful, uncompromising, and effective service for Him. See also 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11.

3:16a John 14:23.

3:17a Paul issues a most severe warning here concerning corrupting and destroying God's house. He makes it clear that *each Christian* is a *house of God*. It is possible, of course, to *destroy the house of God*. Paul makes that very plain here. It is possible to promote false teaching, to leave out important truths, and to give false hope. It's also possible to avoid the complete story, or to try to please some person—or all the people—instead of God, and to thereby *corrupt and destroy* those lives and souls to whom you are ministering.

If a student of the word of God decides to live in sin, or regard obedience to any of Christ's commands as optional because of your teaching, the charge against you, the teacher or preacher, is serious indeed! *If anyone corrupts and destroys God's house*, Paul warns, *God will destroy him!* No longer is Paul talking about the fire that destroys works. He speaks now of the destruction of *the soul* of the deceitful worker or teacher who has caused the soul of some Christian to be destroyed.

The Greek word translated *destroy* here means *to corrupt, to deprave, to destroy, to shrivel or wither, to spoil or ruin*. We dare not try to explain these

sacred and has been dedicated to Him, and you are that house.^a

¹⁸ Don't fool yourself! If you consider yourself to be wise, don't hesitate to be a fool in the opinion of the people of this age, in order that you may be truly wise.

¹⁹ Because God looks at the "wisdom" of this world^a as utter nonsense. As the Scripture says,

God catches these men in their own clever schemes.^b

²⁰ The Scriptures also state,

The Lord knows how the wise reason, and how wrong and worthless that reasoning is.^a

²¹ So stop your bragging about certain men, because everything belongs to all of you.^a

²² That includes Paul, Apollos, Peter, the world, life, death, the present, the future—it all belongs to all of you.

²³ And you all belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.^a

We Are All Servants of Christ To Whom We Are Accountable

4 So you should think of Apollos and me as servants of Christ, who've been entrusted with revealing God's secret truths.

² Now the supreme qualification for those given such a trust is that we are found to be faithful to our Lord.

³ It's of little concern to me if you, or even a court of law, examines or judges how faithful I am. In fact, I don't even judge myself.

⁴ I don't know of any area where I have failed to faithfully teach the truth. But that doesn't make me innocent, because the Lord is the One who is constantly and closely examining my every word, thought, deed, and motive.

⁵ So don't judge the motives of anyone before the proper time. Wait until the Lord comes. He will then turn on the searchlight and bring out into the

open the things that have been hidden in darkness, and will reveal the true motives of every person's heart. Then whatever praise each deserves will come from God.

⁶ For your benefit, my brothers and sisters, I have used Apollos and myself as examples in regard to these matters, so that you may learn from our example not to think more highly of men than the Scriptures teach that you should. Then you won't be comparing one man with another, and admiring one teacher more than another.

⁷ Because who made you the different and special person you are? And what do you have that you didn't receive from God? So if you received everything, why do you think so highly of yourself, as if you hadn't received all that you are and have?

⁸ Do you already have everything you need or want? Are you already rich? Do you already reign as kings, without any need of us?^a I could wish that you did indeed reign, because then we would be reigning with you.

⁹ But it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display out there at the end of the victor's parade, like men marked for death^a in the arena. We have become a spectacle to the entire universe, both to angels and to men.

¹⁰ We are fools for the way we live and preach Christ. But you, of course, are so very wise in the way you serve Him. We are timid and feeble. But you are so daring, bold, and fearless. You receive honor and praise, but we—only condemnation.

¹¹ Right up to the present moment we are both hungry and thirsty, and without proper clothing. We are often beaten, and wander about with no place we can call home.

¹² We work hard for our living, working with our own hands. When we are hatefully treated with verbal abuse, we bless and help those who curse us.^a When we are persecuted, we accept it without seeking revenge of any kind.^b

verses away. They are here for your warning! They are here for my warning! See also Mark 9:42. This is future prophecy, indeed—a most solemn prophecy of both promise and warning. See also Colossians 1:23 note.

3:19a ... in matters of religion ...

3:19b Job 5:13 ... when they try to outsmart Him.

3:18-20a Psalm 94:11. Some people believe their reasoning is superior to the simple truths presented in the Bible, so they twist and turn Scripture to make it conform to their own system of theology. It is to such people that God is giving this warning.

Anyone who thinks he is so *wise* that he can modify and soften the warnings that God has given to Christians faces frightful judgment. Likely, such a one will not even appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ. God warns in the preceding verses that such people will be *destroyed*. Matthew 15:14b.

3:21a Referring back now to v 4. Everything, including teachers and preachers, are a gift to you from God. As an heir of God (Romans 8:17), owning everything, you shouldn't be kissing the boots of men.

3:23a 1 Corinthians 15:28.

4:8a Paul is speaking here in irony and indignant

¹³When we are denounced and cursed, we continue to plead kindly with our accusers to recognize the truth. Even to the present moment we are looked upon as the scum of society, as garbage.

¹⁴I'm not writing these things to shame you; but because you are my dear children, I want to help, encourage, and challenge you.

¹⁵Even if you should have ten thousand who teach you about Christ, you still don't have many fathers. Because I became your spiritual father when I brought you the Great News about Christ Jesus.

¹⁶For that reason I urge you to follow my example.

¹⁷That's why I've sent Timothy to you, as my faithful and much loved son in the Lord. He will remind you of what I teach and how I live for Christ, which are the very things I teach everywhere in every church.

¹⁸Now some of you are proud and boastful, thinking I wouldn't dare to come and deal with you personally.

¹⁹But I definitely will be coming your way, and soon, if the Lord is willing. Then I'll find out not only what these proud people have to say, but what kind of power they have.

²⁰Because the sign that God is ruling in and working thru a minister, is demonstrated not only by how well he speaks, but by clear evidence of the power of God working in and thru him.

²¹Which do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a whip, or with love and in a spirit of gentleness?

Immorality in the Church Must Be Judged

5 But now, another matter: It is widely reported that there is sexual immorality among you—and sexual immorality so foul and sickening that it's not even tolerated among the pagans—that a man is living in sin with his stepmother!^a

²And yet you are boasting and proud of your

“patience and fairness” toward this man! Why haven't you instead cried over this sin and expelled this grievous sinner from your fellowship?

³Now I may not be with you in person, but I'm right there with you in spirit. And I have already pronounced judgment upon this one who has sinned, just as I would if I were there.

⁴When you gather together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, you must severely deal with this matter. I'll be with you in spirit.

⁵With the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, you must hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the health of his body, in the hope that his soul may be saved^a in the Day of our Lord Jesus.

⁶There's not one thing good about your boasting!^a Don't you know that even a small amount of yeast soon works its way thru the whole batch of dough?

⁷Get rid of that old yeast, so you may continue to be a truly new batch that's without yeast, which you really are! Because we also have a Passover Lamb, our Messiah, who has been sacrificed for us.^a

⁸Then there won't be any old yeast among us, including any yeast of hate or other wickedness, when we celebrate the true Passover Feast. There will be only sincerity and truth, the bread that has no yeast.

⁹In my previous letter, I told you not to associate with people who are living sexually immoral lives.

¹⁰But I wasn't talking about the pagans, who live only for what they can get out of this brief life, and who are sexually immoral, or covetous, or blackmailers, or idol worshippers. In that case, you would have to leave this world.

¹¹I meant you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a follower of the Lord, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, an idol worshiper, a drunkard, a swindler, or who runs others down with his ravings and gossip. Don't even eat with

sarcasm against the false and self-confident teachers in Corinth.

4:9a ... to be fed to the lions ...

4:12a Romans 12:14.

4:12b Romans 12:17-21.

5:1a Even the pagans abhorred such a crime, and always treated it as an abominable wickedness, and never allowed it to continue.

5:5a Even then, his salvation is not certain. The subjunctive mood here denotes a probability, dependent upon his true repentance and turning from his sin to obedience to Christ, as a result of God's judgment upon his body.

5:6a ... about your own achievements and those of your favorite teachers, while at the same time you are allowing such sin in your midst!

5:7a Previous to Passover, the Jews are to throw out all leavened bread (bread made with yeast, Exodus 12:1-20), which pictures sin being judged and thrown out of their lives. Christians also have a Passover Lamb (Christ), and we also are to rid ourselves of all sin. God will judge us if we allow sin to remain in our lives or in our churches.

Will God's judgment upon His people and Church today be any less severe than His judgment upon Israel for failure in this regard? See Exodus 12:19;

such a person!

¹² It is not our business to judge those outside the church. God will deal with them.

¹³ But it certainly is our business to judge and discipline those within the church. You must expel that wicked man from your fellowship!^a

Lawsuits Among Believers

6 And how can any of you dare to sue a Christian brother in a non-Christian court, and ask the ungodly there to settle your problem, instead of asking God's people to settle the matter for you?

² Don't you know that God's people are destined to judge the world? And if you're to judge the world, shouldn't you even now be able to judge these small matters?^a

³ Don't you know that we will even judge angels? So surely you should be able to judge matters having to do with this life.^a

⁴ When things come up that need a wise decision, do you really need to go for settlement to those whom the church regards as having low standards of righteousness and justice?

⁵ I say this to your shame! Is it possible that you don't have a wise man among you, not even one, who is capable of settling matters between one follower of the Lord and another?

⁶ Instead, one follower sues another, so that their problem is settled by unbelievers!

⁷ The very fact that you are suing each other means that you already have a serious failure

among yourselves. Why don't you rather allow yourselves to be wronged and cheated?

⁸ Instead, you keep doing wrong and cheating. And you're doing this to other followers of Christ!

⁹ Don't you know that those who persist in doing wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't allow yourselves to be fooled! Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor homosexual perverts,^a will inherit the Kingdom of God.

¹⁰ But neither will thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor swindlers, nor those who run others down with their ravings and gossip.^a

¹¹ And that's the kind of people some of you were. But you've been washed, you've been purified and dedicated to God, and you've been made right with God by your acceptance of what the Lord Jesus accomplished by suffering and dying for you. All of this was done by the work of the Holy Spirit in your lives.

Honor God With Your Body

¹² "God made everything for our use, so I'm not committing evil if I make use of them," some say. But not everything results in good for you or for others when indulged in. And even if all things should be lawful for me, I will not allow myself to become a slave to the use or indulgence of anything!

¹³ Others say, "Food is for the purpose of being put into the stomach, and the purpose of the stom-

1 Corinthians 11:30; 1 Peter 4:17-18.

5:13a Deuteronomy 17:7; 19:19; 22:21,24; 24:7.

6:1-2a Christians will rule and reign with Christ in His Kingdom. Daniel 7:18,27. It will be in this coming Kingdom that *God's people are destined to judge the world*.

6:3a Whether this reference is to fallen *angels* or to all *angels* is not clear. Hebrews 2:5 tells us, *For God has not put the world to come ... under the rule of angels*. It is we who will reign.

6:9a See Romans 1:26-27 note.

6:9-10a Much could be said about these two verses of warning. People guilty of one or more of the sins listed here may believe with all their heart that they will gain Heaven. If they refuse to repent and turn from their sin, however, the prospects are dim, indeed, for their future.

Such people seem to feel that mental belief in the fact that Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world is enough to make up for their continued sinning. These words of the apostle Paul testify clearly that he agrees with our Lord's words to Nicodemus, *Unless you are born again, you will*

never be able to see or experience the Kingdom of God. John 3:1-17.

If salvation by good works is not possible, neither is it possible to drag salvation thru the mire of continued sinfulness. The truth is a simple deduction. Therefore there is no salvation apart from good works. 2 Corinthians 5:17. If you are indulging in any of these sins you *will not inherit the Kingdom of God!* Your only hope is to repent and turn from your sin and live to please God!

* * *

The word *fornication* means voluntary sexual intercourse between persons of the opposite sex who are not lawfully married to each other. This word has been translated *sexually immoral* in most cases in this translation.

An actual carved idol was a real threat to the early Christian. But an *idolater* today is any person who loves and worships any thing, experience, or person, more than he loves, obeys, and worships God.

An *adulterer* is one who does not obey the word of God in regard to God's instructions concerning marriage after a divorce. See Matthew 5:31-32;

ach is to receive food.” But just remember that God will soon destroy both.^a It is also true that our bodies have not been given us for the purpose of indulging in sexual immorality, but to please and honor the Lord. The Lord is very concerned about our bodies, providing for them and preserving them.

¹⁴And God will raise these bodies back to life again by the same power with which He raised the Lord Jesus.

¹⁵Don’t you realize that your bodies are members that make up the body of Christ? Should you then take a part of Christ’s body and unite it with a whore? Never!

¹⁶Don’t you know that the man who joins his body to that of an immoral woman is closely and intimately united with her as one body? Because the Scripture plainly states,

The two will become as one body.^a

¹⁷But the one who unites himself to the Lord becomes one with Him in spirit.

¹⁸So always run from immoral sex temptations as fast as you can and with all your might!^a Every other sin that a person commits has to do with things outside his body, but the one who commits fornication sins against his own body.^b

¹⁹Or don’t you yet know that your body is a house where the Holy Spirit lives? He is a gift to you from God, and lives within you!

²⁰You no longer belong to yourself, because you were bought by God at an extremely high price.^a

So, glorify God in your body and spirit, which both belong to God.

Questions About Marriage

7 Now for the things you wrote about: A man does well if he doesn’t marry.

²But because of all the temptations to give in to fornication,^a each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband.

³The husband should give his wife the loving marital affection due her, and the wife should do the same for her husband.

⁴Because the wife’s body no longer belongs to her alone, but also to her husband. And likewise, the husband’s body no longer belongs to him alone, but also to his wife.

⁵So don’t refuse sex to each other, except by mutual agreement for a set time, in order that you may both be free to devote yourselves to fasting and prayer. Then come together again so that Satan doesn’t tempt you because of your lack of self control.

⁶I’m not saying you must marry, but you certainly may if you wish.

⁷But I wish all men could remain unmarried, as I am. But each person has his own gift from God. To some He gives the gift of being a good husband or wife, and to others the gift of staying happily unmarried.^a

⁸But I do say this to the unmarried and to widows: It will be best for you if you remain unmar-

19:3-9; Mark 10:1-9; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11. Unfaithfulness in marriage is also adultery.

In regard to the sin of being *effeminate*, applied to morals, as it is here, it denotes those who give themselves up to a soft, luxurious, lazy and easygoing way of living; who make self-indulgence the grand object of life; who can endure no hardship, and practice no self-denial in the cause of Christ and their duty to Him. It also applies to those who give themselves over to sensuous pleasures, or allow themselves to be prostituted by others.

* * *

None who commit any of these sins, or the others listed here, will *inherit the Kingdom of God!* Their inheritance will be to be cast from God, even as He has warned, into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:15.

No matter what claim a person indulging in these sins might make to being a converted, good Christian, etc.—their claims and excuses will be in vain. Yes, you can find preachers who will gladly explain why and how this Scripture doesn’t really mean what it appears to say, or that it surely doesn’t apply to you. But you will be in Hell with them if you fol-

low such corrupt teachers or preachers.

How shall we escape God’s judgment if we neglect a salvation that is so great? Hebrews 2:3.

6:13a The great concern of the masses is the satisfying of the various appetites of their bodies in any way they wish. This is so foolish. Their bodies will soon be in the grave, and they will be facing the Great Judgment Day, and eternity away from God.

6:16a Genesis 2:24.

6:18a Present tense here denotes need for continual vigilance.

6:18b See 7:2 note, and Galatians 6:7-8, and the notes.

6:20a ... *by the death of His incomparable Son.*

7:2a Voluntary sexual intercourse between persons of the opposite sex who are not lawfully married to each other. The meaning of the Greek word also includes homosexuality, bestiality, and all other sexual immorality.

7:7a Paul likely said this because of the distress and persecution the Church was experiencing at that time. See vss 25-26.

ried, even as I am.

⁹But if you can't control yourself, go ahead and marry. It's better to marry than to burn with wrongful passionate desires.

¹⁰Now to the married I command (yet this is not my command, but the Lord's): A wife must not separate herself from her husband.

¹¹But if she does, she must remain unmarried or be reunited to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

¹²In regard to the other problems you wrote about, I say this (I, not the Lord): If your wife is not a follower of the Lord, but she is willing to live with you, you must not leave or divorce her.

¹³And if your husband is not a follower, but he is willing to live with you, you must not leave or divorce him.

¹⁴Because the unbelieving husband is set apart for special attention from God by means of the living witness of his Christian wife; and the unbelieving wife is set apart for special attention from God by means of the living witness of her Christian husband. Otherwise, if the family separates, the children may never be converted to the Lord; whereas in a united family they may come to know Him.

¹⁵But if the unbelieving mate is determined to leave, let him go. A Christian husband or wife is under no obligation to insist on keeping the family together under such conditions, because God has called us to live in peace.

¹⁶And besides, how can you wives or husbands be absolutely sure that you could save your mate even if they did stay?

Serve the Lord Wherever You Are

¹⁷So accept your present situation as having been given you by the Lord, and keep living for the Lord in whatever situation you find yourself at the time of your conversion to Christ. These are the instructions I give in all the churches.

¹⁸If a circumcised man becomes a follower, he should not take any steps to reverse the situation. And there is no need for anyone converted while still uncircumcised, to now be circumcised.

¹⁹It doesn't matter at all whether you are circumcised or not. What is important is that you do what God has told you to do, and refrain from doing what He has told you not to do.

²⁰Usually a person should remain in the same employment situation he was in when Christ called him.^a

²¹Have you been called to live for the Lord and serve Him, and you're a slave? Don't let your bondage give you deep concern. Of course, if you can gain your freedom, use that freedom to serve the Lord in a greater way.

²²Because the slave who is called by the Lord is now the Lord's free man, and the free man who belongs to Christ is now His slave.^a

²³You were bought by God at enormous cost, so don't become slaves of anyone else!^a

²⁴So, my brothers and sisters, each of you should continue in the same situation you were in when God called you, and begin serving God right there.

Questions About Getting Married

²⁵Now, about young people who are unmarried: I have no command from the Lord, but as one whom the Lord has made trustworthy, I will tell you what I think.

²⁶Because of these unsettled times of stress and persecution, I believe it best for these young people to remain unmarried.

²⁷If you are married, stay married. If you are not married, don't try to get married.

²⁸But if you do marry, you haven't sinned. And if the young people marry, they haven't sinned either. But I wish I could spare you the many problems you will face if you marry during these difficult days.

²⁹What I'm saying is, the remaining time for each of us is short.^a Because of that, from now on those who have wives should live as devotedly for the Lord as though they weren't married.^b

³⁰Those who cry should still have such confidence, that they will act and think as though they were not crying. Those who have reason to rejoice must not forget that all joy concerning things and situations of earth are so temporary.^a And those

7:20a Unless you are employed in something that is not pleasing to God.

7:22a And it is his duty to obey and serve Him.

7:23a Your primary duty is to God.

7:29a Life for all of us is very short. But this will have special meaning as we see the end of this age drawing ever closer.

7:29b That is, we must not allow our attachment

to our wives to interfere with any duty that we owe to God.

7:30a Only that which is eternal is worth really rejoicing over.

7:30b We must soon release them to others. Only what is eternal is lasting.

8:1a ... and then sold in the markets or their temple restaurant:

who buy must realize that these material things don't really belong to us at all.^b

³¹As we use the things of this world, we must not abuse the privilege and go after them as our chief aim, because this world in its present form will soon be a thing of the past.

³²Also I want you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is free to be concerned about faithfully serving the Lord, and doing what will please Him.

³³But the married man will be necessarily concerned with his duties to provide for his family, and with doing what will please his wife. So he is pulled in two directions.

³⁴The same is true of a wife and an unmarried woman. The unmarried woman can be wholly concerned about the Lord's work, and can devote herself both body and spirit in living for the Lord; while the married woman is burdened with many cares of the world, and must be concerned about how she can please her husband.

³⁵I'm saying all of this for your own good, not to control you, but to point out the best and most effective way that you can serve the Lord with undivided interest and attention.

³⁶But if any man thinks he is not acting properly toward the girl he is engaged to, by putting off marrying her, and she is getting along in years, he should be allowed to do as he thinks best. He won't be sinning. Let them get married.

³⁷But the man who stands firm in his decision, who sees no need to change his mind, has also done well if he decides not to marry the girl.

³⁸So then, the man who marries the girl does well, but the man who does not get married does even better.

³⁹A wife is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives. But if he dies, she is free to marry whoever she wishes—but only if he is a follower of the Lord.

⁴⁰In my opinion, however, she'll be happier if she remains single—and I believe I have the witness of God's Spirit in this.

About Food Offered to Idols

8 Now about eating food that's been offered as a sacrifice to idols:^a We all know, of course, that an idol is nothing. But be careful; knowledge is not always the only safe guide. It can often cause you to be puffed up with pride. If you truly love others, you will have real concern for them, and seek by every means to build them up in their faith and obedience.

²If anyone thinks he fully understands the situation, he still doesn't understand anything to the degree that he ought to.

³But it's the person who truly loves God who is approved by Him.

⁴Now then, about eating food offered to idols: We know there is no such thing as a real heathen god in all the universe. There is only one God, and no other.

⁵Yes, there are these so-called gods—some said to be in Heaven and some on earth (and indeed there are many of these gods and lords).

⁶But it has been revealed to us that there is only one God, and that's the Father,^a who is the Fountain and Source of all things. It is He who has brought us into existence for His own purposes, plans, and pleasure. And there is only one Person whom the Father has made Lord and Ruler over all,^b and that One is Jesus Christ. Thru Him God created all things,^c and it's also thru Him that we have come into existence!^d

⁷But not everyone knows this. Even some who are now followers of the Lord have been so used to thinking of idols as real, live gods, that even now, if they eat this food, they believe they are eating food that has been offered to a real heathen god. And they are guilty of sinning if they go against their erroneous and weak conscience and eat that food!

⁸But food doesn't have anything to do with our gaining God's approval. Because we are no better if we eat, nor are we worse if we don't.

⁹But be careful, so that this freedom of yours doesn't in some way become a stumbling block to

8:6a Deuteronomy 4:35; 2 Samuel 7:22; Isaiah 44:6,8; 45:21; 64:4; Mark 12:29; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; 6:16; v 4 above.

8:6b Matthew 28:18; Luke 10:22; Acts 2:29-36; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:10; Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 19:16.

8:6c John 1:3; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2.

8:6d The inference here is that there's nothing

wrong with eating food that has been offered to idols if one wishes to do so. Jesus is the One who made all these things, and they have all come to us thru Him. However, the inference in the following verses is that because of those who might be encouraged by your liberty to do what their weak conscience tells them not to do, you should not eat this food. This is true of whatever will cause others to stumble.

those who are not fully informed.

¹⁰Because if someone who doesn't understand sees you eating in the restaurant of an idol temple because of your knowledge, won't it be possible that this uninformed person may be encouraged to ignore his conscience and eat this food anyway?

¹¹In that case, this weak follower of the Lord for whom Christ died, would be destroyed because of your knowledge!

¹²When you sin in this way against your fellow followers, by undercutting their weak conscience, causing them to do what they believe is wrong, you are sinning against Christ!

¹³For that reason, if by eating certain food, I might cause one of the Lord's followers to sin, I will never again eat such food, so that I won't cause one of them to fall.

Rights and Duties of an Apostle

9Am I not an apostle? Am I not free^a? Haven't I seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Haven't your minds and hearts been changed as the result of my work for the Lord?

²Even though I may not be an apostle^a to others, surely I'm an apostle^a to you, because your conversion to the Lord is proof that I've been sent to you.

³That's the answer I give those who question my claims.

⁴Don't Barnabas and I have the right to expect food and drink for the work we do?

⁵Don't we each have the right to marry one of

the Lord's followers and bring her along with us, the same as the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Peter do?

⁶Or are we the only ones who must support ourselves by working at another job?

⁷Did you ever hear of a soldier serving in the army at his own expense? What farmer plants a vineyard but never eats any of the grapes? Or what shepherd takes care of a flock but never drinks any of the milk?

⁸But I don't say this only from a human point of view, because God's Law says the same thing.

⁹In the Law, Moses wrote,

You shall not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating while it is treading out the grain.^a

Do you think God is concerned only about oxen?

¹⁰Didn't He really have us in mind when He said that? Of course He did, because the man who plows and the man who threshes should work in the hope of sharing in the harvest.

¹¹If we have worked to plant spiritual seed in your hearts, is it too much to expect a share of your material harvest?

¹²If others receive this benefit from you, shouldn't we have an even greater right to it? But we haven't made use of this right. Instead, we continue to endure every kind of deprivation so that we won't hinder you from listening to the Great News about Christ.

¹³Don't you know that those who work in the Temple eat the food offered at the Temple, and that those ministering at the altar are given a share of

9:1a ... *from any obligation to work at secular work to support myself?*

9:2a One who has been sent with a message—a messenger.

9:9a Deuteronomy 25:4.

9:11-14a See Galatians 6:6.

9:16a Paul would have been living in rebellion against Christ—living in sin—if he had chosen to ignore, refuse, or resist Christ's call to him. But for Paul, nothing was too much to do, to suffer, to give up, if only people might be saved. And every Christian is called to faithfully sound the same warning and give the same message of hope.

Two passages where God's command and warning are given to believers about this are Matthew 28:18-20 and Ezekiel 33:1-20. A good question to ask yourself as a Christian is, "What would Jesus be doing and saying if He were now where I am, in my circumstances?" Do it! 1 John 2:6.

9:18a The inference is, *And by doing so I'm able to be of greater effect in the service of Christ.*

9:21a See Hebrews 5:9, and the note there.

9:22a Paul refers to those who are weak in faith regarding the right and wrong of eating certain food. He went along with them to make sure he didn't cause any of them to stumble.

9:23a The reason Paul gives here for his concern to reach everyone with the message, is that he might *give evidence that he was indeed a Christian, so that he might be admitted into Heaven to share in the happiness of all who will be admitted there.* Paul knew that he was morally bound to share the Great News with others.

If our whole nation was faced with a deadly disease that threatened to kill everyone, what would a person deserve who had discovered the cure but kept it for himself and his family and a few close friends, and for selfish or fearful reasons refused to share it with others? He would deserve the worst judgment possible!

God warns that judgment awaits those who refuse to obey Him by giving the warning and sharing the Great News. Read Ezekiel 33:1-20. Those who will not speak out for Christ because they are cowardly,

the sacrifices offered there for their own needs?

¹⁴The Lord has likewise given instructions that those who preach the Great News are to receive their living from those to whom they minister that News.^a

¹⁵But I have never asked for any such support for myself, and I'm not writing about these matters now in the hope of obtaining support. I would rather die than lose my boast that I'm only interested in you, not your money.

¹⁶But the truth is, I don't have anything to brag about when I've preached the Great News, because the necessity of preaching it rests upon me so heavily. Yes, I would be in terrifying trouble if I didn't preach it.^a

¹⁷If I preach it because my heart is in it, I do have a reward. But even if I'd rather be doing something else, I would still preach it because of my duty and my desire to please Christ who has called me to preach it.

¹⁸What's my reward then? It's the great privilege of preaching the Great News without being concerned about the money I'll get, when I don't demand my rights when I bring it to you.^a

¹⁹But even though I'm free and am obligated to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, so that I might win as many as possible to Christ.

²⁰When I'm with the Jews, I live like one of them, in order to win them to Christ. In other words, I conform myself to the Law of Moses in order to win those who are under the Law.

²¹When I'm with Gentiles, who are not living

under Jewish Law, I live as one who is not under the Law, in order to win them. That doesn't mean I have no obligation to obey God, because I am definitely under obligation to obey Christ.^a

²²When I'm with those who are weak in faith, I become as one of them in order to win them.^a I conform myself to everyone in every possible way so that by every means possible, I may save some of them.

²³I do all this so that the Great News may go forth in the greatest way possible, and so that I may give positive evidence that I too am a Christian and will be admitted to Heaven with you, to all the happiness there.^a

²⁴Don't you know that in a race there are many runners, but only one wins the prize? You too must run in such a way that you will win!^a

²⁵All who compete in the games^a practice total self control in order to thoroughly prepare themselves for the race. Now they do all this merely for a blue ribbon or a gold medal that will give only temporary satisfaction. But we're contending for a fabulous crown that will bring us unimaginable, rapturous joy, forever!

²⁶That's why I run to win! In my fight, I don't just smash my fists into the air and go thru the motions, or pull my punches.^a I make every blow count!

²⁷I severely discipline my body and make it my slave, to do what I want it to do, so that after preaching to others, I won't find myself thrown out as worthless.^a

and fear what people will think or say, more than what God will think or say (Romans 10:9-10; Revelation 21:8), and who refuse to spend themselves in sharing the Great News, don't deserve the benefits of Heaven! Mark 8:34-38; 1 Timothy 4:16. See v 27.

9:24a We're all in the race, and the finish line is at the end of this life. Matthew 24:12-13; Hebrews 3:6,14; Revelation 2:26. We must run according to the rules (Hebrews 5:9), and we must run with determination to win. Luke 13:24. Not everyone who runs wins. Only those who give convincing evidence of a life that has been changed by Jesus Christ, and who continue to sincerely obey Him (Hebrews 5:9; Colossians 1:21-23) will win the race and gain eternal life.

You don't have to lose. Run to win! With God's help you can do it. Philippians 2:13. Accept His love and forgiveness thru Jesus Christ, and run the race with purpose and determination to win, and you will!

9:25a The Olympic Games, or any athletic event.

9:26a Paul wasn't a fake servant of God, one who

softened or tailored his message to please certain people. His only concern was to both live and preach the full truth, and thereby faithfully serve and obey his Lord. What will the evidence reveal about you on Judgment Day?

9:27a Robert Shank in *Life in The Son*, writes: "Many claim that Paul's fear was not that he might fail to be saved, but rather that he might find himself disqualified for further service as an apostle and that he might fail to receive the full reward which was assured him if he continued faithful ... But the immediate context (9:23—10:14) establishes the fact that Paul's fear was the possibility of losing, not opportunities of rewards for service, but the salvation of his soul!

"A. T. Robertson, former professor of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary of Louisville, Kentucky, in *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 150, writes: 'Most writers take Paul to refer here to the possibility of his rejection in his personal salvation at the end of the race. He does not claim absolute perfec-

Warnings from Israel's Past

10 Also, dear friends, I don't want you to forget that our ancestors were all under the blessing and protection of the cloud that led them thru the wilderness,^a and they all passed safely thru the Red Sea.^b

²They were all baptized as followers of Moses in the cloud and in the sea.^a

³They all ate the same spiritual food.^a

⁴They all drank the same spiritual drink, because they drank from the spiritual Rock that went with them; and that Rock was Christ.

⁵But in spite of all that, God was not pleased with most of them, and as a result, their dead bodies were scattered over the desert.

⁶What happened to them should be a brutally grim warning to all of us not to crave evil things, as they did.

⁷Don't become idol worshipers, as some of them were. The record states, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and then got up to revel in song and dance in honor of an idol."^a

⁸And we must not indulge in sexual immorality, as some of them did. Judgment from God fell upon 23,000 of them in one day because of such sinning, and they all died!

⁹We must not see how much we can get away with before Christ judges us, as some of them did. As a result, He sent poisonous snakes which destroyed many of them.

¹⁰Nor should we grumble and complain about God's dealings with us, as some of them did, resulting in God sending His death angel who also destroyed many of them.

¹¹All of these things happened to them as powerful warnings to us.^a They were written down so that those of us living in this end time would learn from what happened to them.

¹²So even if you are absolutely sure that you are standing firm and would never sin in these ways, you must always be alert and on guard to make doubly sure that you don't fall.

¹³Know this: Any temptation that comes your way

is one that has already come to everyone else. But God is faithful to watch over you, and He won't allow you to be tempted beyond your power to stand firm against it. Because along with the temptation, He will also make a way for you to escape, so that you can stand firm in the face of it.^a

¹⁴So, my dear friends, keep running from every kind of idol worship.^a

¹⁵I wish to speak to you now as to intelligent people. Judge for yourselves whether or not what I'm about to say is true.

¹⁶As we drink at the communion service from the sacred cup that we ask God to bless, are we not sharing together the assurance that Christ's blood was shed for us that we might live? And as we break the bread, are we not recognizing anew that Christ's body was broken for us?

¹⁷Because although there are many of us, we are one loaf—one body. And we all partake of the one loaf.^a

¹⁸Consider the people of Israel: Are not those who eat the food sacrificed on the altar of God having a vital part in that sacrifice to God?

¹⁹Am I saying, then, that an idol is a real god, or that the food sacrificed to an idol changes in some way when it is sacrificed to it?

²⁰No! Because the sacrifices of the heathen are actually made to demons, not to God. And I certainly don't want you involved with anything that has anything to do with demons!

²¹You cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and also from the cup of demons! You cannot eat at the Lord's table and also at the table of demons!

²²Do you really intend to provoke God to jealousy? Do you think you are stronger than God, and can risk a battle with Him?

How to Use Christian Freedom

²³You may claim, "It is now permissible for me to eat anything."^a But not everything is beneficial. It may be permissible, but not everything builds one up.

²⁴You shouldn't be concerned only with what will

tion (Philippians 3:12) and so he presses on. At the end of his life he has serene confidence (as he states in 2 Timothy 4:7) with the race run and won. It is a humbling thought for us to see this wholesome fear instead of smug complacency in this greatest of all preachers of Christ."^c

Paul recognized that the various desires of his body could be his downfall. We need to recognize this too. Fighting life's temptations is not an easy

battle, but with God's help you can win. You don't need to settle for Hell when God most earnestly wants to do everything you will let Him do to bring you to Heaven.

10:1a Exodus 13:21-22.

10:1b Exodus 14:1-31.

10:2a This is not referring to a religious ceremony of baptism. It refers to these people being immersed in dedication to Moses their leader, as a

benefit you, but how you can benefit others.

²⁵ However, buy and eat whatever is sold in the meat market. Don't bother your conscience by asking whether it had been sacrificed to idols.

²⁶ Because, "The whole earth belongs to the Lord, and everything in it."^a

²⁷ If an unbeliever invites you to dinner, and you decide to go, eat whatever he serves you. Don't cause a problem for someone's conscience by asking where the food came from.

²⁸ But if a fellow guest tells you, "This meat was offered in sacrifice to idols," then, for his sake, and for the sake of conscience—not your conscience, but his—don't eat it, even though the earth and everything in it belongs to the Lord.

²⁹ "But," you may ask, "why must my liberty be muzzled because of what someone else believes?"

³⁰ "If I'm thankful to God for the food He's provided, why do you condemn me for eating food for which I'm truly thankful?"

³¹ Yes, I'll tell you why. Whether you're eating or drinking or doing anything else, you should do everything in a way that will both glorify God and lead others to honor and obey Him.

³² Don't do anything that may cause a Jew, a follower of Christ, or anyone else to sin by acting against his conscience.

³³ Do as I do. I try to please everyone in everything I do. I don't do what will satisfy my own desires, but what will be for the good of many, so that they may be saved.

11 Follow my example, in the same way that I follow the example of Christ.

Rules for Worship

² I indeed praise you, dear friends, that you have remembered all that I taught you, and that you continue to obey those teachings.

³ But now I want you to know that every man is under the authority of Christ, and a woman is under the authority of her husband, and Christ is under the authority of God.

result of the miraculous cloud above them as they journeyed, and because of the miraculous way God opened the Red Sea for them to pass thru.

10:3a Manna. Exodus 16:14-36.

10:7a Exodus 32:6.

10:11a ... *warning us of the severity of God's judgments upon those who sin.*

10:13a Philippians 2:13.

10:14a Anything you love, revere, and desire more than you love God, is an idol! All unsaved people

⁴ Every man who prays or prophesies in public worship with his hat on disgraces Christ, under whose authority he is.

⁵ But every woman who prays or prophesies in public worship with her head uncovered disgraces her authority, which is her husband. To have her head uncovered is just as disgraceful as if she'd had her head shaved.

⁶ If a woman doesn't cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off. But if it's shameful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, she should cover her head.

⁷ A man should certainly not wear a hat in public worship, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.

⁸ Because the first man did not come from woman, but the first woman came from man.^a

⁹ Nor was man created for the woman, but the woman for the man.^a

¹⁰ For this reason, and because of the angels,^a the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head.

¹¹ But in God's scheme of things, men and women both need each other.

¹² Because even as the first woman was made from man, now all men are born thru women. But it is God who created everything and everyone.

¹³ Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God in public worship with her head uncovered?

¹⁴ Aren't you naturally repulsed deep within yourself, and feel it's a disgrace to him, when you see a man with long hair?

¹⁵ But when you see a woman with long hair, she is enhanced by it, because her hair has been given to her by God as a covering.

¹⁶ But if anyone still disagrees, I can only say that this is the only practice that we or any of the other churches follow.

Rules for the Lord's Supper

¹⁷ Now, in giving the following instructions, I have no words of praise for you, since your coming

are idol worshipers in one way or another. But this must not be true of one who claims to be a follower of Christ!

10:17a ... *which is Christ, the Bread of Life.* John 6:31-58.

10:23a ... *because that food hasn't changed any after being offered to idols.*

10:26a Psalm 24:1.

11:8-9a Genesis 1 and 2.

11:10a ... *who are watching, ...*

together for “fellowship” does more harm than good.

¹⁸First of all, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are cliques and divisions among you. And to some degree I believe it.

¹⁹But I suppose that divisions are bound to arise among you, so it may become clear as to who are, and who are not, the true friends of God.

²⁰It certainly is not the Lord’s supper you are eating when you come together.

²¹Because when eating, each one thinks only of himself, so that some are still left hungry. And some of you even get drunk!

²²What? Don’t you have your own homes in which to eat and drink? Or do you so despise the church of God that you must humiliate the poor members, who have little or nothing they can bring.^a What shall I say to you about all this? Shall I praise you? I certainly will not!

The Lord’s Supper

²³Now this is the message I received from the Lord, as I previously told you: On the night the Lord Jesus was betrayed, He took some unleavened bread in His hands.

²⁴And after He had given thanks to God for it, He broke it into pieces^a and said, “Take this and eat it. This pictures My body^b which is being broken for you. Make a practice of doing this in remembrance of Me.”

²⁵In the same way, after supper He also took the cup, and said, “The contents of this cup represent the new agreement God has made with you, which has been sealed and made valid by My blood. Continue to share this cup, and whenever you drink it, drink it in remembrance of Me.”

²⁶So until He comes again, whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming the power of the Lord’s death.^a

²⁷So whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy or careless manner will be guilty of the same crime as those who killed the body and spilled the blood of the Lord.

²⁸So you must carefully examine yourselves before you eat that bread and drink from that cup.

²⁹Because anyone who eats and drinks of it

unworthily is eating and drinking God’s judgment upon himself.

³⁰That’s why so many are weak and sickly among you, and many have even died.^a

³¹If we would carefully examine ourselves, we wouldn’t be judged by God.

³²But when God judges us, He is disciplining us in order to save us from being finally condemned with the people of the world.^a

³³So then, my dear friends, when you come together to eat, always make a practice of allowing everyone to have an equal share of the food.

³⁴If anyone is still hungry, let him finish his eating at home, so that your coming together doesn’t result in God’s judgment upon you. I’ll straighten out the other matters when I visit you.

Gifts from the Holy Spirit

12 Now concerning your questions about the gifts from the Holy Spirit. I want you, dear friends, to understand the truth about them.

²You know that when you were pagans, you were tricked and somehow led astray to worship idols that couldn’t even speak.

³For that reason, I want you to know that no one who speaks under the influence of the Holy Spirit ever denounces Jesus in any way. And no one will be disposed to say, “Jesus is my Lord,” unless he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit.^a

⁴Now there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but it’s the same Holy Spirit who gives them.

⁵There are different ways we can serve the Lord, but we all serve the same Lord.

⁶And the Lord has different work for each of us to do, but it’s the same God who works in each of us and helps us in everything we do.

⁷Now the Spirit actively works thru each person for the benefit of everyone.

⁸To one person, He gives the intelligence to speak wise words of advice and direction. To another, the same Spirit gives a clear view and insight into knowledge, and the ability to instruct others in that knowledge.

⁹The same Spirit gives special faith to another; and to still another, gifts of power to heal the sick.

¹⁰He enables another to work miracles, another

11:22a ... and cannot bring the good food to the supper that you can.

11:24a In this writer’s opinion, we greatly displease the Lord if we use wafers in the communion service instead of broken bread. And in my spirit the Lord agrees. Christ broke the bread as an illustration of His body being broken for us. Unleavened

bread (bread without yeast) can be obtained in almost any food store. It can then be broken before the service, with a few pieces left for the minister to break during the service to illustrate the suffering Christ endured for us. Wafers tell us nothing!

What would Christ do about the matter if He were in your church to conduct the communion service?

to prophesy, and another to know whether the prophecy was from God. To another, He gives the ability to speak in languages he never learned,^a and to another, who doesn't know the languages either, the ability to interpret what was said in those languages.

¹¹ But it's the one and only Holy Spirit who works thru these various gifts He has given, and He distributes them to each person according to His own will and wisdom.

One Body with Many Parts

¹² And just as your physical body is a single unit, having many parts, and all those parts (even though so many) when joined together form a single body—the same is true of the body of Christ, the Church.

¹³ Because whether we're Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, the one Spirit has immersed each of us into our appropriate place into one body. And He has caused each of us to drink^a of the one Spirit.

¹⁴ Now the human body isn't made up of only one part, but of many.

¹⁵ So if the foot should say, "Because I'm not a hand, I'm not part of the body," that wouldn't make it any less a part of the body.

¹⁶ Or if the ear should say, "Because I'm not an eye, I'm not part of the body," that wouldn't cause it to cease being a part of the body.

¹⁷ After all, if the whole body were an eye, how could we hear? Or if the whole body were an ear, how could we smell?

¹⁸ But as it is, God has placed every part of the body in exactly the place where He wants it to be.

¹⁹ If every part had the same function and served the same purpose, what kind of a body would that be?

²⁰ But though the body indeed has many different parts, it is still only one body.

²¹ So the eyes can't say to the hands, "We don't need you!" Nor can the head say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

²² No, on the contrary, those parts that may seem unimportant are all so very necessary to the proper functioning of the body.

²³ What's more, we take special care of those parts which may be considered less honorable. And we are careful to cover those parts we consider unrepresentable, while our presentable parts don't need such care.

²⁴ Also, when God put our bodies together, He made them in such a way that the weaker parts are protected by the stronger parts.

²⁵ So there's no discord among the parts of the body, as they work together for the common good of the whole body.

²⁶ If one part of our body hurts, we hurt all over. If one part is honored, all the other parts rejoice with it.

²⁷ Now all of you together are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a very important part of it.

²⁸ In creating Christ's body, the Church, God has put these parts into it:

First, apostles,

Second, prophets,

Third, teachers,

Then those who can perform miracles,

Those with various gifts of healing, to

enable them to heal various diseases,

Those with special ability to help others,

Those with ability to lead and direct God's various workers,

And those who can speak in languages they never learned.

²⁹ Is everyone an apostle? Is everyone a prophet? Is everyone a teacher? Does everyone perform miracles?

³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in languages they never learned? Do all interpret what has been spoken in those various languages?

³¹ No, but all of you should continue to strive earnestly in prayer before God to obtain the best gifts. But, as desirable as these gifts are, let me show you a means to use in the Lord's service that is even far more excellent and needful than any gift.

Love

13 Even if I could speak in all the languages of Heaven and earth, but lacked love, I

Go thou and do likewise. Ask the people in your church that question

11:24b Meaning *this represents or is a picture of or will bring to your remembrance* My body.

11:26a ... *to save you from sin and its consequences.*

11:30a Literally *have fallen asleep.*

11:32a People who live for the pleasures and

achievements of this life, with little or no real interest in living to please God.

12:3a Paul is evidently referring to instances when a spirit speaks thru a person. Only the Holy Spirit can glorify God by acknowledging that Jesus is Lord.

12:10a Acts 2:1-42; 10:1-48; 19:1-7.

12:13a John 7:37-39.

would be no more effective than a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

²And even if I had the gift of prophecy, and understood all hidden truths and had unlimited knowledge, and if I had the kind of faith that could cause mountains to move, but lacked love, I wouldn't amount to anything.

³Even if I sold everything I owned in order to buy food to feed the poor, and even died in the flames as a martyr for preaching God's truths, but lacked love, I would gain nothing.

⁴Love is always patient and kind. It is never envious, boastful, nor puffed up with pride.

⁵It is never rude, nor self-seeking. It is not quick tempered. It doesn't continue to talk about the wrong that was done.

⁶Love never rejoices when evil wins, but it always rejoices when truth triumphs.

⁷It is always supportive, trusting, hoping, enduring.

⁸Love will continue to be a powerful force forever. But the time will come when gifts of prophecy and speaking in unknown languages will be things of the past. And the gift of knowledge will no longer be needed.

⁹Because now we know so little, and even when we are prophesying, we are given only part of the truth.

¹⁰But when perfect truth is finally revealed to us, we will have no further need of that which now serves us in an imperfect way.

¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I reasoned like a child, I thought like a child. But when I became a man, I put childish things aside.

¹²At the present time, we see God and His truth as though we were looking thru a glass that is extremely blurred. But then we will be face to face with Him.^a Now I have only partial knowledge, but then I will have complete understanding of the truth, in the same way that God now knows all about me.

¹³Meanwhile we have these three things: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.^a

About Gifts of Prophecy and Tongues

14 So make it your highest aim to love God, and others^a; but still strive most earnestly

in prayer to obtain spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit—especially that you may prophesy.^b

²If you speak in tongues (in languages you never learned), you are not speaking to men but to God. And even though the Holy Spirit is speaking thru you about spiritual mysteries, only God can understand you.

³But the one who prophesies builds up, advises, and comforts those who hear him.

⁴The one who speaks in tongues is himself built up spiritually, but the one who prophesies builds up the whole church.

⁵I wish all of you spoke in tongues, but I wish even more that you prophesied. Because the one who prophesies is of greater value to others than the one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets what he says, so that everyone can understand and be built up by his message.

⁶So when I come to you, dear friends, what good will I do you if I speak to you in tongues, unless I, or someone else, interpret that message and bring you some special revelation or word of knowledge from God, or some prophecy or message of instruction?

⁷Even in the case of a lifeless flute or harp, how will one ever know what tune is being played unless the melody of the piece is played clearly?

⁸And if the army bugler plays a tune the soldiers don't understand, how will they know they are being called to battle?

⁹It's the same with you. Unless you use your tongue to speak words that can be understood, how will anyone know what you're saying? You'll just be talking to the air.

¹⁰I suppose that of the many different languages in the world, none of them are hard to understand for those who speak them.

¹¹But if I don't understand the language, I'll be a foreigner to the one speaking, and the speaker will be a foreigner to me.

¹²It's the same with you. Since you are so zealous for spiritual gifts, be zealous to excel in those gifts that will enable you to build up the faith of those who listen to you.

¹³So let the one who speaks in tongues pray that he may be enabled to interpret what he's saying.

¹⁴Because if I pray in tongues, my spirit is indeed

13:12a 1 John 3:2.

13:13a When we are finally with the Lord, our faith and hope will have been fulfilled. But forever there will be the need to love and be loved.

Paul does not belittle the gifts of God here, but they must be used in true and tender love, or they

will not be effective.

14:1a Mark 12:30-31.

14:1b See Romans 12:6 note.

14:19a ... *unless the message is interpreted.*

14:21a Isaiah 28:11-12.

14:22a It's a miracle designed to convince them of

praying, but my mind has no part in it.

¹⁵ So what should I do? I will indeed pray in tongues given me by the Holy Spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding. I will sing in tongues given me by the Holy Spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding.

¹⁶ Otherwise, if you praise God only with your spirit in tongues in the assembly, how will the others there who don't know the language be able to join you in praise, since they don't understand a word of what you're saying?

¹⁷ You would indeed be praising God acceptably, but those with you wouldn't be helped.

¹⁸ I thank my God that in private I speak to Him in unknown languages more than all of you.

¹⁹ But when I am together with others in church, I would rather speak just five words they can understand, in order to teach them, than 10,000 words in a language they don't understand.^a

²⁰ My dear friends, stop acting like little children in regard to things that fascinate you. You indeed need to be like infants when it comes to doing evil, but be mature adults when it comes to seeking real results!

²¹ In the Scriptures the Lord has said:

"With other languages and with other lips I will speak to this people; but even then, after all of that, they will still not listen to Me."^a

²² So speaking in a language you never learned is a miraculous sign, not for the Lord's followers, but for the benefit of unbelievers.^a But prophecy is mainly for followers, not for unbelievers.

²³ So if everyone were to speak in tongues when you are all assembled, and some unbelievers or people who didn't know the purpose of the languages were to come in, wouldn't they say you're all insane?

²⁴ But if you are all prophesying when an unbeliever or uninformed person comes in, the more he hears, the more convinced and convicted of his sins he will become.

²⁵ And by that means he will come to realize that God knows even the darkest secrets of his heart. So he will finally fall down on his knees and worship God, and declare, "O God, You are surely here among these people!"

Worship Must Be Orderly

²⁶ What should we conclude then, dear friends? Yes, each of you should come together for the purpose of sharing. One may have a song, another a word of instruction, or a truth the Lord has revealed to him. Another may have a message in tongues, another the interpretation. But let everything be done for the purpose of building one another up.

²⁷ If anyone speaks in tongues, only two people, or at the most three, should speak, and one at a time. And there must be someone to interpret what was said.

²⁸ But if there is no interpreter, the one with a message in tongues must keep silent in the church, and speak only to himself and to God.

²⁹ Two or three prophets may speak, and everyone else must listen carefully, to determine whether the message is really from God.^a

³⁰ And if someone sitting there receives a revelation from God, the one speaking must stop and let the other person speak.

³¹ In that way you can all^a prophesy, one at a time, and you can all receive instruction and encouragement.

³² The prophet can speak or stop speaking at any time, because each prophet is a free agent and is in control of his own spirit.

³³ Because God is not a God of confusion and turmoil; He is a God of peace. This is something that is emphasized in all the churches.

³⁴ Your women are to keep silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Jewish Law also says.

³⁵ If they have a question, let them ask their husbands at home; because it's a disgrace for a woman to speak up in church.

³⁶ Or did the word of God originate with you?^a Or are you the only ones to whom it came?^b

³⁷ Let those of you who have the gift of prophecy, and others who are living close to the Lord, check this out, and acknowledge that what I'm writing you here are commands from the Lord.

³⁸ But if anyone continues to ignore this truth, let him continue in his ignorance.^a

the truth of the Christian religion.

14:29a The audience, or at least the other prophets, should listen carefully to judge whether the message is from God and is in harmony with God's previously revealed truth. We each have the same responsibility today.

14:31a That is, all who have the gift of prophecy.

14:36a ... so that you are the ones who have the right to dictate policy?

14:36b Or have you no respect for what others have determined?

14:38a Meaning I'm not going to pursue the matter further. Let him suffer the consequences.

³⁹ So, my dear friends, strive with earnest desire to prophecy, but don't forbid anyone to speak in tongues.

⁴⁰ But let everything be done properly, in an orderly way.

The Great News About Christ

15 Now I wish to remind you dear friends about the Great News that I preached to you, which you also received, and on which you now base all your hopes for time and eternity.

² It's by means of this Great News that you are being saved,^a but only if you are continuing to hold firmly to the message I preached to you. Otherwise, all your previous following of the Lord has been of no value to you at all.^b

³ Because I gave you those truths which are of prime importance, which I had myself also received^a:

That the Messiah died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said He would;^b

⁴ that He was buried, but that three days later He was raised back to life again, just as the Scriptures had predicted;^a

⁵ and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the rest of the Twelve.

⁶ After that, He was seen by more than 500 of His followers at one time, most of whom are still alive today, although some have now died.

⁷ Later still, He was seen by James, and then again by all the apostles.

⁸ Last of all, He was also seen by me, by one who was caused to live in spite of the fact that I tried to commit spiritual abortion.^a

⁹ I'm the least worthy of any of the apostles. I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

¹⁰ But because of kindness and mercy from God

that I certainly don't deserve, I am what I am. And the mercy God showed me hasn't been without results, because I've worked harder than anyone else. Still, it wasn't I, it was God in His mercy working thru me.

¹¹ The message I preached to you is the message we continue to preach, whether it is I or others who do the preaching. And this was the message you believed.

We Will Also Be Raised from the Dead

¹² Now then, if the message we preach includes both the declaration and the proof that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you keep insisting there won't be any resurrection of those who are dead?

¹³ If that's true, then even Christ hasn't been raised from the dead!

¹⁴ And if Christ hasn't been raised, then our preaching is utterly worthless and your faith is just as worthless.

¹⁵ If that's true, then we've been lying about what God did. Because what we've been telling you is that He raised Christ from the dead. But He did no such thing, if the truth is that the dead will not be raised.

¹⁶ Because if the dead will not be raised, then Christ has not been raised either.

¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith in Him is utterly worthless, and you are still lost and under condemnation by God because of your sins.

¹⁸ The same is then true of all who have died trusting in Jesus. They are hopelessly lost!

¹⁹ If the hope we have in Christ is good only for this life, and no more, we are the most miserable and the most deserving of scornful pity of all people on the face of the whole earth.

15:2a Present indicative passive—meaning: *present, continuous, definite action, by means of a power outside yourself.*

15:2b See Colossians 1:23, and note.

15:3a ... *and had gladly accepted as my hope.*

15:3b Psalm 22:1,6-18; Isaiah 52:14; 53:1-12; Daniel 9:26; Zechariah 12:10; Luke 24:25-27,45-47.

15:4a Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 12:40.

15:8a ... *by killing all Christians in order to rid the earth of Christianity before it had a chance to really be born.* The actual Greek word means *an abortion, an untimely birth*. The word does not mean *born late*. It's a compilation of two Greek words meaning *from* and *to wound*.

15:20a ... *after living for God and trusting in His promises of eternal life.*

15:21a Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-24; 5:1-5.

15:22a John 5:24-29.

15:22-23a Every child of *Adam* (which includes all of us) *will die*, but every true follower of Christ *will be made to live again*. Christ first arose, victor over death. At His second coming, *the dead who belong to Christ will be the first to rise. Then we who are still alive will be caught up with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.* 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. See also vss 51-52 and Matthew 24:29-31.

15:25a Matthew 22:44 et al.

15:24-25b *The end* will not occur until after Christ has reigned on earth at least a thousand years. Every person on earth during that time will have had a chance to accept Him as Lord and Sav-

²⁰But the truth of the matter is, **CHRIST HAS INDEED BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD!** And He's become the first of countless millions, now dead, who will one day be raised to live again!^a

²¹And since death has become a certainty for all of us because of what one man—Adam—did,^a now the resurrection from death has also become a certainty because of what one Man—Christ—did.

²²Because all of us who are related to Adam will die, but all who are rightly related to Christ will be made to live again!^a

²³But each will be raised in his proper order: Christ was the first to be raised; then all who belong to Christ will be raised to live again when He returns.^a

²⁴Then the end will come, when Christ will hand the Kingdom over to God the Father, after He has destroyed every opposing ruler, authority, and power.

²⁵Because God had destined^a that Christ must reign until He has thoroughly conquered every enemy, and they all lie subdued under His power.^b

²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed will be death.^a

²⁷This will fulfill the prophecy that states,

God has put everything under His control and authority.^a

But it is clear that the “everything” does not include God Himself, who is the One who put everything under Christ.

²⁸Because when all things have finally been put under Him, then the Son will turn the Kingdom over to the Father and be under the One who had put all things under Him. He will do this so that in regard to all matters, God may become totally and completely everything in the heart of everyone.

²⁹And what about those people who are being baptized for the dead? If there is no such thing as a resurrection from the dead, what is their reason

for being baptized for the dead?

³⁰If there's no resurrection to look forward to, why should we then continue to expose ourselves to constant danger?

³¹I face the threat of death every day because of my boasting of the hope I have thru Christ Jesus our Lord.^a

³²If I fought those beasts here in Ephesus^a for mere human glory, what have I gained? If the dead are not going to be resurrected, we might as well “eat, drink, and be merry, because we'll all soon be dead!”^b

³³Don't be fooled by people who talk like that! If you associate with folks who believe like that, they'll soon lead you into corrupt living!

³⁴Wake up to what the truth really is, and stop your sinning! Because some of you evidently don't know God at all. I say this to your shame.

What Kind of Body Will We Have?

³⁵But someone may ask, “How is it possible for the dead to rise up? What kind of body will they have?”

³⁶What foolish questions! Whatever you sow in the ground must first of all die before it can come alive.

³⁷And what you plant is a mere seed, such as a kernel of wheat, or whatever, not the fully developed plant that will come up later.

³⁸Then God gives it the kind of body He has determined it shall have, and each seed is given its own body.

³⁹All flesh is not the same kind either. People have one kind of flesh, animals another, fish another, and birds another.

⁴⁰While beings on earth have bodies, beings in Heaven also have bodies. But the magnificence of the heavenly bodies is of one kind, and the magnificence of earthly bodies is another.^a

ior. Still it will seemingly take a thousand years to bring the people on earth under Christ. He will no doubt seek to win the rebellious by love, but He will also use force in many cases to bring about this submission. Psalm 2:9; Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15.

At the end of the thousand years Satan will be loosed again (Revelation 20:1-3) and will be allowed by God to stir up all remaining rebels to attack Jerusalem, the world capital. All rebels who join Satan in this last great assault against Jerusalem (Revelation 20:7-10) will be consumed by fire. If any rebels exist elsewhere, they will no doubt be destroyed in similar fashion.

15:26a When all of Christ's enemies have been either won over to Him or conquered, then *the last*

enemy, death, will also be destroyed. So it will not be until after the Millennium that God will abolish death.

15:27a Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:29-36.

15:31a It was the preaching about Jesus and the resurrection that so angered the Jews.

15:32a Acts 19:1-41.

15:32b Isaiah 22:13.

15:40a *Heavenly bodies* are spiritual bodies, and spiritual bodies are just as real as physical bodies. Our physical bodies are made up of atoms, which many scientists believe are mostly, if not completely, made up of electrical charges. So what is generally considered solid matter is simply energy in a different form. The spiritual bodies are no doubt

⁴¹The sun has one kind of grandeur, the moon another, and the stars another. And each star is different than all other stars in its grandeur.

⁴²The same is true of the body that will be resurrected from death. The body that's being buried was perishable, but the resurrected body will never die!

⁴³The perishable body is buried as a discarded, useless thing, but when it rises up it will be beautiful. It is buried because all of its feeble strength has finally left it, but the body that will come forth in the resurrection will be powerful!^a

⁴⁴The body that is buried is a physical one, but the body that will rise up will be a superamazing spiritual one. Just as there are physical bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.^a

⁴⁵That's why the Scriptures tell us,

The first man, Adam, became a being with the breath of life,^a

whereas Jesus, the last Adam, is a life-giving spirit.

⁴⁶But we're not given a spiritual body first; we first receive a physical body, then a spiritual one.

⁴⁷The first man came out of the earth, made by God from the soil. The second Man was the Lord, who came from Heaven.

⁴⁸So all who belong to earth are like the first man whom God made from the soil. And all who reach the heavenly realm will be like the One who came from Heaven.^a

⁴⁹So, as we now have a body like the man who was made from the earth, we will then have a body like Christ, the Man from Heaven.

⁵⁰Now what I'm saying, dear friends, is that bodies made of flesh and blood will not be able to

enter the Kingdom of God.^a Nothing perishable will be allowed there, where everything is imperishable.

⁵¹Now listen to me, and I will tell you something that has been kept secret: Not all of us will die, but we will all be changed.

⁵²It will happen in a fraction of a second, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sounding of the last trumpet.^a Because when that trumpet sounds, all the dead who belong to Christ will be resurrected back to life with bodies that will never die. And we who are still alive will also be changed.^b

⁵³Because it is absolutely necessary that these decaying, dying bodies be exchanged for bodies that will never decay or die; that these temporary bodies be exchanged for bodies that are everlasting.

⁵⁴So when this perishable body has been transformed into an imperishable one, and this which is temporary has become everlasting and never-dying, then the Scriptures will come true that state:

"Death has been swallowed up! The victory^a is won!"^b

⁵⁵**"O death, where now is your sting? And grave, what happened to your victory?"^a**

⁵⁶Death is able to fatally sting us because of our sin. And God's pure and holy law gives death the authority to carry out this judgment against sin.

⁵⁷But thanks be to God who has given us the victory over sin and death thru our Lord Jesus Christ!^a

⁵⁸So because of the great resurrection to everlasting life that is now positively assured us, my dear brothers and sisters, be ever so firm in your

just as *wonderfully made*. The inference is that the *heavenly bodies* far outweigh the *earthly bodies* in grandeur.

15:43a Ephesians 1:18.

15:44a The existence of the one kind of body is no more impossible than the existence of the other. The spiritual body won't be a mere spirit, because then it wouldn't be a body. It will be our spirit clothed with substance that at present is unknown to us. Those bodies will not be dependent upon the various functions and needs of our present bodies. They will have an economy of their own; living without the need of nourishment; not subject to decay; not liable to sickness, pain, or death. Jesus Christ had a spiritual body when He arose from the grave. But still His spiritual body could do anything His physical body could do, plus much more. It will be the same with us.

15:45a Genesis 2:7.

15:48a Philippians 3:21.

15:50a In our present bodies, we evidently wouldn't be able to enjoy the intensified and pure enjoyments of Heaven. And they would keep us from reaching our full eternal potential. A natural body like ours, subject to decay, is unfit for Heaven. It just cannot enter into the *inheritance that is immortal, that will never perish nor spoil nor fade away*. 1 Peter 1:4.

15:52a According to Matthew 24:29-31, the last trumpet will not sound until after the Great Tribulation. That's when the resurrection and rapture and all this change in our bodies will take place.

15:52b Matthew 24:29-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

15:54a The victory Christ gained for us on the cross.

15:54b Isaiah 25:8.

15:55a Hosea 13:14.

15:57a Romans 8:1-17.

15:58a Seek diligently to know and do God's will

resolve to live only to please God!^a Don't let anything move you to do otherwise. Always put yourself into the Lord's work with all your heart, soul, and energy!^b Because you can have complete confidence that the diligent work you do in obedience to the Lord's command is pleasing to Him and will accomplish His purposes, with great results.

A Collection for God's People

16 Now about the collection of money to help God's people in Judea: Do the same as I told the Galatian churches to do.

²Every Sunday each of you should set aside funds in proportion to your income, and save it up, so that no offerings will need to be taken when I come.

³When I arrive, I will send your gift on to Jerusalem by means of whichever men you approve, together with letters of introduction.

⁴And if it seems good that I go too, then they can accompany me.

Paul's Travel Plans

⁵I will be coming your way after going thru northern Greece. I will definitely go there first.

⁶It may be that I will stay with you for some time, perhaps even thru the winter. Then you could send me on my way, wherever that will be.

⁷Because I don't want to come right now and just pass thru on my way up north. When I come, I want to stay awhile, if the Lord is willing.

⁸But I'll be staying here in Ephesus until Pentecost,

⁹because a door has opened here that's wide open for me to serve the Lord effectively, in spite of the many who oppose me.

¹⁰If Timothy comes your way, make sure you don't intimidate him. He's faithfully serving the Lord, just as I am.

¹¹So no one should despise him.^a Send him on to me in a happy frame of mind. I'm expecting him here, along with some of the other evangelists.

¹²Now in regard to our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to visit you along with the others, but he didn't feel at all that he should at this time. But he does plan to be with you later, when he has opportunity.

Final Words

¹³In the meantime, continue to be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong!^a

¹⁴And whatever you do, do it in love.

¹⁵Let me remind you, dear friends, that the members of the household of Stephanas were the first converts to Christ in southern Greece. And they have been so zealous in giving of themselves in service to God's people.

¹⁶I urge you, dear friends, to accept the leadership of people like that, and of everyone who works and labors with us.

¹⁷I was so glad that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus were able to visit me, because they were able to supply what you have not been able to give.

¹⁸They truly refreshed and encouraged me, even as they have done for you. Be sure to honor such men.

¹⁹The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla send you their most hearty Christian greetings. And those meeting as a church in their home do the same.

²⁰All the followers of the Lord here send you their greetings. Greet one another with genuine love in Christ.

²¹And here's my greeting in my own handwriting:

Warmest greetings—Paul.

²²If anyone does not truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, he must remain under a curse.

Come, Lord Jesus!

²³May the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ rest upon each of you.

²⁴My love goes out to all of you who are in Christ Jesus. So be it.

Sincerely in Christ,
Paul and Sosthenes

in everything! See Luke 16:9 and the note.

15:58b But always realize that you must work under His direction and blessing, for without Him you can do nothing of real worth.

16:11a ... *because of his youth and inexperience.*

16:13a Compare Ephesians 6:10-18.

Thru kindness and mercy from God that I certainly don't deserve, I have been given the privilege of being the wise master builder who laid the foundation for your Christian lives. Now someone else is building on that foundation. But let each builder be intensely concerned as to how he builds on it.

¹¹God will accept no other foundation than the one which has already been laid, which is Jesus Christ.

¹²Now the various materials that can be used in building upon that foundation are either gold, silver, and precious stones; or wood, hay, and straw.

¹³When the fire hits on Judgment Day it will become very easy to tell what quality of materials each builder used, because every man's work will be tested by fire, to reveal just what quality of work it was.

¹⁴If anyone's work on these buildings is still standing after the fire, he will receive a reward.

¹⁵But if anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer great loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one barely escaping thru the flames.

¹⁶Don't you know that each of you are a house of God, and that the Spirit of God is living within you?

¹⁷If anyone corrupts and destroys God's house, God will destroy him! Because God's house is sacred and has been dedicated to Him, and you are that house.

—I Corinthians 3:10-17

Paul's Second Letter to the CORINTHIANS

My Dear Friends:

This is Paul again, one chosen by God to be a messenger of Jesus Christ. Together with our brother Timothy, I am writing to you friends who gather together as God's people in Corinth, and to all in southern Greece who are truly dedicated to God.

²May God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord bless you far beyond what any of us deserve. And may that include true and deep peace of mind and heart.^a

Paul's Thanks to God

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He's a most compassionate Father. He's also our God, who calls us to come near to Him, and then inspires, urgently admonishes, and encourages us.

⁴He encourages us in the very midst of all our troubles, so that we will be able to comfort others also, in whatever trouble they may be in. We can offer them the same encouragement that we ourselves have received from God.

⁵This very thing is happening to us right now. Some of the same sufferings that Christ went thru are now overwhelming us.^a And because Christ already went thru them, He is now so able to powerfully and effectively encourage us.

⁶So when we go thru deep trouble, the end result is to bring you encouragement, so that your salvation^a may be nurtured and preserved. What I'm saying is, our hardships and trials should result in encouraging you to be willing to endure the same sufferings we endure. And when we are encouraged, it's that you might also be encouraged, and finally saved.^a

⁷So we have a confident, unshaken hope concerning you, because we know that as you willingly endure suffering for Christ,^a you will also be greatly encouraged by Him.

⁸For that reason, dear brothers and sisters, we don't want you to be ignorant about the dreadful

trouble we experienced in western Asia Minor.^a We were weighed down under great pressure, way beyond our power to cope. We even gave up hope that we would live thru it.

⁹In fact, when we knew we were about to die, we knew we couldn't survive by our own strength, so we put our trust completely in God, because He can raise even the dead.

¹⁰And He did indeed save us from a terrible death, and He continues to save us. Furthermore, we have confidence that in future perils He will continue to keep us safe.

¹¹But we also need you to continue to work with us in earnest prayer. Then as a result of the many of you praying, there will be many who will later be thanking God for what He is doing for us and thru us.

Paul's Change of Plans

¹²Because our boast is this: Our conscience assures us that we have behaved in the world, and especially toward you, in godly uprightness and sincerity. We haven't relied on worldly means or wisdom to reach our goals, but have relied only on God's undeserved help.

¹³Also, we never write you anything that you can't read and easily understand. And I hope that to the very end, you will acknowledge our open sincerity.

¹⁴I appreciate the extent to which at least some of you have accepted us, and have expressed your pride in us. I will also be proud of you on that great Day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns.

¹⁵Because of this confidence I have in you, I had meant to visit you again before now. That would have allowed me to be a double blessing to you.

¹⁶My plan had been to visit you on my way to northern Greece, and again on my way back. Then you could have helped in sending me on my way to Judea.

¹⁷Was I shallow in my purpose when making those plans? Or when I make plans do I do so in a worldly manner, trying to please everyone by say-

1:2a ... as you sincerely surrender your will to Him, and put your full trust in Him.

1:5a ... as we now witness to a hostile world ... See 1 Peter 4:12-13 and note.

1:6a 2:15 and 1 Corinthians 1:18.

1:7a Romans 8:17; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 2:12; 3:12.

1:8a Which is now western Turkey.

ing both “Yes” and “No”?

¹⁸As surely as God always speaks the truth, our message to you was never both “Yes” and “No.”

¹⁹Because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom Silas, Timothy, and I have been telling you about, is never One who says both “Yes” and “No,” so that you don’t know what to believe. No! When He speaks, He means exactly what He says!

²⁰Because whatever promises God has made, His promises are absolute.^a So also, when God speaks thru us and says, “This is the way it is going to be,” to His glory we give you His exact message.

²¹Now it is God who has enabled both you and us to continue to stand firm in our dedication to Christ. And it is He who has anointed^a us for His service.

²²He also put His seal of ownership^a upon us, when He gave us His Spirit in our hearts as a very small down payment.^b

²³On the other hand (and I call upon God to witness against me if I am not telling the truth), the reason I have not yet returned to Corinth was that I might spare you severe and painful discipline.

²⁴It’s not that we are determined to lord it over you in regard to your faith. But as your fellow workers, we are concerned about promoting your joy, because it’s by means of your genuine faith that you are able to continue to stand firmly secure.

2 But I made up my mind not to come your way again if I could bring you only sorrow.

²Because if I were to make you sad, who would there be to make me glad—only the very ones I had made sad.

1:20a This is also true of God’s warnings.

1:21,22a The Holy Spirit is given to all true followers of the Lord as a *seal of ownership*. God then clearly witnesses to us (Romans 8:16) by His Spirit, assuring us that we now belong to Him. Then as we ask God for His Holy Spirit in further measure (Luke 11:13; John 3:34) He is given as an *anointing* with power to serve God. Acts 2:6-8. His Spirit is also an *earnest payment* on all that God promises He will do for us and thru us thruout eternity.

1:22b ... *giving us but a tiny, glorious taste of the great and unspeakable fulfillment that awaits us when we are finally welcomed home into His glorious presence*. Luke 11:13; Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-18; Romans 8:16. The *earnest payment* is both the *indwelling* of the Holy Spirit within the believer upon our conversion to Christ, and the *infilling* or *baptism* of the Holy Spirit.

Those who have asked the Lord for the *infilling*

³That’s why I wrote you as I did, so you would get things straightened out before I came, so that when I came, I wouldn’t be made to grieve over those in whom I should rejoice. I was sure that what would bring joy to me would bring joy to you as well.

⁴It really tore my heart out to write you as I did. I wrote with great distress and anguish, shedding many tears. It was not my desire to cause you grief, but to let you know how immensely deep my love is for you.^a

Paul Urges Forgiveness

⁵I don’t want to be too harsh in condemning the one who sinned. But if he has caused anyone grief, he has done so to all of you, to some extent, more than to me.

⁶The punishment given to this person by the majority of you is enough.^a

⁷Now, however, you should forgive and encourage him, so that he doesn’t get so overwhelmed with sorrow that he gives up in despair.

⁸I urge you therefore to let him know again how much you love him.^a

⁹Another reason I wrote, was to test you, to see if you would be obedient in everything.^a

¹⁰Now if you forgive him, I forgive him too. If I forgive him, it’s because it has been your decision to do so. And I feel certain that Christ is looking on with approval.^a

¹¹It’s indeed important that you forgive him now so that Satan doesn’t take advantage of us, because we’re not ignorant of how he lays his hideous traps.

¹²Well, as I was on my way to northern Greece, I

or *baptism* of the Holy Spirit when they became believers (Acts 19:1-2), or following that time (Luke 11:13; 18:1-8), and have received, can testify to the glorious truth of this *earnest payment*. However, Paul appears to refer here to the presence of God’s Spirit in the *heart* of each believer, the *indwelling* of His Spirit.

2:4a It is cruelty to allow a brother to continue in his sin and not warn him. No one gives greater proof of his love for another than the one who kindly but firmly warns one of his sin and danger. James 5:19-20.

2:6a 1 Corinthians 5:5.

2:8a Their discipline was because of their love for him, to restore him to holy living and a sure hope. Now that he had been disciplined and had repented, they were to bring him back into fellowship, in love.

2:9a ... *even in discipline, so that the Church*

came to Troas. My plan was to stay there for a while and preach the Great News about Christ. The Lord had indeed opened up great opportunities for me there.

¹³ But when I didn't find my brother Titus there, I had no peace of mind. So I said good-bye to the Lord's followers there and went on to northern Greece to look for him.^a

¹⁴ Praise be to God! He constantly leads us from one victory to another as we tell people about Christ. Thru us, He is spreading the fragrance of what there is to know about Christ everywhere we go.

¹⁵ Because to God, we are like fragrant incense being offered to Him by Christ. And that fragrance is reaching out into the minds and hearts of both those who are being saved and those who are dying in their sins.

¹⁶ To those dying, the fragrance of our testimony is offensive, and smells putrid, like death.^a But to those who are being saved, it has the fragrant aroma of Heaven and of life.^b But who is really capable of handling such vital responsibilities?^c

¹⁷ Because we are not like many who twist and change God's message^a for their own temporary financial benefit. But in all sincerity, as faithful servants of Christ, we preach the whole truth that God has given, knowing that He is always watching and listening to our message.^b

God's New Agreement

3 Does it sound as if we're again trying to gain your confidence? Or, like some others who have come to you, do we need letters of reference

may be pure and strong, under God's blessing.

2:10a It is assumed that the man had repented, and had renounced and forsaken his sin.

2:13a Paul had evidently expected a report from Titus in Troas about how his first letter to the Corinthians had been received. He finally found Titus in northern Greece.

2:16a Their rejection of the message only increases their guilt and condemnation, resulting in an even more terrifying and awful second death. Revelation 20:11-15.

2:16b Their full and sincere acceptance of it will result in a blessed eternal life.

2:16c A minister of Christ can be truly effective only by—

- living a holy life
- always living with eternity's values in mind
- daily feeding his soul by reading God's Book
- having deep concern for lost and straying people, and doing all that's possible to lead them to

for you, or from you?

²No, you yourselves are the only letter we need when we go to others, and you have indeed written yourselves on our hearts. And from my heart your letter is being read and understood by people everywhere.^a

³It's very clear that your letter was written by Christ—not with ink, nor did He chisel it in tablets of stone; but by employing us as His ministers, and by means of the Spirit of the living God, He made His vivid and penetrating impressions upon the tender pages of your hearts.^a

⁴So if we seem sure of ourselves, it's only because we are so sure of what God can do thru Christ.

⁵We're not claiming that those changes have taken place in your lives because of any abilities we have to change you, because anything we can do for you is taking place because of what God is doing for you thru us.

⁶He is the One who has given us the ability to clearly explain His new agreement with mankind—not an agreement of written rules, but an agreement whereby God has promised that His Spirit has come to live within us.^a The old agreement, containing written laws, only resulted in death.^b But with the promise that God is living within us by His Spirit, to guide us in the way we should live and serve Him, we can joyfully look forward to everlasting life!

⁷The old agreement was carved on stone tablets. And when Moses brought the tablets to the people from God,^a his face glowed so brilliantly (even though it was even then fading away) that the peo-

Christ and right living

· and by spending much time with God, seeking His leading, wisdom, and power.

And with love, he must also carefully lead and instruct his own family and congregation in the same pursuits.

2:17a ... *in order to please their listeners, instead of God* ...

2:17b 2 Chronicles 16:9; Proverbs 5:21; 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:9-11.

3:2a ... *as I tell them of the miracles God has performed in changing your heathen hearts.*

3:3a The *heart* actually refers to the emotional and governing center of a person. The heart of our emotions can indeed be tender and impressionable.

3:6a See John 7:37-39; 14:15-17.

3:6b ... *by its numerous rules we were unable to fully obey* ...

3:7a Exodus 34:29-35.

ple of Israel couldn't look steadily at him.

⁸If the Law, which brought only death, came with such glory, how much more glorious will the work of God's Holy Spirit be in our lives!^a

⁹Because if the system of justice that condemned us was glorious, the system of love, compassion, and mercy that now makes us right with God is far more glorious.

¹⁰In fact, the new agreement is so amazing and wonderful that, by comparison, the old agreement is no longer glorious at all.

¹¹Because if God's old agreement that is now cancelled out was glorious, of how much greater glory is His new plan for our salvation, which will remain in effect from now on?

¹²So because we now have such an outstanding hope, we're very bold in speaking to everyone about it.^a

¹³We're not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from staring at him as the brilliance there began to fade away.

¹⁴In fact, the minds of those who received the old agreement became hardened. And even now, when they read the agreement in the Old Testament, that same veil blurs their understanding. It's only when they come to understand and accept what Christ has done for them that the veil is removed.

¹⁵So even today when the Law of Moses is read in their synagogues, a veil is still over their hearts that keeps them from understanding the true meaning of what is read.

¹⁶But whenever any of them sincerely turn to the Lord God to investigate the Lord Jesus, the veil is taken away.^a

¹⁷Now the Lord we speak of here is the Spirit who lives within us.^a And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom^b from the old Law.

¹⁸So now, without any veil over our faces to darken our understanding, we can all see the glory of the Lord. Then we begin to reflect His glory, as from one degree of glory to another, we are being transformed by the Spirit of the Lord to become just like the Lord Himself.

Treasure in Clay Pots

4 So for these reasons, and because God has been so merciful in appointing us to tell everyone the Great News, we never get discouraged and give up.

²But we reject all shameful and deceitful ways of getting out the message. We don't use any tricks or gimmicks,^a nor do we claim that God says things He doesn't say.^b But we seek to convince the conscience of every listener by presenting the full truth, without compromise, knowing that God sees and hears everything we do and say.^c

³But even if the meaning of our Great News is hidden or unclear to some, it's unclear only to those who are being led to utter destruction.^a

⁴The culprit in their situation is Satan, the god of those who live only for this present brief time. He's the one who has blinded their minds so that the brilliant splendor of the Great News about Christ, who is exactly like God,^a won't shine on them and give them light and understanding.

⁵We don't preach about ourselves, but about the necessity of surrendering to Christ Jesus as Lord. We're only your servants, for Jesus' sake.^a

3:8a ... *"which results in our heart and life being renewed, and our soul saved."*—Barnes

3:12a Romans 10:9-10.

3:16a ... *and they see the true nature of their own religion and its meaning, that it is intended as an instructor to lead them to Jesus as Messiah.*

3:17a John 14:15-17,23.

3:17b Not freedom to sin, but freedom from needing to obey the old ordinances in order to obtain right standing with God.

4:2a ... *to get people to confess Christ as Lord and Savior before they have considered the cost ...*

4:2b ... *in order to gain converts to ourselves.*

4:2c ... *and that we will one day be judged by God for every message we have preached.* 1 Corinthians 3:5-17.

4:3a ... *because they don't wish to believe the message enough to be obedient to it.* This is in the present passive, meaning, present action by a power outside themselves that is leading them to the

future punishment in Hell and the Lake of Fire, which is reserved for all who live to please themselves instead of God.

4:4a ... *and who has perfectly portrayed for us what God is really like ...*

4:5a ... *We are wholly dedicated to building you up to faithfully obey and serve Him.*

4:6a Genesis 1:3.

4:7a That is, in these fragile, weak, and decaying bodies. We are altogether unworthy to hold a treasure of truth so priceless.

4:10a Galatians 6:17; Colossians 1:24.

4:11a By this time, many had already been martyred because of their faith in Jesus.

4:12a The sufferings and self-denials of the apostles were for the good of others, and would result in their benefit and salvation. Our willingness to live for and serve others, even to the point of suffering and death, also results in others being saved.

4:13a Psalm 116:10.

⁶Because it's the same God who said, **Let light shine out of darkness!**^a who has now caused light to shine in our hearts. And it was by means of the radiance of the person of Jesus Christ that we received our knowledge of the glory of God.

⁷But because we possess and carry this treasure of knowledge in such fragile clay pots,^a we fully realize that the unsurpassing greatness of the power to convict and convince men of the truth is from God, and not from ourselves.

⁸As for ourselves, we are continually hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed. Time after time, we are perplexed, but we never give up.

⁹We are continually being persecuted, but we're never abandoned by God. We are continually being struck down, but never destroyed.

¹⁰The scars on our bodies bear witness to the fact that we constantly face the threat of death as we witness for the Lord Jesus,^a so that our life as we live it in this body may also picture for you how and for what purpose Jesus lived.

¹¹In fact, those of us who still survive the attacks of Satan, because of our stand for Jesus,^a are constantly being exposed to death, so that the life Jesus lived may be clearly seen by others as we live for Him in these perishable bodies.

¹²So then, while death is constantly working to conquer us, the result for you is eternal life.^a

¹³And since we have the same kind of faith as the one who said, "I believed, and for that reason I spoke out,"^a we also believe, and continue to speak out.

¹⁴Because we know^a that the One who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us up

because of what Jesus has done, and is continuing to do for us and in us. Then together with you, He will bring us into His presence.

¹⁵Now all that Christ and we apostles have done has been for your sakes, so that the rich mercy of God, that is reaching more and more people every day, will result in a mighty crescendo of thanksgiving and praise to the glory of God.

Living By Faith

¹⁶That's why we never get discouraged and quit. It's true that our bodies are getting older and weaker, but our inner self is being renewed by the Lord every day!

¹⁷Because the trivial troubles we are willing to endure for the Lord are so temporary, and are resulting in our obtaining an eternal glory of such magnitude that it is far beyond all comparison with anything we now know or can even imagine.^a

¹⁸So we're not greatly concerned about all the things that can be seen, but our concern is for those things that cannot be seen as yet. Because the things you can now see are temporary, but the things that cannot yet be seen are eternal.

5 Because we know that even if this temporary house that's made for living on earth, this tent body in which we now live, is destroyed, we have a house in Heaven—not a house made by human hands, but an eternal one that God has made for us.^a

²Yes, it's true, in our present body we groan,^a earnestly desiring that our body from Heaven should envelop us.

4:14a *He knew with absolute certainty* that God had raised Jesus from the dead. He had seen Him (1 Corinthians 9:1) and had also talked to Peter and others (1 Corinthians 15:5-8) who had seen and talked to the risen Lord. He also knew what a miracle Jesus had performed in changing his own life.

4:17a See 12:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Ephesians 3:8. Paul considers the *troubles* of this life—even persecutions—to be *trivial* when compared with the tremendous eternity promised us. They are *so temporary* compared with an eternity with God that will never end! And these troubles are working for us by turning our minds and hearts to the future, which is not only for a moment but forever.

So the more dissatisfied we become with this life because of its troubles, problems, etc., the more we will tend to become occupied in our Lord and in His business. The result of this shift in affections will be an even greater and more glorious resurrection.

Also consider the ages upon ages during which

the lost will endure extreme suffering, with absolutely no hope that it will soon, or ever, end. *So for that reason, my brothers and sisters, be most diligent to make your calling and election to eternal life with God a sure thing!* 2 Peter 1:10.

5:1a One day these earthly bodies of ours will be dissolved. If we die before Christ comes back, our bodies will return to dust. But whether we live or die, God has prepared for each of us a *new house*.

The *house* He speaks of here is not our home in Heaven. John 14:1-2. He is speaking of the new body that God will give to each of His people. It will be a body that will never die—an *eternal* body—a body like Christ's glorified body.

5:2a All humankind *groans* under a heavy load. There are always problems with the body, disasters of life, and concerns of one kind or another. But the Christian's delight is to look forward to the time when life as we know it will be exchanged for a life lived in a glorious and eternal body, in a glorious

³And if God will clothe us in this way, we won't be mere spirits without bodies.

⁴It's also true that while living in this earthly tent, we groan, being constantly weighed down.^a It's not that we desire to be without a body, but our desire is to be clothed with our new body, that this perishable body may be overwhelmed by Life that is everlasting.^b

⁵Now God is the One who has prepared us for the very purpose of inheriting all of this. He has even now given us His Holy Spirit as a guarantee payment.^a

⁶That's why we are always cheerfully confident, knowing that every moment we spend in these earthly bodies is only a brief time spent away from our true home and away from the Lord.^a

⁷So we continue to live by faith, not by what we can see.

⁸We say we are always cheerfully confident. Yes, but we would much rather be gone from the body and home in Heaven with the Lord.^a

⁹So our greatest concern is always to do and say

and eternal place, with our glorious Lord.

5:4a ... *by all the troubles, trials, and disasters of life.*

5:3-4b No Christian wants to leave this life and become a floating spirit somewhere. No, our desire is not to *be without a body* (to be free from our mortal body). Rather, it is to receive our new body, which will be able to experience and enjoy the Lord in a way we have never known before.

5:5a ... *as a guarantee of all He has promised and prepared for us in His presence.* See 1:21-22, and the note.

5:5-6a God made us for Himself, that we might be with Him. To the true Christian, God has already given the *guarantee payment of the Spirit*, which is just a portion of what He plans to give us of Himself when His children arrive *home* with Him. So considering the fullness of life that awaits us on our arrival home, it should be understandable that we sometimes become very homesick. In fact, that's a very healthy symptom for a Christian.

5:7-8a The Christian life is a life of *faith*. But, oh, what great proofs we have to back up that faith. 1) Fulfilled prophecy is one proof. 2) There is God's creation all around us, which, when analyzed, could never have evolved out of nothing. 3) The Lord Jesus and His marvelous life on earth—all that He did and said—are the greatest proofs of all.

These are just three proofs, and there are many more. So, though we *live by faith*, we are absolutely *confident* in the One in whom we have placed our faith. The proofs He has given are sufficient to

what is pleasing to the Lord, both while here in this body and also when we arrive home with the Lord.

¹⁰Because we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.^a There we will each receive Christ's verdict, as He considers how we have lived in these mortal bodies. And Christ's decision will be based on the good, or worthless and evil, quality of each life.

About Turning to God

¹¹So because we know from past experience what it is to be terrified at the prospect of standing before the Lord for judgment, we continually persuade everyone to prepare for that Day by faithfully obeying and serving Him. God sees our heart,^a and He knows that our only motive is to promote His glory and save the souls of others. And I trust that you are also convinced in your consciences of the integrity and uprightness of our aim.

¹²But when we say this, we're not trying to prove again to you how sincere and concerned we are.

show that what He has promised, He will surely fulfill.

5:10a Read why this trial must take place. See Appendix 213, page 479.

5:11a Always remember that the Lord will not judge by our standards, but by His word. John 12:46-50. So make certain that you read and study His word, always praying that God will help you to live it.

God sees our heart. All we do, are, think, plan, and desire is clearly seen by God. 2 Chronicles 16:9; Proverbs 5:21; 15:3. He even knows our motives. It is certain that nothing about our lives will be hidden from God's eyes when our time comes to stand before Him for judgment. Read of the concern King David had in this regard, in Psalm 139:23-24.

5:13a ... *when we live and witness as we do, ...*

5:14a ... *and needed to be resurrected back to life, if we were to escape the judgment of the ungodly, the second death.* We had all died spiritually (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ephesians 2:1), and there was need of the same divine power to give us new birth spiritually as there will be to raise up dead bodies to live forever. Christ's death for us (dying in our stead) now makes it possible for God to offer us forgiveness and new life. v 17.

5:16a ... *according to his nationality or color, or whether he's rich or poor, slave or free, educated or uneducated. We are only concerned with whether or not he has yet found new life thru Christ.*

5:16b ... *We now recognize Him mainly as the*

We're simply giving you reason to boast about us and defend us when we're insulted by those who revel in how well they dress and how smoothly they speak, but have no real loving concern in their hearts for you.

¹³ If it's charged that we're insane, well, all I can say is that all we are doing and saying is for God's sake. But if we're in our right mind,^a it's because we have your good at heart.

¹⁴ It's the love that Christ has shown for us that now continues forcibly to cause us to compress all of our energies into one channel. Because we realize that if Christ died for the sake of all of us, it was because all of us had died.^a

¹⁵ And He did die for everyone. So now it's only fitting that those who come to life again thru Him should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died for them, and then rose again.

¹⁶ So from now on we no longer judge anyone by human standards.^a Though we once looked forward to the Messiah as an earthly prince and conqueror (as King of the Jews), that's no longer the

main way we think about Him.^b

¹⁷ So when anyone in truth becomes a Christian, he becomes an altogether new person!^a His old goals and ambitions and his old way of living are things of the past. Listen! Everything about him or her is now new!^b

¹⁸ And it is God who has accomplished all this change in us, from being His enemies to becoming His friends. He did it by having Jesus Christ suffer and die for us. And now He has given all of us the assignment of bringing others from their enmity into friendship with Him.^a

¹⁹ Our message to everyone in the world is to be that God now offers to bring them back into friendship with Himself because of what Christ suffered for them. Now He won't need to charge them with their sin. We are also to tell them that God has now given to every one of us the solemn responsibility of telling everyone else in the world how they too can now be brought back into friendship with Him.^a

²⁰ So all of us are now authorized messengers for

Savior of the world!

5:17a See John 15:1-10; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:10; 4:21-32.

5:17b Every person who is truly born again, and thereby becomes a Christian, undergoes such a change in his views and feelings that it's proper to say of him that he is an altogether new person. He becomes an altogether new person in a moral sense. He has new views, new motives, and new principles. He has a new purpose for living, with new goals for his life.

Unless there is this total change, he is still a rebel against God, and under His judgment. No other moral change takes place so deeply, so radically, and so thoroughly as the change in a person who is truly converted to Christ.

True, you cannot bring all of this about by yourself. You need God's help at all times. But still, your sincere desire and aim must be to be all that God, with His help, wants you to be and do. See references listed at Hebrews 2:18, and the notes.

A Christian has new views of God and of Jesus Christ, new views of this life and of the life to come, new views of truth and duty. He has new hope, new joy, new friends, and new interests. Yes, a Christian is altogether different than he was when he lived for what he could get out of this life and out of others. Now his great concern and desire is to obey God and give of himself in service to both God and man. See Ephesians 2:10; 4:21-24; Galatians 6:15; Romans 6:1-23.

* * *

Some translations omit the word "all" (or "everything" in this translation) in regard to the new life. But it's in the Greek Received Text, and the "everything" agrees with all the teachings of Christ and the apostles. They never taught that selective obedience was acceptable with God.

But from Adam and Eve down to the most recent rebels against full obedience to God, both within the organized church and outside it, they all want Heaven when they die, but on their own terms. They want freedom to disobey God at least in some things. Well, it didn't work for Adam and Eve, and it won't work for you either if you're also one of those refined rebels.

Cheating on God is cheating on God, whether it's a so-called small sin or a big one. Don't play Russian roulette with your soul! That one sin you are cuddling will earn for you a place in Hell! Romans 6:1-23. Come clean with God and give Him all of you, and do all that He commands you to do. Then you will have the joy and assurance that all is well. Do it! And we'll see you in Heaven, where God has promised us riches, glory, and pleasures forever!

Never say, "It will cost too much." Is anything worth going to Hell for? Choose to live! Read *The Amazing Story of God*—Appendix 247, page 520.

5:18a See Appendix 214, page 480.

5:19a Our work is not finished when we have told people what Christ has done for them. We must then challenge them about their solemn responsibility to now warn others of the judgment to come and of the new life there is for them in Christ, if they

Christ. God now makes His appeal to the world thru us! So we beg the lost, as Christ would plead, "Turn from your enmity toward God and surrender to His terms and conditions for mercy,^a and receive His forgiveness."^b

²¹Because God made Jesus, who never sinned, to be a sin-offering for us, so that thru all He has done and will yet do for us, we might become as righteous in God's eyes as Christ is.

6 So then, as workers together with Christ, we also plead with you not to receive God's gracious offer of peace and pardon without responding in an adequate and effective way.^a

²Because God says:

I heard your cry to Me at a time when I was willing to listen. At the time when My salvation was being offered, I helped you.^a

Listen to me! NOW is the time when God is willing to listen to you! NOW is the time when God's salvation is being offered you!^b

³We are doing our very best to make sure that we are not a stumbling block to any of you in any way, so that you won't lose confidence in our witness among you.

⁴But in everything we do, we try to make it very clear that we are sincere servants of God. So we patiently endure grievous troubles, hardships, and distressful situations.

⁵We have been beaten, jailed, and mobbed. We have worked hard, even during times of sleepless watching and going without food.

⁶We have shown our sincerity by our wholesome lives, by our knowledge of God's word,^a and by our patience and kindness. It has also been seen by the way the Holy Spirit has worked thru us, and by our sincere love for you.

are to live!

If every person won to Christ was convincingly made to see the responsibility they now have to personally tell the Great News to every person they contact from day to day, the resulting chain reaction would be utterly astounding. Matthew 28:18-20.

5:20a Some claim there are no conditions for receiving God's forgiveness, that God's offer of forgiveness is unconditional. Read what Jesus told Paul about this in Acts 20:21 and 26:18-20. See also Galatians 5:4 note, and Hebrews 5:9.

5:20b ... *and allow Him to make a new person out of you.*

6:1a Paul here pled with the Corinthians to examine their own hearts to see if they really were born again. One believes the Great News in an inadequate,

⁷We have always spoken the truth. And you have seen the power of God at work in our ministry. We have met every opposition, whether on the right hand or on the left, in an honest and honorable way.

⁸We have been defamed as deceivers, yet we have remained true to God and man whether we were honored or dishonored, whether praised or cursed.

⁹We're considered unknown and unimportant, but God knows all about us.^a We're considered by some to be almost dead, but we're very much alive. It's true that we've been severely beaten and left for dead, but still we weren't killed.

¹⁰We're continually facing situations that cause us sorrow, but still, we're always rejoicing. We're considered poor, but we're making many rich. We don't have anything, and yet we own everything.^a

¹¹We've been very frank with you, and I want you dear friends in Corinth to know that our heart is wide open to you.

¹²We have not closed our hearts to you, but you have closed your hearts to us.

¹³Now in return for the open hearts we offer you (I speak as one correcting his children), why not also open your hearts to us?

Run From Union With Unbelievers

¹⁴Don't be unequally united with unbelievers! Because what common interest can those who practice doing what's right and honorable have with those who practice dishonesty, injustice, and every other kind of sin? What can light and darkness ever have in common?

¹⁵When did Christ ever come to an agreement with Satan about anything? So how can one who lives to please Christ and one who lives to please

quote, ineffective way if he has not given his entire will to God so that God may make a new person out of him. Our faith must be a belief not only of the mind, but from the heart. Romans 10:9-10. A genuine faith from the heart will produce lasting holy living.

Paul warns to guard against self-deception. Are you willing and wanting to obey God in everything? Are you praying for and allowing God's Spirit to work in you to produce good works?

6:2a Isaiah 49:8.

6:2b Satan isn't against religion, he just wants you to wait until tomorrow to get right with God. And tomorrow he'll say the same. But it will be just as difficult to die to your pride and your favorite sin tomorrow as it is today. Today, *NOW*, is when God

himself ever agree?

¹⁶Or what agreement can there ever be between a house of God and idols? And don't forget: Each of us is a house of the living God. As God has said:

I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be My people.^a

¹⁷But the Lord also says:

You must come out from among those idolaters and unbelievers. Tear yourselves away from all that so fascinates them! Have no part in their evil deeds and ambitions. Then I will welcome you to Myself.^a

¹⁸**"And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters."^a
So says the Lord Almighty!^b**

7 So, my dear friends, since we have these marvelous promises from God, let us do our part in cleansing ourselves from everything that pollutes our body and spirit, using every strength we have to perfectly please Him, realizing the awesome fact that we are always in the presence of God.^a

Paul's Joy

²Open your hearts to us. We haven't wronged or corrupted or cheated anyone.

³I'm not saying this to condemn you. I've said before that you've so firmly attached yourselves within our hearts that we would gladly die with you, or live the rest of our lives with you.

⁴I've been very frank in what I've written you here. But I want you to know that I've done a lot of bragging to others about you as well. You have literally filled me with encouragement, so that I overflow with joy even in the midst of all our troubles.

is willing to save you. Don't put it off!

6:6a Paul had taken the time to immerse himself deeply in the Scriptures, so that he could share real truth with others.

6:9a ... and has intense interest in each of us.

6:10a Those who belong to Christ do indeed own everything. We are heirs of everything God is and has. Romans 8:16-18; 1 John 3:2.

6:16a Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 32:38; Ezekiel 37:27.

6:17a Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 20:34,41.

6:18a 2 Samuel 7:14.

6:18b The implication of these verses is that God will receive us as His sons and daughters, and live within us, and bring us to be with Himself eternally only if we will leave the evil ways of the world and

⁵The truth is: When we arrived here in northern Greece, we got very little sleep, because there was trouble everywhere. There was the usual opposition from the heathen and the Jews,^a and on top of that, the deep fears and concerns for the various problems of the churches.

⁶But God, who comforts those who are downcast, gave us great comfort by the arrival of Titus.

⁷And it wasn't only his coming that gave us such a great lift. But when he told us of the comfort and encouragement he had experienced when you told him of your earnest desire to see me, and of how you had mourned over the sin that had occurred, and how zealously you agreed with my charge to you—well, I could hardly contain myself for the joy that welled up within me.

⁸So even if I hurt you deeply with my last letter, I'm not sorry I wrote it. But still, at the time I wrote, I was in deep sorrow that I had to write it. Now, however, I realize that although that letter deeply disturbed you and caused you much grief, it was only a temporary grief.

⁹Now I'm extremely glad, not because I brought you such sorrow, but because your sorrow led you to a change of heart. Because your sorrow led you to do what God wanted you to do in that situation, and as a result, you weren't harmed by us in any way.

¹⁰Because when you are faced with the fact that you are displeasing to God, and you turn from your sin and obey Him, the result is salvation. And that result is not something to be sorry about. But when people of the world are sorry about being caught in sin, there is still only God's judgment and the second death ahead for them.

¹¹But look at what happened when you allowed your sorrow to lead you to please God. What dili-

obey Him. Only then can we honestly claim, *we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ!* Romans 8:17.

7:1a Literally, we are to do so *in the fear of God*. God is always with us and watching us (Psalm 33:13-15,18-19; 34:15; 94:8-10; 139:1-24), because He knows all things, and because He dearly loves us.

But we must realize that unless we are willing to clean up our act and stay clean for God (with His help), we cannot continue as sons and daughters of the Father. Colossians 3:5-17. The fact that no one but Christ has ever lived perfectly does not weaken our obligation to continually strive for that perfection. See Matthew 5:48.

7:5a See 11:24-28.

gence it produced in you! What eagerness to clear yourselves and be restored to favor with God! What anger against the one who had sinned, what fear of what God might do, what passionate desire to please God! What zeal to now get to the heart of the matter and deal with it! What readiness to pronounce judgment! You have now entirely cleared yourselves of blame in this matter.

¹² My main purpose in writing that letter was not only that this incestuous person should be punished, or that the one wronged might be helped, but that your diligence in dealing with this sin might be seen by everyone. It was also that you might know that I must give an accounting before God about my real concern for your spiritual welfare.^a

¹³ We are indeed encouraged by your attitude in the whole matter. But we had even greater cause for rejoicing because of the joy Titus experienced when all of you so refreshed and encouraged him.

¹⁴ You have fulfilled every bold claim I ever made to Titus about you. You didn't cause me shame in any way for speaking to him about you as I did. Just as I always spoke the truth to you, Titus found that my bragging about you was also the truth.

¹⁵ And his love for you continues to grow as he remembers how earnest all of you are about obeying God, and how you received him with fear and trembling as a messenger of God.

¹⁶ So I'm indeed happy that I have such good reason to have full confidence in you.

Generous Giving Encouraged

8 Now, my brothers and sisters, let us tell you how God has poured out His blessings on the churches of northern Greece.

² In spite of a great trial that severely tested them, they had such joy in the Lord that even from the depths of their poverty, they gave so unselfishly that the result has been a most generous gift.

³ I can testify that they indeed gave according to their ability, and yes, their generosity extended far beyond their actual ability. They gave because they really wanted to give.

⁴ Actually, they kept urging us most earnestly to accept a gift from them, and allow them in this way to help the Lord's followers in need in Judea.^a

⁵ And when we agreed, they didn't do only as we

had hoped, but first they rededicated themselves to the Lord. Then they agreed with our wishes and followed our directions.^a

⁶ So we encouraged Titus, who had already talked to you about this need,^a that he should return to you and complete his leadership among you over this matter.

⁷ So now, in the same way that you excel in everything—in faith, in preaching and teaching, in knowledge, in your earnest diligence, and in your love for us—see that you now also excel in being a blessing to those in need by giving generously.

⁸ I'm not commanding you to do anything, but I am allowing you to test the sincerity of your love^a by comparing your faithfulness in giving with that of others.

⁹ Think of how undeserving you are of all that your Lord Jesus Christ has given you. Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor so that by His becoming poor you might become rich.

¹⁰ So this is my advice in this matter: A year ago you wanted to give toward this need, and you made a good beginning in collecting the funds.

¹¹ Now you need to finish what you started. You were eager to get involved. Now you need to be just as eager to complete the project by giving according to your means,

¹² because your gift is acceptable to God when you give gladly in relation to what you have. He, of course, doesn't expect you to give what you don't have.

¹³ Now I don't mean that you should so generously free others of their poverty that you become poor yourselves.

¹⁴ But you should work for equality. Your present abundance can help them get on top, while at a later time, you may be down and will need them to supply you from their abundance. We should each be concerned that others may be as blessed as we are.

¹⁵ As the Scripture says,

The one who gathered much didn't have any left over, and the one who gathered little didn't have too little.^a

Titus Sent to Corinth

¹⁶ I thank God that He has put the same earnest

7:12a We each have that same responsibility in regard to the spiritual (and therefore eternal) welfare of others. 2:4.

8:4a Acts 11:27-30.

8:5a ... in regard to the contribution to be

made.

8:6a ... among the Christians in Jerusalem and Judea ...

8:8a Christianity is the religion of love! And that love is to be demonstrated by doing good to anyone

concern for you into the heart of Titus that I have.

¹⁷Because he not only accepted our challenge that he return to you, but he was eager to do so. So he's coming to you of his own accord.

¹⁸And we're sending along with him the brother who is so highly praised among all the churches for his preaching of the Great News.

¹⁹Not only that, but he has also been chosen by the churches here to travel with us when we bring their gifts of kindness and love to Jerusalem. This relief and service will not only bring glory to the Lord Himself, but will also be a witness of your eagerness to help where there is need.

²⁰Now, we want to avoid any suspicion on the part of anyone about the way we administer this generous gift.

²¹The Lord knows our honesty, but we also want everyone else to know that everything will be done honestly.

²²So in addition to the two, we are sending along another brother who has often proved to be an enthusiastic servant of the Lord in many ways. He's especially interested in going along because of all the good reports he's heard about you.

²³If anyone asks about Titus, he's my partner and fellow worker on your behalf. In regard to the other two brothers, they are messengers sent by the churches here, men who are truly an honor to Christ.

²⁴So show these men the proof of your love, and the reason for my bragging about you. That will really inspire the other churches.

Some Instructions About Giving

9 It's really quite unnecessary for me to write anything more about your meeting the needs of our fellow followers of the Lord.

²I know how eager you are to help. I've enthusiastically told the followers here in northern Greece that you people in southern Greece were ready with your gifts a year ago. And your eager desire to give has inspired most of the people here to do the same.

³But I've sent these brothers to you, ahead of me, so that you can be sure to have your gift ready. I surely wouldn't want my bragging about you to be mere imagination.

⁴It would embarrass me, and, of course, you as

well, if some people here in northern Greece should come with me, only to find that my confident bragging about you was false, if you weren't ready with your gift.

⁵So I thought it necessary to urge these brothers to go to you, ahead of me, to challenge you to prepare the big-hearted gift you had earlier promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift when I arrive, and not as a grudging obligation.

⁶Let me remind you: If you plant sparingly, you will also harvest sparingly, but if you plant generously, you will also reap a generous harvest.^a

⁷Each of you should give as your heart prompts you to give. Don't give grudgingly or because you feel you must, because God loves the one who gives cheerfully.

⁸And always remember, God is able to cause blessings of every kind imaginable to flow to you, so that you will at all times have all you need of everything. As a result, you will always have an abundance from which to give to every good work.

⁹As the Scripture says:

When the good man scatters his gifts abroad to the poor, the good he has done will be remembered by God forever.^a

¹⁰Now may God, who supplies seed for the one who plants, and bread for food, give you a good supply of seed for planting and a great harvest. May He in that way increase your ability to do good.

¹¹And as you continue doing so, you will continue to be enriched in every way, enabling you always to be generous in helping to meet every need. And the generous gifts you send thru us will result in thanksgiving to God on the part of those who receive them.

¹²Because when you serve God in this way, you not only supply the needs of your fellow followers, but you also cause an outpouring of grateful thanks to God on the part of many.

¹³These people will praise and glorify God for the proof they see that you are indeed living in obedience to the faith you say you have in the Great News about Christ, shown clearly by the liberal way you have communicated your love to them and to everyone else.

¹⁴You will also benefit from their prayers for you, as they beg God to bless you because of the great

and everyone whenever and wherever we have a chance. The most solid proof of that love is our willingness to part with our funds or property, our time, or whatever else is valuable to us (even our very life, if that should be necessary), in order to

bring salvation and happiness to others. John 15:13.

8:15a Exodus 16:18.

9:6a Luke 6:38; Philipians 4:19.

9:9a Psalm 112:9.

proof they see of His goodness working in and thru you.

¹⁵Thanks be to God for the utterly indescribable gift^a He has given us!

Paul Defends His Work for Christ

10 Now with all the meekness and gentleness of Christ Himself, I appeal to you. Yes, this is I, Paul, the one who is said to be very bold when far away from you, but humble and meek when facing you.

²But I beg you not to force me to be bold and severe toward you in the way that I intend to face up to some of you. Some think we are ruled by self-serving goals, which we plan to achieve by clever means.

³It's true that we live in these weak, human bodies. But we're not fighting a physical battle.

⁴And we don't use earthly weapons in our warfare. We tear down strongholds of every description^a by God's mighty power.

⁵And by His power we're demolishing the arguments of various systems of false philosophy, and every high opinion that men have of themselves, who resist the knowledge that God reveals about them. As a result, we are capturing their minds and turning all their thoughts toward desire to fully obey Christ.

⁶As soon as those among you who are sincere have given proof of your obedience, we will be ready to deal severely with those who still rebel against obedience to Christ.^a

⁷You who oppose us are looking only at our physical appearance. If anyone is convinced in himself that he has been sent by Christ to preach His Great News, let him again do some self-examination and see that in the same way that he has been sent by Christ, so have we.

⁸Maybe I brag too much about my authority. But the Lord gave me this authority for the purpose of building you up, not to tear you down.

⁹And I'll not be shamed by those who claim that I write these letters merely to frighten you.

¹⁰Because the one opposing me says, "His letters are severe and powerful, but when he's here in person he's weak, and his spoken messages are pitiful and worthless."

¹¹Let this person be fairly warned that there will be no difference between the words of the letters we have written while absent from you and our actions when we arrive among you.

¹²But we wouldn't dare to classify ourselves or compare ourselves with those who think so highly of themselves. They're stupid when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with each other.

¹³But we won't brag about being more effective than we have been. God is the One who assigns duties and gives the necessary abilities, and my assignment certainly included working there with you.

¹⁴So we are not extending ourselves beyond our area of duty when we now come to you, because we were the first ones to come to you with the Great News about Christ.

¹⁵I'm not trying to take credit for what's happening in other areas, where other men are working. But I do hope that as your faith continues to increase, you will be able to help me in a great way to accomplish the work that God has assigned me.

¹⁶Then we will be able to preach the Great News even in the regions beyond you, because we don't want to be rejoicing only in what someone else has done in his area.

¹⁷But **Let the one who brags, brag about what the Lord is doing.^a**

9:15a While we can bless others with our love thru giving, God has given us the indescribable gift of His love! He even loved us when we existed only as a mere thought in His eternal mind. His love for us is so great that He sacrificed His incomparable Son for us, thru whom He now offers us forgiveness and eternal life. That means acceptance into the Royal Family of God, and a future that no human eye has ever seen, nor ear ever heard of, nor mind ever imagined. Truly, it is a gift so great that no human words even come close to being adequate enough to fully describe!

10:4a Some of those strongholds are: 1) Love for the things of this brief, uncertain life; 2) Human passions; 3) False religious beliefs; 4) Organized

religious opposition; 5) World opinion; 6) Subtle arguments, etc.

10:6a John 3:36; Romans 2:1-10; 6:16; Hebrews 5:9; 2 Peter 2:10; 1 John 2:3-4,17.

10:17a Jeremiah 9:24.

11:2a This must be the great concern of each of us, both for ourselves and for each fellow follower of the Lord. Pastor, even as Paul, this must be your most intense concern regarding every member of your congregation! Romans 15:16; Hebrews 12:14.

11:3a The implication is that if they abandoned their pure lives as followers of Christ, they would experience the same spiritual disaster that Eve did.

11:4a Warning! Test every minister (1 John 4:1) to make sure he is preaching the truth. Is he teach-

¹⁸ So we shouldn't be looking for the approval of others by bragging about what we've done. It's God's approval that counts.

Paul and the False Apostles

11 I trust you'll be patient with me as I indulge a little in some foolishness. Indeed, you already have.

² Because you see, I continue to be intensely jealous for you, in the same way that God is. I've promised you in marriage to a Man—to Christ. And I want so earnestly to present you to Him as a virgin who has kept herself pure.^a

³ But now I'm afraid that somehow, in the same way that Satan, by means of that snake, was able by his cunning to trick Eve, that your minds may be polluted, and that you will abandon your pure and sincere devotion to Christ.^a

⁴ Because if someone comes along and preaches about another Jesus than the one we told you about, or if he encourages you to accept a spirit different from the Holy Spirit you had already received, or a different great news than you had earlier accepted, you seem quite willing to listen to him.^a

⁵ But I don't consider myself inferior in any way to those "super-apostles" of yours.

⁶ Even if I'm not a smooth speaker, I'm not lacking in knowledge. I've certainly made that clear to you in every way and in all matters.

⁷ But did I make a mistake by lowering myself in your opinion when I lifted you up by preaching the Great News to you, and not charging you for my services?

⁸ I robbed other churches, accepting support from them in order to serve you.

⁹ Even when I was with you and in need, I was not a lazy burden to anyone. What I needed was supplied by the brothers who came from northern

Greece. I wasn't a burden to you in any way, and never will be.

¹⁰ As surely as I speak the truth because Christ is in me, no one can stop me from bragging about my work among you in southern Greece.

¹¹ Why? Because I don't love you? God knows I do.

¹² And the way I've worked in the past, I'll continue to work, in order to cut the ground out from under those who continue to falsely brag that they're doing God's work in the same way we are.

¹³ Such men are false messengers, lying about their work, disguising themselves as messengers of Christ.

¹⁴ It's no surprise that they do this, because even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

¹⁵ So it's not surprising, then, that men who serve him disguise themselves as ministers who do what's right. But their final destiny will be exactly what their actions deserve!^a

Paul's Sufferings for Christ

¹⁶ I say again: Don't let anyone take me for a fool! But if you must, at least listen to me as you would to a fool, so that I also may do a little bragging.

¹⁷ Of course when I speak in this confident, boastful way, I'm not speaking as the Lord would speak, but as a fool speaks.

¹⁸ But since many brag in order to satisfy their own selfish desires, I will too.

¹⁹ And since you yourselves are so wise, you gladly listen to fools!

²⁰ In fact, you even put up with anyone who orders you around and takes for himself whatever you have, or takes advantage of you in other ways, or promotes himself, or strikes you repeatedly in the face.

²¹ To my shame, I must confess that I was too weak to be as bold as all that! But in whatever way

ing the whole truth, as revealed in the Bible? Or is he substituting something else as the meaning of various Scripture, in place of the obvious truth? Does he explain away the warnings? Does he skip over words or sections that may get him in trouble with some of the people? If so, he is in deep trouble with God; and so are you (2 Timothy 4:1-5) if you allow such to be preached to your young people and others.

We must take a stand against the useless trivia that's being preached in so many churches these last days, or we will share the guilt and the judgment from God! Your eternal life and the lives of others depend on what you accept and live by and

allow as truth! In love, but with firmness, you must deal with such cases as Christ has commanded in Matthew 18:15-18.

A challenge! Pray for your pastor. When he preaches the truth (even bringing you under conviction) thank him. Let him know you're behind him when he preaches the whole truth. He needs encouragement, just as you do. Don't only thank him, but allow God to use your pastor's faithful preaching to change your life. He must answer to God for the way he preaches, and you must answer to God for what you do when the truth is revealed to you.

11:15a See Matthew 7:15-23.

anyone else may be bold in speaking out—I'm speaking like a fool now—I will be just as bold.

²²Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.

²³Are they servants of Christ? I'm speaking now as if I were out of my mind, but I'm a servant of His in a far greater way. I have worked much harder, have been beaten with whips more times than I can number because of my stand for Him, have been in prison more often, many times facing death.^a

²⁴Five different times, the Jews gave me their frightful 39 lashes with a whip.

²⁵Three other times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned. I've been shipwrecked three times, and once I spent a day and a night in the water.

²⁶In my many travels for Him, I've often been in great dangers while crossing or navigating flooded rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, the Jews, and dangers from the ungodly. I've also met serious dangers from mobs in the city, from hunger and thirst in the desert, dangers on the high seas, and dangers from those who claimed to be followers of Christ, but were not.

²⁷I have worked and toiled, often going without sleep. I've been hungry and thirsty, often fasting. I've been cold from not having enough clothes to keep me warm.

²⁸Besides all these external things, there is the constant pressure of daily concern for the care of all the churches.

²⁹Whenever anyone reveals weakness, I become weak with concern for him. When someone is lured into sin, intense anger burns within me against the seducer.

³⁰So if I must brag, I will brag about things that show how weak I am.

³¹The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is worthy of praise forever, knows I am not lying.

³²In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had guards placed at the city gates to arrest me.

³³But I was let down by rope in a basket thru a window in the city wall, and thereby escaped his clutching hands.

Paul's Visions and Revelations

12 It seems, however, that bragging won't do me any good; but let me tell you about several visions and revelations from the Lord.

²I know a certain follower of the Lord who was caught up to the third Heaven. This happened 14 years ago. Whether he was in his body during this happening, or out of it, I really don't know. Only God knows.

³Now, I know this man very well. But, as I said, I don't know whether he was in his body or out of it when this happening took place. Only God knows.

⁴But he was caught up into Paradise, and heard such astounding things that there are no human words that even come close to adequately describing what he heard. In fact, he hasn't been allowed even to try to explain what he heard.^a

⁵I will continue to be highly elated and jubilant about such an experience. But I'll not brag about myself, except about my weaknesses.

⁶But even if I should wish to brag about the visions and revelations I've had, I wouldn't be a fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth. But I'll refrain from that, so that no one will have a higher opinion of me than he gains from the things he sees me do and hears me say.

⁷And then, to keep me from becoming conceited because of the incredible revelations I had received, I was given a thorn in my flesh. This was a messenger from Satan, that constantly tormented me, to keep me from being proud.

⁸Three different times I begged the Lord that He would remove it.

⁹But His firm and unyielding answer was, "My desire to greatly bless and use you is all you need. Because My power is brought to perfection in those who realize how utterly weak they are in themselves." So for that reason, I would rather most gladly brag about how powerless I am, so that the

11:23a ... *because of my bold stand for Christ and His true message.*

12:4a See 4:17 and 1 Corinthians 2:9; Ephesians 3:8.

12:10a ... *thru my faith in what Christ can and will do!*

12:12a ... *In spite of the opposition I met in Corinth, I patiently continued to give proof that my message to you was indeed from God.*

12:21a That surrender to the rule of sin is spiritually fatal is clearly implied here.

13:1a Deuteronomy 19:15.

13:3a ... *both in His blessings* (1 Corinthians 1:4-7) *and in His judgments* (1 Corinthians 11:30-31).

13:5a Paul uses the present indicative thruout these statements. In Greek, the present indicative usually means continuous or repeated action in

power of Christ may work thru me.

¹⁰ So I take pleasure in various weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties, all for Christ's sake. Because when I know how weak I am, then I am powerful!^a

Paul's Concern for the Corinthians

¹¹ I'm acting like a fool the way I'm bragging. But you forced me to it, because you should be the ones speaking up for me. Because I'm certainly not inferior in any way to those "super-great-apostles" of yours, although I'm nothing in myself.

¹² Surely you agree that my ministry was accompanied by all the signs of one truly sent to you by God; not only by signs, wonders, and miracles, but by my patient endurance as well.^a

¹³ In what way then did you receive an inferior ministry, compared to other churches, except that I wasn't a lazy burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

¹⁴ Now I'm ready to come to you for the third time. Again I won't be a burden to you, because I'm not after your money. All I want is you. After all, the children shouldn't be expected to provide for the parents, but the parents for the children.

¹⁵ And I will gladly spend everything I have and use all the energy I have for the sake of your souls, although it seems that the more intensely I love you, the less I am loved.

¹⁶ No matter what you say about that, I have not been a burden to you. Still, some seem to feel that I'm a sly person, and that I've continued to take advantage of you by deceitful means.

¹⁷ But did I take advantage of you thru any of the messengers I sent you?

¹⁸ I urged Titus to go to you, and sent the other Christian brother with him. Titus didn't take advantage of you in any way, did he? Haven't Titus and I acted in the same spirit, and behaved in the same way?

¹⁹ So why must we again defend ourselves before you? With Christ as my witness before God, let me assure you that everything I have done for you, dear friends, I have done that I might build you up

spiritually.

²⁰ Frankly, I'm afraid that when I come, I'll not find you as I would like you to be, which would result in you not finding me as you would like me to be. I'm afraid I may find quarreling, jealousies, hot tempers, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder.

²¹ I'm also afraid that when I come again, my God may humble me among you, causing me to deeply mourn because of the many who lived in sin before, who have not even yet repented and turned from their impurity, their sexual sinning, and other corruptions in which they indulged.^a

Final Warnings and Greetings

13 The Scripture says:
The testimony of two or three witnesses must verify every accusation.^a

And this is the third time I'll be coming to visit you.

² I warned you before, when I was with you on my second visit, and although I'm absent, I'm now writing to forewarn those of you who were living in sin before, and to all the rest of you, that if I come again, I will spare no one.

³ Since you always demand proof that Christ is speaking thru me, you shall have it. Christ hasn't been weak in His dealings with you. He's been powerful in your midst!^a

⁴ Although He appeared weak when He allowed Himself to be crucified, yet by God's power, He's now very much alive! We also appear weak as we serve Him, but we shall act for Him with God's power as we deal with you.

⁵ Examine yourselves to see whether or not you are indeed a true Christian—genuinely born again (living now as God would have you live), while trusting in Jesus as your Savior. You must examine yourselves and make sure that you stand the test. Do you have the witness in your spirit that Jesus Christ is living within you? This witness will indeed be there—unless, of course, you fail the test.^a

present time, and especially if the context so indicates. And the context certainly indicates necessary, continued action in this warning and challenge from Paul. We *must* continue to examine ourselves so that we will know what spiritual state we are in.

The way to make that examination is to read God's word daily. We need constant reminders of how God wants us to live, and for what purposes.

We need God's word to point out to us what our

thoughts and ambitions really are. What does our conduct tell others? How interested are we in spending time with the Lord in prayer and in searching the Scriptures? Only as we feed on the Scriptures and spend time with the Lord in prayer will we be strengthened spiritually and directed in the way we should live.

* * *

If a businessman needs to keep in close touch

⁶But I hope you will see that we are not failing the test.

⁷Now I pray to God that He will help you to keep from doing any evil. Not so it will be obvious that we are approved by God;^a but that you will do what is right even if it should appear that we are worthless and have failed the test.

⁸Because it's a fixed rule with us to do absolutely nothing that is against what is right and true, we will do and say only that which will promote the truth.^a

⁹So we will be glad indeed if God does not use us to show His power against you, if you are standing strong in the faith. But also, our constant prayer for you is that you will go on to perfection.^a

¹⁰The reason I'm writing these things while absent from you, is so that when I come, I won't need to be harsh with you in the use of the authority the Lord has given me. Because He gave me

this authority to build you up, not to tear you down.

¹¹Finally, my brothers and sisters, always rejoice and be glad! Aim to live exactly as God would have you live, and may you be extremely encouraged.^a Lay aside all your differences and be at peace with one another in true unity. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹²Greet one another with sincere Christian affection and love.^a

¹³All of God's people here send you their warmest greetings.

¹⁴May the Lord Jesus most richly bless all of you, way beyond what you deserve. May God's love enfold you, and may you be constantly strengthened as you partake of the gifts and influence of the Holy Spirit. So be it.

Most sincerely,
Paul and Timothy

with his books to know the status of his business, certainly a Christian needs to continue to allow God's Book to examine his life in order that he may know just how he stands in the sight of God. By self-examination, we may search out and remove those things that are offensive to God. The sins which seem to trip us up so easily must be known and abandoned!

Likewise, we will also be reminded of what God wants us to be doing, in positive action. God is not only concerned with what we must not be doing, but also with what we must be doing, in obedience to His many commands in the New Testament. The more closely we conform to the life of Christ the greater assurance and joy we will have that all is well between us and God.

Just remember always that you are not on your own. God is more interested and concerned about your salvation than you are yourself. He is always with you to help you. Philippians 2:13.

13:7a ... *because of the way we have turned you from your sinning* ...

13:8a Paul's blessing of power from God was for

the purpose of proclaiming the truth, and also to reveal error. If he had compromised the truth, or allowed some error, some sin, he would have lost God's blessing and failed God's test.


No one in the church at Corinth had anything to fear from Paul if they were living to please and obey God. But they had much to fear if they were compromisers, because Christ will never compromise in regard to right or wrong, and neither would His servant Paul.

Let us do likewise for the glory of God and the glory of His true Church. To do less is to fail and be disqualified. It is sad indeed to realize that many people today have the reputation of being real Christians, but they are spiritually dead because of their sinning. Revelation 3:1-6. Awake to righteousness!

13:9a See 7:1 note.

13:11a ... *because of God's expressed great love for you, and by all of His great promises to you, both for this life and for eternity.*

13:12a Literally *with a holy kiss.*

 So when anyone in truth becomes a Christian, he becomes an altogether new person! His old goals and ambitions and his old way of living are things of the past. Listen! Everything about him or her is now new!

—2 Corinthians 5:17

Paul's Letter to the GALATIANS

My Dear Friends in Galatia:

This is from Paul, a messenger^a—not a messenger sent by men, nor by the authority of man, but by Jesus Christ and by God our Father who raised Him from among the dead.

²Greetings to all of you in the churches in the province of Galatia in Turkey. All the Lord's followers with me send their greetings as well.

³May God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord grant you all the blessings of the Christian life, including peace of mind and heart.

⁴In obedience to what our God and Father wanted Him to do, Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice on the cross for our sins, in order to rescue us from the evil influences and dreadful future of those whose god is this present evil age.

⁵May our Father be praised and revered thruout all of endless eternity! Indeed, may it ever be so!

No Other Great News!

⁶But I'm utterly shocked and amazed at you people! How is it that you've so quickly deserted our God, who called^a you to Himself by means of the undeserved love and mercy He so graciously offers you thru Christ? Instead, you are now accepting a different "great news"!

⁷But there's no great news at all connected with what you're now accepting. Those who are confusing you want only to twist and destroy the Great News about the Messiah.

⁸But even if I myself or an angel from Heaven were to preach a different great news to you than the Great News I already brought you, may he be damned!

⁹So you will know that I mean what I've just said, I say it again: If anyone preaches any great news to you other than the Great News I already brought you, may he be damned!

¹⁰In making this harsh statement, am I merely trying to convince you of my opinion, or am I telling you what God declares? Or, do you think I'm concerned about what people wish to hear? If

I were still concerned about pleasing people, I wouldn't be a servant of Christ!

Paul's Authority Is from God

¹¹But I want you dear friends to know, that no mere man had anything to do with authoring the Great News I've been preaching.

¹²Because I neither received it from man, nor did any man teach it to me. I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.

¹³You've heard how I behaved in the past as a zealot of the Jewish religion, how I angrily and violently persecuted the Church of God and did my best to destroy it.

¹⁴Because I was so very devoted in upholding the traditions of our ancestors, I was advancing in the Jewish religion far ahead of many my own age in Israel.

¹⁵But even before I was born,^a God had set me apart to be His messenger.

¹⁶And though undeserving of His kindness and mercy, it pleased Him to call me to Himself^a and introduce me to His Son, and then send me to tell people in all nations that the Great News about Jesus is for them too.^a But I didn't then immediately go and talk this over with others who are as human as I am.

¹⁷No, I didn't even go to Jerusalem to talk with those who were messengers of Christ before I was. Instead, I went to Arabia,^a and then returned to Damascus.

¹⁸It wasn't until three years after my conversion to Christ that I went up to Jerusalem to meet Peter. I stayed with him at that time for 15 days.

¹⁹Even then I didn't see any of the other messengers, except James, the Lord's brother.

²⁰I assure you before God that what I'm writing you here is the truth!

²¹Then I went to Syria and Cilicia.

²²Before this time, none of the people in the Christian churches in Judea had met me personally.

²³The only thing they had heard was the contin-

1:1a Or *an apostle*.

1:6a Romans 8:28-30.

1:15a Jeremiah 1:5.

1:16a Acts 9:1-22.

1:17a ... *to be alone with the Lord, and confer with Him...*

ued report that, “The one who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the Great News, the very faith he once tried to destroy!”

²⁴ And they praised God for what had happened to me.

Paul Accepted by the Other Apostles

2 Fourteen years later, I went up to Jerusalem again. This time I went with Barnabas, also taking Titus with us.

² I went there because God had revealed that I should go. In a private meeting with the church leaders I told them what I preach as I give the message of the Great News to the Gentiles, as I didn’t want all the work I had done, or would do in the future, to come to nothing.

³ Titus was there with me, and although he’s a Greek, they didn’t even demand that he be circumcised.

⁴ The reason I went, was to confer with the church leaders, because false believers had infiltrated our churches in order to spy out the freedom from Jewish rules and regulations that we have in Christ Jesus, and to enslave us to those rules again.^a

⁵ But we didn’t surrender to them in any way, not even for one minute, so that the truth of the Great News would be preserved for you.

⁶ But the point is, none of those leaders who seemed to be so highly respected—whatever they were, it doesn’t make any difference to me, because God doesn’t have any personal favorites—none of them had anything to add to what I had received from the Lord.

⁷ Instead, they saw that God had given me the task of bringing the Great News to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been given the task of preaching it to the Jews.

⁸ They saw that God was working effectively thru Peter as a messenger to the Jews, and thru me as a

messenger to the Gentiles.

⁹ And when James, Peter, and John, who seemed to be the pillars of the church, clearly recognized how much God’s favor was upon me, they shook hands with Barnabas and me as a token of their full agreement that we should go to the Gentiles, and they, to the Jews.

¹⁰ All they asked was that we would continue to remember to help the poor, which was something I have always been eager to do.

Paul Corrects Peter at Antioch

¹¹ But when Peter came to Antioch, I publicly told him face-to-face that he was wrong, because he needed to be reprimanded for what he was doing.

¹² Here’s what happened: When Peter first came to Antioch, he ate openly with the Gentile believers. But when some friends of James showed up, he stopped having anything to do with the Gentiles and separated himself from them, because of his fear of these men who believed that all Gentile believers must be circumcised.

¹³ And the rest of the Jewish Christians joined him in his cowardly hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their double-dealing.

¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not being open and honest in their loyalty to the truth God had given us in the Great News, I said to Peter in front of everyone there, “Peter, you are a Jew, but you live like the Gentiles rather than like the Jews. Why, then, are you now insisting that the Gentile believers live like Jews?”

¹⁵ From birth we had the Jewish teachings instilled into us, and were not allowed to live in the sinful ways of the Gentiles.

¹⁶ But we now know that no one can become right with God by obeying Jewish laws and ceremonies. Only faith in Jesus Christ can do that. So that’s what we’ve done: we’ve put our faith in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with

2:4a It is not to be supposed that Judaism as such is contrary or the exact opposite of Christianity. Indeed, Christianity was essentially Jewish for the first two centuries. Paul’s contacts were almost always in the Synagogues.

It is a gross error to say that here’s evidence that the New Testament regards Judaism in all its forms as a religion distinct from Christianity and that Paul no longer considered himself a Jew. The historical bitterness that resulted from the persecution of Jews at the hands of a politicized and paganized church from the time of Constantine, is still with us today, and in no little degree contributes to the dis-

trust that most Jews have for Christians. It is now beginning to heal as God is again turning to His Jewish people just as He said He would do in their restoration, but the greatest is yet to come.

2:16a See Romans 3:19-26.

2:18a Romans 5 and 6.

3:2a He no doubt refers here to all the manifestations of the Holy Spirit that had been made to them: 1) In renewing them when they were converted, 2) indwelling them, John 14:17,23, 3) affirming His presence within them, Romans 8:16, 4) giving them power by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-21; 1 Corinthians 12:1-

God thru Him, and not by the Law, because there's no way that anyone can become right with God by obeying Jewish laws.^a

¹⁷ Now if I claim right standing with God thru faith in Christ, but then go back to my sinning, does that mean that Christ is now responsible for my sinning? Absolutely not!

¹⁸ If I rebuild the old life I tore down, I am the guilty reprobate,^a not Christ.

¹⁹ But when I considered all the endless requirements of the Law, I died to all hope that I could ever become alive to God by obeying the Law.

²⁰ So now, in effect, I too have been put to death on the cross with Christ. But still, I'm alive! But it's no longer I who am alive and in control. The fact that I'm now spiritually alive is due to the fact that Christ now lives in this body of mine. So now as I live among all the problems, temptations, and cares of this life, I look for deliverance and strength from the Son of God, who so loved me that He gave His very life for me.

²¹ I will do nothing to weaken or cancel God's gracious offer of forgiveness and eternal life thru Jesus Christ our Lord. Because if peace with God can be obtained by obeying Jewish laws and ceremonies, then Christ's death was useless and He died for nothing.

We Are Justified by Faith!

3 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you and convinced you to no longer obey the truth? Don't you remember how visibly and vividly I pictured Jesus being nailed to the cross for you?

² Tell me just one thing: Did you receive God's Holy Spirit^a by obeying Jewish laws or by believing the truth you heard?

³ How can you now be so stupid? After God has done so much for you thru His Spirit, do you think you are now being made perfect by obeying Jewish laws?

⁴ Did you suffer so many things for nothing—if indeed it turns out now that it was for nothing?

⁵ When God blesses you with His Holy Spirit^a and performs miracles among you, does He do all this for you because you perform certain Jewish ceremonies, or is it because you believe what He has promised you?

⁶ Consider what the Scripture says about Abraham in regard to this,

Abraham believed what God promised, and because he believed what God said He would do for him, he was given right standing with God.^a

⁷ So continue to realize this: Only those who exercise genuine faith are true children of Abraham.

⁸ In fact, the Scriptures even foretold that God would give right standing to people everywhere, by means of their faith in His promises. God gave this Great News to Abraham in advance by telling him,

People in every nation on earth will be blessed thru you.^a

⁹ So then, all who believe God's promises are being blessed together with Abraham, the man of faith.

¹⁰ But all who rely on their obedience to Jewish laws and ceremonies to save them are under a curse. Because the Scripture says,

Everyone who fails to continually obey every single command that is written in God's Book of the Law is under God's curse.^a

¹¹ And the fact that no one is made right with God by obeying Jewish laws is also clear in the Scripture that says,

Now the one who gains right standing with God will receive eternal life because he believes the whole message that God has given us.^a

¹² But the Law has nothing to do with believing. As another Scripture says,

Only the one who perfectly and continually obeys these laws and ceremonies will have eternal life.^a

11.

3:5a Luke 11:13.

3:6a Genesis 15:6; Hebrews 11:8.

3:8a ... *because it is thru you that the promised Savior is to be born.* Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18.

3:10a Deuteronomy 27:26.

3:11a Habakkuk 2:4. What does it mean to believe God? In these New Testament times, it first means to believe that God has sent His incomparable Son to earth in human form in the person of Jesus Christ, to die as a sacrifice for our sins, and be our Savior. Jesus was also God's Representative, His Spokesman. So we must believe and obey the mes-

sage He brought us. We are not saved by our obedience, but also, we are not saved unless we obey Him. We are not believing in Him (John 3:16) if we choose to ignore or disobey any of His commands or teachings, or the teachings of His apostles thru whom He spoke after leaving the earth physically.

Even Moses, many centuries before Christ, commanded that when Christ arrived on earth, we must listen to Him and obey Him. Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19; Acts 3:22-26. For further proof that faith includes obedience see John 3:36; Romans 2:1-16; 6:16; Hebrews 5:9; 11:8,17-19.

We must also believe that our sins can be forgiven.

¹³But Christ saved us from the curse that came upon us for not perfectly obeying the Law. He did it by taking upon Himself the curse that was upon us. Because the Scriptures also state,

Anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse.^a

¹⁴So because of what Christ Jesus suffered for us on the cross, the blessing God promised Abraham is now available to everyone else as well. All of us may now receive the many blessings God has promised us thru His Holy Spirit, if we will faithfully believe God.

The Law and the Promise

¹⁵My brothers and sisters, let me illustrate my point. Even when men sign an agreement, none of those who sign can later add to or take from the obligations of that agreement.

¹⁶Now God made an agreement with Abraham and with his Descendant.^a God didn't say, "... and to your descendants," referring to many people, but He uses the singular, "... and to your Descendant,"^b referring to one person—to Christ.

¹⁷What I'm saying is this: God made an agreement with Abraham about Christ; and the Law, which God gave thru Moses 430 years later, doesn't set aside and cancel God's promise.

¹⁸Because if the inheritance God promised Abraham was to be obtained by obeying the Laws of Moses, then God's promise means nothing. But God gave the inheritance as a free gift to Abraham by promise!^a

¹⁹Well, why then did God give the Law? It was given later to show mankind what was sinful,^a and that there is an awful price to pay for sinning. But the Law was in force only temporarily, only until Abraham's Descendant, to whom the promise referred, had come. And God gave the Law to

angels to give to Moses, the mediator.^b

²⁰But a mediator is not needed when a person is alone and speaking for himself, and God was alone and spoke for Himself when He made the promise to Abraham.

The Purpose of the Law of Moses

²¹Is the Law of Moses, then, in conflict with the promises of God? Not at all! Because if a law had been given that was able to give life, then certainly peace with God would have been attainable by obeying that law.^a

²²But the Scriptures clearly declare that all people in the whole world are under God's judgment because of their sin.^a The Law serves as a means of making this very clear, so that we will put our trust in God's promise that right standing with Him will be given those who are believing^b in Jesus Christ.

²³But before it was revealed that we could be saved by faith in Jesus Christ, we were guarded by the Law. We were kept in protective custody by it until it would later be revealed that we could be saved by faith in Him.

²⁴So the Law acted as our guardian-teacher until Christ came, when we would be made right with God thru faith^a in Him.

²⁵But now that faith in Christ has come, we are no longer under the guardianship of the Laws of Moses.

²⁶Because all of you are now children of God by means of your faith in Christ Jesus.

²⁷Because all of you who were truly immersed into Christ have now taken upon you His feelings and concerns, His opinions and nature.^a

²⁸And those of us who belong to Christ Jesus are all on the same level, saved in the same way, whether we're Jew or Greek, slave or free, man or

en only because of Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross. Our heart-attitude toward Him must be obedience (Hebrews 5:9), but also we can know that if our heart is right toward Him, we may ask His forgiveness whenever we may slip and fall (1 John 1:5-9) and He will again forgive and cleanse us. Psalm 51:12; Jeremiah 33:8; Titus 2:14.

This does not mean that we can freely sin because God will forgive us. No, because the mark of one who is right with God is that he will not continue to willfully sin by disobeying or ignoring any of God's commands. 1 John 2:3-6; 3:1-10.

3:12a Leviticus 18:5. That is how one must perform if he is to be saved by doing the works commanded in the Law. But no one has ever perfectly obeyed them, except Jesus. So the Jews and every-

one else need God's mercy in forgiveness. And God offers that mercy and forgiveness thru Jesus Christ.

3:13a Deuteronomy 21:23.

3:16a Jesus Christ.

3:16b Genesis 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Acts 3:25, and the note.

3:18a Romans 4:13; Genesis 12:2-3; 15:5; 17:5.

3:19a Romans 7:13.

3:19b ... *representing the people before God.*

3:21a Laws are never given for the purpose of justifying anyone. Laws merely state what must be done or must not be done, and what the penalty will be for disobedience.

3:22a Psalm 14:1-3; Romans 3:23; 6:23. And all continue to be under God's condemnation until they accept the way God has provided for their for-

woman.

²⁹And if you belong to Christ, then you are, in a special sense, true descendants of Abraham. And you are heirs of God, because you now believe^a and share in the promise God made to Abraham.

4 Now let me point out that as long as the son who has inherited his father's property is a child, he is treated no differently than a slave, even though he owns everything.

²He is constantly under the supervision of guardians and trustees until the time his father had previously set for him to take over the affairs of the estate.

³The same was true with us, when as infants in spiritual understanding, we were held in slavery by God's first instructions to the world about salvation.

⁴But when the time that God had set for our coming of age finally arrived, He sent His Son to us. He was born of a woman, and was Himself subject to the laws of God.

⁵He came to save those who had broken God's laws,^a so that we might be adopted by God as His children.^b

⁶And because you are now His children, God has sent the same Spirit into your hearts that is in the heart of His Son Jesus, causing you to tenderly and affectionately cry out, "O Father! My Father!"

⁷So you are no longer treated as a slave,^a because you are now a child of God! And if a child of God, then you are also an heir of God, all because of what Christ has done for you.

Paul's Concern for the Galatians

⁸As for you Gentiles who didn't know God, you were also slaves—slaves to those idols and gods of your mythology who by their very nature could never be gods.

⁹But now that you have come to know God—or rather, to realize that God knew and loved you—how can you even think of turning to the weak and bankrupt elementary rules of the Jewish religion? Do you really want to be enslaved all over again?

¹⁰You are now trying to gain God's friendship by paying special attention to Jewish religious days, months, seasons, and years.

¹¹I'm afraid for you! Can it be that all my hard work for you has been wasted effort?

¹²My dear brothers and sisters! I beg you to look at the truth as I now see it, because I also once believed as you now believe.

¹³It's not me you have wronged.^a You have never done that. You will remember that the first time I brought the Great News to you, I spent quite some time with you because I was weak and sickly.

¹⁴But even though my illness was a great burden to you, you didn't despise or reject me with contempt. You received me as if I were one of God's angels; yes, as if I were Jesus Christ Himself.

¹⁵So what's happened to the great blessings you then rejoiced in? I'm a witness to the fact that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to replace mine.

¹⁶Have I now become your enemy because I'm telling you the truth?

¹⁷These other men are anxious to gain your friendship, but not for your good. What they want is to separate you from us, in order to get you to eagerly support them.

¹⁸You were so right in your previous eagerness for the truth! But that's an attitude that must continue always, and not be evident only when I'm with you.

¹⁹Oh, my dear children! You are forcing me to go thru labor pains all over again, until Christ is formed in you.

²⁰How I wish I could be with you now. The very

givenness and victory over sin. Romans 7:24-25; 8:1-17.

3:22b See v 11, and the note there.

3:24a ... faith in *what Christ has done for us when He suffered and died to make it possible for God in righteousness to forgive our sins; and faith and acceptance of what Christ taught and commanded, both thru His personal teachings and His teachings thru His apostles.*

3:27a John 3:3,5; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 11:2; Galatians 6:15.

3:29a ... *just as Abraham did.* Genesis 15:6; Romans 8:16-17; Galatians 3:6.

4:5a ... *and were under sentence of a dreadful penalty* ...

4:5b God had in the first place made us like Himself, in His own image and likeness, to be His children. Genesis 1:26. But Satan has seduced all of us to rebel against our Father, and live under his corrupt control. And because of that rebellion, God's righteous Law has condemned all of us to both physical death and living spiritual death in Hell. But by Christ's sacrifice for us, He has made it possible for God to offer us forgiveness, and to adopt and restore us back into His family!

4:7a A slave of Satan, or a slave to the many, many rites and ceremonies of the Law of Moses.

4:13a It was God and His Son, Jesus, they had wronged, by now believing as they did. And they had also wronged others by their example. As the

tone in my message would be different than it was before. I'm truly perplexed and in doubt about you.

The Example of Hagar and Sarah

²¹ Listen to me, those of you who want to live under the Law: Aren't you aware of what the Law says?

²² It says that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and the other by a woman who had always been free.^a

²³ The son born to the slave woman was born in the usual way. But the son born to the free woman was born because God had promised he would be born.

²⁴ Symbolically, these women represent two agreements. Moses received one agreement from God at Mount Sinai, which gave birth to slavery to the Law. This is Hagar.

²⁵ Hagar represents not only the agreement given at Mount Sinai in Arabia, but she also corresponds to Jerusalem in Israel, which, together with her children, even today, live in slavery to the Law.

²⁶ But the Jerusalem in Heaven is free. And it's this Jerusalem that's the mother of all of us.^a

²⁷ Because it is written in the Scriptures:

Rejoice, O childless woman who has been unable to bear children! Lift up your voice and shout for joy, you who never felt the pains of childbirth! Because the deserted wife will have more children than the one who now lives with the husband.^a

²⁸ Now my brothers and sisters, just like Isaac, we are children who have been born because of God's promise.

²⁹ But the same thing is happening now that happened then: Those who have only natural birth are

persecuting those who have been reborn spiritually by the Spirit of God.^a

³⁰ But again, what does the Scripture say?

"Send the slave woman and her son away, because the son of the slave woman shall never be an heir together with the son of the free woman!"^a

³¹ Remember, dear friends, we are not children of the slave woman but of the one who is free!

Christ Set Us Free!

5 So take a firm and resolute stand for the liberty you gained when Christ set you free. Don't let anyone entangle you again with a yoke of slavery!

² Listen carefully to what I'm saying. I, Paul, state: If you become circumcised in order to gain God's favor, Christ's sacrifice won't do a thing for you.

³ I also warn every one of you: If you become circumcised in order to gain God's favor, you become obligated to obey everything else in the entire Law of Moses, at all times.^a

⁴ All of you who are now trying to get right with God by obeying the Law of Moses have been cut off from Christ!^a You have fallen away from His pardoning mercy, which you never did deserve.^b

⁵ But with the continued help of the Holy Spirit, we who belong to Christ because of our faith in what He has done for us, continue to eagerly wait for the fulfillment of the hope we have because of our peace with God thru Him.

⁶ Whether we are circumcised or not is of no importance or concern to those of us who are trusting in Christ for salvation. What does matter is faith that expresses itself in true love for God^a and for others.^b

saying goes, "No man goes to Hell alone. He always drags many others with him."

4:22a Genesis 16:1-16; 18:1-15; 21:1-21.

4:26a ... all of us who believe in Christ for our right standing with God.

4:27a Isaiah 54:1. Paul is saying, "Salvation by faith in God's promises was at one time believed by very few, but now this truth has more followers than those who trust in the Law of Moses."

4:29a John 1:13; 3:1-8; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23 and notes.

4:30a Genesis 21:10.

5:3a ... or perish.

5:4a We must now obey Christ, and trust in His sacrifice for our sins. See Hebrews 5:9. Yes, it is possible to be cut off from Christ. See Colossians 1:23, and the notes.

5:4b And yes, it is possible to fall away from all the

future that is yours in Christ. Again, see Colossians 1:23, and the notes.

5:6a One who truly loves God sincerely seeks to please Him in all things.

5:6b Mark 12:28-34.

5:9a Yeast here refers to false teaching.

5:10a We are to preach, teach, and persuade as we plant the seed of God's message in human hearts and minds, and then water and cultivate it; but it is God who makes things grow, even in human hearts. 1 Corinthians 3:7.

5:11a ... as some claim I am ...

5:11b It appears that these false teachers had been telling the Galatians that even Paul preached that circumcision was necessary for salvation. But Paul here most firmly denies this.

5:12a Castrate.

5:13a Besides disobeying God, you almost always

⁷You started out running so well. Who was it that got in your way and kept you from continuing to be convinced as to what the truth really is?

⁸That kind of persuasion isn't coming from God, who is calling you to freedom in Christ!

⁹Remember, it takes only a little yeast^a to change the whole batch of dough.

¹⁰But I still have full confidence in you. I'm sure the Lord will convince you that what I've told you here is the truth.^a As for the one who is troubling you, whoever he is, he will have to bear the judgment of God that he deserves.

¹¹And listen, brothers and sisters, if I'm still preaching that circumcision is necessary for salvation,^a why am I still being persecuted by the Jews? If I preached that, there wouldn't be any problem with the Jews about the cross of Christ.^b

¹²As for those who are causing you all this confusion by insisting you must be circumcised, I wish they would go all the way and emasculate^a themselves!

¹³Because, my brothers and sisters, you have been called to freedom. But you must not use your freedom to satisfy the various desires of your body and mind in a wrong way. Instead, you are to live for the good of one another in the spirit of love.^a

¹⁴Because the whole of the Old Testament Law is summed up in one command. It's this:

You are to love others in the same way that you love yourself.^a

¹⁵But if you keep on biting and tearing at each other, watch out or you'll completely destroy one another.

The War Between Flesh and Spirit

¹⁶That's why I challenge you to think, speak, and

act in obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be in any danger of gratifying any selfish or wrongful sensual desire.

¹⁷Because all selfish desires, and all sensual appetites and desires you are tempted to satisfy in a wrongful way are in violent opposition to the desires of the Holy Spirit for you. And the desires of the Holy Spirit for you are in opposition to the wrongful desires that tempt you. There's a constant war going on inside each of us. The Holy Spirit is waging war against our selfishness and against our temptations to satisfy our sensual appetites and desires in a wrongful way, in order to keep us from the wrong we are tempted to do.

¹⁸So then, if you allow yourselves to be led and controlled by the Holy Spirit,^a you are free from any need to put yourselves under the restraints and control of the Law of Moses.

¹⁹Now the actions produced by corrupt and unrenewed human nature are very evident. They include: adultery, sexual immorality, all forms of unclean sexual acts, loose living,

²⁰idolatry,^a witchcraft, hatred,^b fights caused by disagreements, jealousies, outbursts of rage,^c selfish ambition, violent disagreements, heresies,

²¹envy, murders, drunkenness, carousings, and all other such things. As I warned you before, I warn you again: Those who indulge in any such practice will not inherit the Kingdom of God!^a

²²But when you allow the Holy Spirit to control your life, the fruit He will produce in you will be: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

²³gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such behavior.^a

²⁴Those who belong to Christ have put to death

cheat and harm others when you satisfy your desires in a selfish and harmful way. Again, remember, God is always watching, and He pays wages both for the good and the evil you do. See 6:7, and note.

5:14a Leviticus 19:18.

5:18a Romans 8:5-13.

5:20a Idolatries include anything on which affections are passionately set; extravagant admiration of the heart. Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5.

5:20b Hatred is bitter dislike, abhorrence, and ill-will against anyone; tendency to hold grudges against or to be angry with someone.

5:20c Refers to turbulent passions; domestic and civil turmoils; rage; determined and lasting anger.

5:19-21a This Scripture is prophetic in nature, issuing a warning against sins of the flesh, proclaiming that a person who so indulges his flesh

will not inherit the Kingdom of God. In vss 22-24, Paul describes the true Christian as one who lives in obedience to what God has revealed in Scripture. Contrasting the two pictures should enable one to understand what is necessary for one to enter into eternal life with the Lord.

"This passage is full of fearful warning to those who indulge in any of these vices. Paul, inspired by God, has solemnly declared that such people cannot be saved. They cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven as they are. Nor is it desirable that they should. What kind of place would Heaven be if it were filled with adulterers, fornicators, idolaters, with the proud and envious, and with murderers and drunkards? To call such a place Heaven would be an abuse of the word.

"The human heart must be changed, or man cannot be saved. We should rejoice that such people

the wrongful passions and desires of the flesh.^a

²⁵ Since it is the Holy Spirit who has given us new life and hope, we should always let Him run and control our lives.

²⁶ And we shouldn't be conceited and boastful. If we are, we will only drive one another to jealousy and hard feelings.

Be Deeply Concerned for Others

6 My dear brothers and sisters, if a fellow Christian is being overpowered by some sin, it is the duty of those of you who are allowing the Holy Spirit to lead you, to restore that person.^a But do so gently, with humble consideration, realizing how concerned you yourself also need to be to keep from falling to temptation.

² So share each others burdens of conquering

cannot, with their present characters, be admitted to Heaven. We should rejoice that there is one world where these vices are unknown, a world of perfect and eternal purity."—*Barnes' Notes*.

5:22-23a Ordinarily every sinner who turns to Christ has a crisis experience when that one turns from self-indulgence to surrender to the love and will of God. This experience is called conversion. The final results of true conversion are the fruits of the Spirit, which are listed here. These fruits are seen in greater measure as one grows in the knowledge of God's message to mankind, yields to God the Holy Spirit, and is filled with the Spirit.

5:24a They have determined in their hearts that they will fully obey God, and not wrongfully satisfy any of their fleshly and selfish desires.

True Christians have turned their backs on their old life, crushing and crucifying it. But besides the initial crisis experience of turning from the old life to the new life in Christ, there must be a daily dying to sin and self.

We must make it our constant concern to crucify the corrupt passions and desires of our flesh. Christ will never recognize those as His own who surrender themselves as servants of sin!

On the other hand, we should display those fruits of the Spirit which Paul specifies here; this is just as much our duty as the crucifying of the flesh. It is altogether necessary in order to give evidence of our sincerity in the faith. It is not enough that we stop doing evil, but we must learn to do what's good and right. Our Christianity obliges us not only to die to sin but to come alive to doing right; not only to oppose the passions of the flesh, but also to produce the fruits of the Spirit as well.

Those who have this mind and determination can have the assurance that the promise of Heaven is

the temptations that so harass us. By doing so, we are doing what Christ commanded us to do.^a

³ Because anyone who thinks he's doing fine spiritually while he does little or nothing to help others, is only fooling himself.

⁴ Each of us, then, must carefully examine our own actions. And when we pass the test, we can rejoice in what we ourselves are doing, and not just in what others are doing.

⁵ Because on Judgment Day, everyone will be judged individually. Each of us will be held accountable for what we have done or have failed to do.

⁶ Now our concern for others must include sharing all of the good material things we are receiving with the one who is teaching us what God wants us to know.^a

theirs, as they both yield to God and understand that they need His constant leading and strength in order to be able to follow thru in this determination.

6:1a When a Christian appears to be losing interest in the things of the Lord, or is known to be indulging in sin, it is not enough merely to pray for that person. We are responsible before God, according to this Scripture, to go to that person, and talk to him and try to win him back to a vibrant life in the Lord.

We are sinning before the Lord if we neglect such people. We need to earnestly pray for them, yes, but praying is not enough. God will do His part, if we pray, but He expects us to do our part as well. We need to go to them and impress upon them the absolute need of walking closely with the Lord.

"True Christians do not commit sin deliberately, as a part or plan of their life. But they may be surprised by a sudden temptation, or urged on by impetuous or headstrong passions, as David and Peter were. Paul does not speak of the possibility of restoring a person who deliberately plans to sin. He doesn't even consider such a one to be a Christian."—*Barnes' Notes*. If such a person is a church member, he certainly needs to be visited and dealt with as one who needs to be born again.

6:2a John 13:34-35.

6:6a See 1 Corinthians 9:11-14.

6:7a Many people deceive themselves by believing they can fool God and get away with their sin. The warning here is that we will definitely harvest what we have sown. Many times we reap a harvest in this life. Even then, a harvest reaped here is just a first payment of what will be reaped in eternity if we continue in our sin. The same principle can be applied to reaping blessed rewards. God is faithful

⁷Don't be fooled! You can't turn up your nose at God and insult Him by ignoring what He's telling you to do or not do, and get away with it. You will harvest exactly what you have sown.^a

⁸The person who sows to please the cravings of his lower nature, will from that sowing reap destruction.^a But the one who sows what he knows is pleasing to God, will from God reap everlasting life.^b

⁹And let's not allow ourselves to grow weary of continuing to do what's good and right, because in due time we will definitely reap a most fulfilling, amazing, and wonderful harvest, if we don't get discouraged and give up.^a

¹⁰That's why we should use every opportunity we have to do good to everyone, and especially if they are followers of the Lord.^a

Final Warnings

¹¹*Notice how big the letters are when I write to you now with my own hand.*

¹²Those who are telling you that you must get circumcised are only concerned about what others will think. Their only reason for trying to compel you to be circumcised is so they won't be persecuted for preaching that the only way you can obtain God's forgiveness is by believing that Jesus suffered and died on the cross for you, as a sacrifice to God for your sins.

¹³But not even those who insist on circumcision obey the rest of the Law. Still, they want you to be circumcised so they can brag that you are their converts.

¹⁴May God help me never to brag about anything

to all His promises as well as to all His warnings.

Consider the laws of sowing. 1) You always reap what you sow! 2) When sowing spiritually and morally there is always a harvest as a result of your sowing. 3) You always reap more than you sow. For one result of sowing good seeds see Luke 6:38. See also Malachi 2:6.

6:8a If your body is involved in your selfishness and sin, it is in your body that you will be judged — both in this life and in The Judgment to come. You will be judged in relation to whatever you worship and for what purposes you have lived.

Again, salvation by works is not the point. But the clear teaching of the Scriptures as a whole is that “unless you are born again you will never see or experience the Kingdom of God.” Paul says it in other words in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “So when anyone in truth becomes a Christian, he becomes an altogether new person. His old goals and ambitions and his old way of living are things of the past. Listen! Everything about him or her is now new!” Is this the kind of conversion to Christ that you have experienced? It's the only accepted experience by God. Read *The Amazing Story of God*—Appendix 247, page 520.

6:8b What's Paul saying here? Hasn't he just been saying that everlasting life is obtained by faith in what Christ has done for us? But now it sounds like there are some works involved. The answer is that two things are necessary for salvation, not just one. The two things are justification and regeneration. *We are justified* by God when we put our faith in Christ. *We are regenerated* by an act of the will, being willing to allow the Holy Spirit to now regenerate us and make us into a new person—one who loves and obeys God.

Jesus called regeneration being “born again”.

James 2:14 and Romans 2:13 state that a faith that does not work does not save. Such a “faith” is false, and not true saving faith at all. See also 2 Corinthians 5:17; Acts 26:20. And notice that in Romans 6:23 Paul is addressing Christians, as well as unbelievers, when he warns, “The wages for sinning is death.” For further information on regeneration see Appendix 211, page 476.

* * *

“So now, turn from your sinning and be converted, so that the record of your sins may be blotted out.”—Peter, in Acts 3:19. And as Paul said in Acts 20:21, “*You must both turn from your sinning and obey God, and believe in our Lord Jesus the Messiah as your Savior.*”

6:9a The rewards God has promised those who continue faithfully are almost too good to be true. But they are true, because it is God who has promised!

Many begin well, *but because of their anxious concern about their earthly problems, and being deceived by wealth and by desire for many other things*, the word of God is choked out of their lives, until they become unfruitful. Mark 4:19. We constantly need to keep our minds and hearts centered upon the ultimate goal of eternal life—life that will never end—a life of glory and riches and endless joy with the Lord! Unless we constantly remind ourselves that we are only pilgrims here, we will be tempted to slight our Lord and neglect the salvation and other needs of our fellow human beings.

What an awful loss many will sustain because they took their eyes off the goal and looked instead at the short-lived joys, comforts, and pleasures of this brief and uncertain time.

6:10a Our main concern for our fellow Christians should be to help them grow spiritually. But that

except about what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross. And because of Him, the things of the world have become of little importance to me, and those who love the world don't consider me to be of any importance either.

¹⁵Being circumcised or not being circumcised has nothing to do with our being included in Christ's Kingdom. The only thing that does matter is that we become altogether new and different people than we were.^a

¹⁶May God's peace and mercy rest upon all of you who believe and live according to this truth. May the same be true for all of God's true people everywhere.

¹⁷I don't want to be troubled about this matter

any more. I bear in my body the scars from the beatings I have received because of my stand for the freedom we have from the Jewish Law thru the Lord Jesus.

¹⁸My brothers and sisters, may the Lord Jesus Christ be especially gracious and big-hearted toward all of you. Indeed! So be it!

Most Sincerely,
Paul

should not be our only concern for them.

6:15a 2 Corinthians 5:17, and note; John 3:1-8.

My

dear brothers and sisters, if a fellow Christian is being overpowered by some sin, it is the duty of those of you who are allowing the Holy Spirit to lead you, to restore that person. But do so gently, with humble consideration, realizing how concerned you yourself also need to be to keep from falling to temptation.

²So share each others burdens of conquering the temptations that so harass us. By doing so, we are doing what Christ commanded us to do.

³Because anyone who thinks he's doing fine spiritually while he does little or nothing to help others, is only fooling himself.

⁴Each of us, then, must carefully examine our own actions. And when we pass the test, we can rejoice in what we ourselves are doing, and not just in what others are doing.

⁵Because on Judgment Day, everyone will be judged individually. Each of us will be held accountable for what we have done or have failed to do.

—Galatians 6:15

Paul's Letter to the EPHESIANS

Dear Ones In Ephesus:

This is from Paul, chosen by God to be a messenger of Jesus Christ.

Greetings to all of you there in Ephesus^a who have truly dedicated yourselves to God and are faithful followers of Christ Jesus!

²May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ continue to give you peace of mind and heart.^a And in undeserved supernatural ways, may They take care of all your needs, and enable you to live the Christian life day by day.^b

We Are So Rich Thru Christ

³Praise and thanksgiving should literally flow from our hearts to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because God has given us every spiritual blessing He has in Heaven,^a all because of who and where we now are in union with Christ.

⁴Even before He made the world,^a He loved and chose as His very own those of us who would come to Him thru Jesus^b so that we might be holy and

blameless, both in our standing with Him and in the way we would live before Him.

⁵And because of His great love for us,^a He decided even then that because of what Jesus Christ would do for us, He would bring us right into His family as His very own adopted children.^b And He made all these plans concerning us for no other reason than His own great delight in doing so.

⁶So let us indeed praise God for His most marvelous undeserved mercy and kindness, and for making us the objects of His kindness by forgiving us and receiving us to Himself by means of His Son who is so dear to Him!^a

⁷We have been delivered from sin's guilt and penalty by means of the blood Jesus shed for us. As a result, God is now able to offer us forgiveness for all our wrongdoings. All that He did for us shows how overwhelmingly great His undeserved kindness and mercy is toward us.^a

⁸He is acting in perfect wisdom and understanding^a as He offers us His superabounding kindness, and then waiting until now to reveal to

1:1a Ephesus was a hub city for commerce, and pagan religion centered around the worship of Artemis (Acts 19:23-41), whose temple in Ephesus was said to be one of the seven wonders of the world. It was in itself "big business". For background material on this letter, read Acts 18:19-21; 19:1-41; 20:17-38; 1 Corinthians 16:8-9.

1:2a God gives wonderful peace of mind and heart to those who turn from living in sin to living to please Him. They have the wonderful assurance from God's word and in their own spirits (Romans 8:16-17) that they are forgiven and will have God's blessing in this life and a glorious future with Him forever.

1:2b See Philippians 2:13 note.

1:3a Pardon, peace, redemption, adoption, the first payment of the Spirit, etc.

1:4a 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8.

1:4b Romans 8:28-30; 1 Peter 1:2.

1:5a What does God's love have to do with helping you succeed in living a Christian life and reaching Heaven? See Appendix 215, page 480.

1:5b Are God's children already chosen? God has decided that all who come to Him thru Jesus Christ will become members of His family, adopted by Him

as His children. But who will become a child of God is left up to each individual. God has given each of us a free will. It is we who will decide whether we will receive Christ as our Lord and Savior, or reject Him. Romans 8:28-30; Revelation 22:17; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9.

1:6a But God loves you just as much as He loves His Son Jesus. Jesus said so. See John 17:23.

1:7a God's great desire is to grant you forgiveness and bring you into His presence as one of His children, to live with Him forever. He has such great things planned for you! 1 Corinthians 2:9.

However, although God's great love has caused Him to do all this for you thru Jesus, His wisdom and righteousness keep Him from forgiving you and giving you eternal life unless you willingly turn from your sinning and ask Him to forgive you and make a new person out of you thru a born-again experience by His Holy Spirit. Do it now! Ask God to come into your life and take full charge, and really mean it.

1:8a ... *as seen by the way He devised a plan by which He could save us, still honor His own law, and then conceal that plan until the right time to reveal it* ...

us the secret of what He had been planning all along.

⁹As we said,^a He decided upon this plan to fulfill His own great desire. And the plan and purpose originated in His own mind, without any outside help or counsel.

¹⁰God has determined that when the destined time arrives, a single Ruler will have charge of all that is in Heaven and on earth. And that Ruler will be Christ^a!

¹¹Because of our relationship to Christ, we also have obtained an incredible inheritance.^a And God has already decided what that inheritance will be for each of us,^b in accordance with His own foreknowledge, plan, and purpose, which is always to fulfill His own desire and will.

¹²So those of us who were the first to put our hope in Christ, have now been sent out to glorify and praise our God as we tell others about His now-revealed, amazing plan.

¹³And when you people heard the true message, the Great News about how you could be saved,^a you also believed in Jesus. And when you believed in Him, God put His seal of ownership upon you by giving you the Holy Spirit whom He had promised.^b

¹⁴The Holy Spirit is given to us^a as a kind of small down payment on our inheritance, until Christ comes back and takes full possession of what He purchased. Truly, the conclusion of our redemption will be the crowning tribute to God's glory.

Paul's Prayer

¹⁵So after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and of your love for all who truly love God,

¹⁶I haven't stopped yet in my thanks to God for

you.

¹⁷I'm always praying for you, asking the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, our most glorious Father, that He will give you the spiritual gifts of wisdom and deep understanding, so that your knowledge of Him will be greatly increased.

¹⁸I'm also praying that the eyes of both your minds and hearts^a will be able to clearly see and understand how utterly brilliant our future is since He called us into fellowship with Himself, and how utterly great the magnitude is of the gloriously rich inheritance that God has planned for those who are truly dedicated to Him.

¹⁹May you also realize how extremely great God's power is. He is already using His great power on behalf of those of us who believe in Him,

²⁰in the same powerful way that He worked on behalf of Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him right next to Himself at His right hand in Heaven.

²¹When He placed Him there, He elevated Him to the highest conceivable dignity and honor, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion among both men and angels, and above every title of authority that can be named, not only in the present order of things but also in that which is to come.

²²He has put everyone and everything, including all in the Church, under Christ's authority.

²³The Church^a is His body. He completely fills it, which He does in regard to everything else as well.

We Are Now Alive Thru Christ

2As for you, you were spiritually dead because of your disobedience and other sins.

²At that time, you lived just like the people of the world live today. You were under the control of the

1:9a ...verse 5...

1:10a 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 19:16.

1:11a Romans 8:16-17; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:10; 20:6; 22:5.

1:11b And just consider the incredible greatness of that incredible inheritance—what great plans God must have for each of us when you think of the fact that *He loves each of us in the same way and to the same extent that he loves His Son Jesus!* John 17:23. How incredibly rich we are in Christ! Shout for joy, and sing praises to our wonderful God and Father!

1:13a ... saved from God's judgment because of your sin, ...

1:13b John 14:15-17; 16:5-15; Acts 19:1-7.

1:14a Luke 11:13.

1:18a The message of the Great News needs to make a terrific impact on both our minds and hearts in regard to the utter greatness of the inheritance we have in God. Some Greek texts use *minds* here, and others use *hearts*. Both are right.

1:23a The Church is the people, not a building. Christ lives within His people.

2:2a Satan.

2:3a ... *who continue to ignore God and His message to them.*

2:6a Revelation 3:21.

2:8a Many teach that even our faith is a gift from God, and is not from ourselves. And they use this verse as one of their proof texts. But the Greek word *touto*, which translated is *that*, is a neuter pronoun, which must refer back to the previous verb, which is the word *saved*. So it's our *salvation* that is a gift

prince of the power of the air;^a the spirit who even now is at work in the hearts of all who refuse to obey God.

³All of us at one time lived for the same purpose as they, living to satisfy the cravings of our depraved nature. Our whole concern was to fulfill the desires of our mind and body. Because of our evil nature, we were doomed to experience God's awful wrath in judgment, just like all others.^a

⁴But God is so merciful! And because of His great love for us, even when we were spiritually dead because of our sins,

⁵He has now made it possible for us to become alive, when He raised Christ from the dead. You are saved by God's freely given, undeserved mercy.

⁶So He has raised us up together with Christ from the dead, and has given us a place of honor in Heaven right along with Christ Jesus.^a

⁷He did all this so that in the ages to come He might point to us as examples of how extremely generous He was in granting us undeserved mercy when He showed His kindness toward us because of what Christ Jesus had done for us.

⁸So it is only because of God's undeserved kindness that you have been saved by your faith in Christ. And that salvation^a is not something you can work out for yourself. It is a gift from God!

⁹You can't work for it, so no one can brag about what he did to save himself.

¹⁰Because God is the One who worked for us^a and now continues to work in us.^b Thru Christ Jesus He made new people of us, so that we would now do what is right and good. God's plan from the very beginning was that when He forgave us, we would obey Him and do what is honorable and right.^c

Jew and Gentile Now One in Christ

¹¹And remember, that you were Gentiles^a by birth. You were ridiculed as *the uncircumcised* by the Jews, who take great pride in calling themselves *the circumcised* (referring to what human hands do to the body).

¹²At that time you had no connection at all with Christ. You had no citizenship in Israel, no share in the promises God had made to them. You were lost in the world, without hope and without God.^a

¹³But now, you who once were so far from God have been brought near by means of what Christ Jesus did when He shed His blood as a sacrifice to God for you.

¹⁴Christ Himself is the One who has now brought us together in peace, making Jews and Gentiles one people, one family. He broke down the hate between us, the wall that separated us.

¹⁵By the sacrifice of His own body He did away with the Jewish Law with its rules, regulations, and ceremonies, which had caused both Jews and Gentiles to treat each other with such scorn and hatred. His purpose was to create from the two people one new body of people in union with Himself, thereby making peace.

¹⁶By means of His death on the cross, Christ made it possible for everyone—Jew or Gentile—to be restored to friendship with God, and become a part of His one new body of people. So their hatred for each other is put to death when they discover they must now come to God by the same Savior.

¹⁷And our Savior came and announced the Great News about peace with God, both to you Gentiles, who were far away from God, and also to the Jews, who were near Him.

from God, not our faith! It is we who must exercise faith in God's promises. Romans 10:17 tells us that faith comes when we read the word of God and as we listen to the word of God being read and explained. Only in this way do verses 8-10 here make any sense together. (See *The Science of Biblical Hermeneutics* by Dr. R. T. Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, page 75, paragraph 4).

Our part in our salvation is to *turn from our sinning and obey God, and believe in our Lord Jesus—the Messiah, as our Savior*, as Paul taught in Acts 20:21. God has done His part, and we are now to both *believe* and *obey*. See Romans 2:1-10; 6:16, and Hebrews 5:9 note.

This is not to be confused with the gift of *special faith* (1 Corinthians 12:9), which God gives to certain followers of His to be used in His service.

How does one receive faith? See Romans 10:11, and the note there.

2:10a ... *thru the sacrifice of Christ* ...

2:10b See Philippians 2:13 note.

2:10c John 15:1-10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 4:21-24.

2:11a All who are not Jews.

2:12a "The ungodly person lives and feels and acts as if there were no God ... He makes decisions with no concern about God's will ... He puts no confidence in God's promises, and doesn't fear when He threatens. He's a traveler to eternity without a God! ... He has no Father in times of trial, no counselor in perplexity, no hope at the time of death."—*Albert Barnes' Notes*. But he must stand before God at The Judgment and answer to Him for his worthless life.

¹⁸Because it's thru Him that both of us are now able to enter into the presence of the Father, with the help of the one and the same Holy Spirit.

¹⁹So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners! You are fellow citizens of Heaven along with all others who are dedicated to God. You are members of God's Royal Family!

²⁰*Your very hope of eternal life and amazing destiny*^a is like a building that's been built on the solid foundation laid down by the apostles and prophets,^b with Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone.

²¹So the whole building is being put together by and upon Christ. And it's continuing to grow into a house that is holy and is totally dedicated to the Lord God.

²²And you also are being built and knit together with all others in union with Christ as a place of residence in which God is living by His Spirit.

God's Revelation to Paul

3 In fact, I'm now a prisoner because I obeyed the command of Jesus the Messiah to tell you Gentiles the Great News.^a

²Surely you've all heard about the assignment God gave me to tell you about the undeserved favor He is now offering all mankind.

³I have already written you briefly about how, by special revelation, God revealed truth to me that was before unknown.

⁴By reading it, you will understand what I know about this previously hidden truth about Christ.

⁵It had not been revealed to man in previous generations in the clear way it has now been revealed by the Holy Spirit to God's dedicated apostles and prophets.

⁶The truth now revealed is that the Gentiles can be fellow heirs of God with Israel. They are eligible to be united in the same body—Christ's Church. They can all now receive all the blessings God promises in the Great News about Christ.

⁷And thru favor I certainly did not deserve, God

gave me the privilege of being His messenger of this Great News, with His power working so effectively thru me.

⁸I'm the least worthy of all the followers of Christ, but God was so very kind in sending me out to tell people everywhere about the riches we have because of Christ, riches so unsearchable that one can't even begin to fully explore them.^a

⁹My assignment is to make all people see what common interest and fellowship all of us now can enjoy because of the truth that has now been revealed. God has always had this plan hidden away in His own mind, even before the beginning of the ages when He created all things thru Jesus Christ.^a

¹⁰His plan from the very beginning was that now, by means of His invitation to people of all nations to become His people, He might reveal to the authorities and rulers in heavenly realms the inexhaustible features of His wisdom.^a

¹¹They can see that God's great plan and firm intention thruout the ages has now been accomplished thru Christ Jesus our Lord.

¹²And thru our faith in the Lord Jesus, we can now approach God and come boldly into His very presence and be assured of His warm welcome!

¹³So for that reason alone, I don't want you to lose courage and give up because of all the sufferings I've gone thru for you. Instead, you should feel encouraged and honored that you have a friend who is willing to suffer for you so that you also might fearlessly remain faithful, whatever the cost.^a

Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians

¹⁴Because of all I have just said, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁵Because from the Father comes every true concept of fatherhood, both in Heaven and on earth.

¹⁶My prayer to Him for you is that from the abundance of His glorious power, that can never be exhausted, He will powerfully strengthen each of

2:20a Implied.

2:20b ... upon their teachings and revelations, received from God ...

3:1a Acts 9:1-19; 21:27 to 22:22.

3:8a 1 Corinthians 2:9; 2 Corinthians 4:17; 12:4; Ephesians 1:11.

3:9a John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2.

3:10a The angels in Heaven may have wondered for many centuries why God had taken such interest in the Jews when all people were His creation.

3:13a Acts 14:22.

3:16a The body needs to be strengthened every day. The same is true of the soul. It needs a constant supply of God's grace, or it withers and decays. The soul is fed by meeting with God in prayer (and by times of fasting and prayer), and by reading His word. You will then be strengthened to bear trials, to perform your duties, to glorify His name.

3:17a It is not enough that you think about Him, and even talk about Him. He must be invited to come into your heart, by His Spirit, to take absolute control of your life.

3:19a See 4:13.

you from the center of your being to the very depths of your soul with His Holy Spirit.^a

¹⁷I also pray that by faith you will throw the doors to your hearts wide open to receive Christ to live within you.^a And may you be deeply rooted in your love for Him, firm and unwavering.

¹⁸Then you will be able to begin to fully realize, together with all others who are dedicated to God, just how immeasurably wide and long and deep and high Christ's love for you really is.

¹⁹May you indeed come to know and experience His love, although the love He has for us goes far beyond our ability to presently understand. As a result of such love, may you be full of God and filled with all that God desires for your life.^a

²⁰May God be praised, as we consider the fact that He is able to do extremely and abundantly more than we can ever ask^a or even imagine, by His power that's already at work within us.

²¹Because of all He has done and continues to do, may He be glorified in the Church thru Christ Jesus thruout all generations, for all ages to come! So be it!

One Church, Many Parts

4 Therefore,^a as a prisoner because of preaching the message the Lord gave me, I plead with all of you to live your lives in a manner worthy of the great-hearted invitation God has extended to you.

²In a gentle and humble spirit of love,^a always be patient and understanding toward each other.

³Always be careful not to lose the spirit of unity. Let the peace you all enjoy because of Christ be the glue that binds you together.

⁴Remember, you are all members of the one and only true family of God. And there is only one Holy Spirit, just as we have all been called^a to the one sure hope of the same glorious future.

⁵There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

⁶Above all else, there is only one God, who is the Father^a of all of us. He is the Ruler over all, by whose wisdom and power all things exist and are

sustained. Think of it, He, the greatest of all, has chosen to live within each of us!

⁷But while that's true, each of us have received different gifts. And Christ is the One who has decided what gifts each will receive, and the magnitude of each gift.^a

⁸That's why David prophesied:

When Christ went up to Heaven, He brought with Him many who had been captives of Satan, and gave gifts to His followers who were still on earth.^a

⁹Now what do the words "Christ went up to Heaven" mean, except that He first came down to earth and experienced the lowest state of humiliation here?

¹⁰So the One who came down is also the One who went back up, far above all the heavens, in order that He might fill all of God's creation with His presence.^a

¹¹Then He appointed some of us as apostles, others as prophets, others evangelists, and others as pastors and teachers.

¹²He appointed these to their various positions for the purpose of perfecting God's people for the work He has for each of us to do, so that everyone in the Church body might be built up and strengthened in their faith and unconditional surrender to Christ.

¹³God's ultimate purpose in all of this is that we may all become united in our understanding and acceptance of the truth about our salvation, and in our knowledge of the Son of God. He wants us to become fully mature, developing in faith and moral character until we become wholly and altogether like Christ.

¹⁴He wants us to stop acting like little children, continually being carried about by every wave that comes along by the shifting wind of every teaching that scheming men put forth, who in their craftiness even systematize their false teachings.

¹⁵Instead, if we continue to share the truth with each other^a with loving concern, each of us will mature in every way that is pleasing to Christ, who

3:20a We can never ask too much if we ask with the honest goal that only God will be glorified in the answer.

4:1a Therefore, *since God has done so much for you, revealing His glorious plan which includes you Gentiles, calling you into His Kingdom, ...*

4:2a ... *as you think of all that God has put up with regarding you, ...*

4:4a Romans 8:28-30.

4:6a 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Timothy 2:5.

4:7a 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. By experience we

know that by earnest prayer, and by using and exercising our talents and gifts, we can increase their magnitude and effectiveness.

4:8a Psalm 68:18.

4:10a Which means—that He might fill all things by His influence, and overrule all by His wisdom and power. Christ, as God, is present everywhere. See 1:23. Christ ascended so that He might pervade and energize the universe, exercise regal sovereignty, and provide His Church with the necessary things to grow, mature, and evangelize.

is our Head.

¹⁶From Him the whole body of His followers receives the ability to grow and become all that it should be, as it works together unselfishly in true love for one another. And all the parts must be connected and knit together at every joint so that each part is able to strengthen the others. Because each part is able to function properly and be fully effective only as it receives full cooperation, with all the other parts putting forth the full measure of strength and energy of which each is capable. In that way, the body of Christ will cause itself to grow by means of love.

Throw the Old Life Overboard!

¹⁷That's why, as a follower of the Lord, I challenge you to stop living like the other Gentiles do, in the stupidity of their empty understanding!

¹⁸Their minds have become utterly darkened in regard to their understanding of what life is all about.^a They have no idea of the incredibly great rewards^b that can be theirs when one lives for and with God, because in their ignorance they have stubbornly hardened their hearts toward Him.

¹⁹Most of them have gone past the point of feeling any guilt at all about their evil lives. Having totally given themselves over to impure and corrupt living, they go all the way in their rebellion, and are forever craving new ways to satisfy the lusts of their flesh and mind that are never truly satisfied.

²⁰But Christ didn't teach you to live like that.

²¹If you have indeed listened carefully to what Jesus taught, if you have learned the true meaning of what He said, you know that the truth He taught was this:

²²You are to rebel against your old way of living. Throw it overboard! Be done with it! Utterly abandon your old self, which is constantly being corrupted and ruined by its deceitful desires!^a

4:15a Romans 10:9-10.

4:18a Insisting on indulging in sin is what has caused this darkness of understanding.

4:18b 1 Corinthians 2:9.

4:22a 2 Corinthians 5:17.

4:23a 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 3:1-7.

4:24a Jesus never taught that He would make allowance for mere selective obedience on the part of His followers. Mark 8:34-38.

4:25a Everything you say or do at any time or in any place affects the rest of the Church, for good or evil.

4:27a ... *by letting your anger continue to eat*

Rules for the New Life

²³Only when you have an entirely new attitude toward the awful rebellion against God that sin really is, and realize the sure judgment of God upon every sinner, can you live in the state of being the new person that God demands that you be.^a

²⁴So take upon your person the new self. After all, you were created to be like God! So live a life of genuine honesty, purity, faithfulness, goodness, and holiness, resulting from sincere obedience to all the truth to be found in God's word.^a

²⁵So put all lying out of your lives. Always speak the truth to one another, because we are all members of the one body of Christ.^a

²⁶Be angry in a just cause, but don't sin as a result of your anger. Don't go to bed angry, without getting rid of it.

²⁷Don't let the devil get a toehold in your life!^a

²⁸The one who has been stealing must no longer steal! Instead, he must get an honest job and put his hands to work at doing something useful. Then he will have something to give to those in need.

²⁹Stop taking part in foul, critical gossiping, or foolish talk. Speak only that which will encourage or build others up, according to their needs, for in that way you will benefit instead of harm those who listen.

³⁰Don't say or do anything that will cause grief to the Holy Spirit of God. After all, He is the One who has placed His seal on you,^a looking forward to the Day when you will finally be reclaimed.^b

³¹You must also rid yourselves of all bitterness, all violent outbursts of anger, all slander, and shouting accusations, along with every other form of malice.

³²Instead, you must always be kind to one another, tenderhearted, always forgiving one another in

away at you.

4:30a See note on 2 Corinthians 1:22.

4:30b ... *from death and corruption.*

4:32a Matthew 6:12-15; 18:21-35.

5:3a The Greek word means voluntary sexual intercourse between persons of the opposite sex who are not lawfully married to each other. The meaning of the word also includes homosexuality, bestiality, and all other sexual immorality.

5:3b Romans 1:24-30; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5-6.

5:5a No matter how much faith a person may claim to have in Christ as Savior, living in sin will

the same great-hearted and generous way that God has forgiven you^a because of Christ.

5 So always do what God would do in your situation, just as a much-loved child imitates his father.

² Live a life in which every decision is made by love, in the same way that Christ's great love for us caused Him to be willing to offer up Himself in death on our behalf, as a sacrifice that was like fragrant incense to God.

³ But sexual immorality,^a or any other kind of impurity,^b or greed, must never be mentioned among you in such a way as to imply that such practices are natural for one who claims to be dedicated to God.

⁴ Also, you must not indulge in shameful or foolish talk, or dirty jokes, which are not at all proper for those who are to be like Jesus. Instead, talk about the many things for which you are truly thankful.

⁵ Because you can be sure of this: No one who indulges in sexual immorality, or is impure in any other way, or is a covetous person—that is, anyone who loves and worships money and the things of this world more than he loves God—will ever enter Heaven or have any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God.^a

Live as People Who Have the Light

⁶ Don't let anyone fool you by false arguments when they encourage you to take part in such sinning, for it's because of just such sinning that God's anger in judgment continues to fall on those who are disobedient to Him.^a

⁷ So don't have any part at all in any of their sins!

⁸ At one time you lived in darkness, but then the Lord turned the light on for you! So now you must live like children of God, who have God's light by which to walk.

⁹ Because the kind of fruit the Holy Spirit wants

to produce in your lives, now that you have received light, includes all that is good and right and truthful.^a

¹⁰ So always carefully and prayerfully examine whatever action you are considering, to make sure that the Lord would be happy to have you go ahead with it.

¹¹ But have nothing to do with those evil deeds of darkness, which don't benefit you or anyone else in any way. Instead, you must make a practice of warning everyone of how deadly and destructive those sins really are.^a

¹² Because it would be shameful to even describe here or talk about the things those people are doing in secret.

¹³ But everything that's being exposed for what it really is, is being exposed by means of the light.^a Because only the light^a can cause things to be seen as they really are.

¹⁴ That's why God's man continues to shout the warning:

Wake up, you who are asleep! Get up from among those who are dead, and Christ will shine on you!^a

¹⁵ So you must be very careful how you live. Don't live like the foolish do, but as those who are wise.

¹⁶ Be aggressive and seize every opportunity to act and speak out for God, because there are so many charms and temptations that would lead you away from the proper use of your time, and that would draw you away into sin.

¹⁷ That's enough reason not to be foolish, but to always try hard to understand and know exactly what the Lord wants you to do and say.

¹⁸ You must stop getting drunk on wine, which is the ruin of so many lives. But do be in a state of continually drinking in and being filled with the Holy Spirit.^a

¹⁹ Then you will be a constant inspiration to each other thru songs of praise and hymns and other spiritual songs, while from your hearts you are

earn him a place in Hell with the unbelievers of every stripe. Luke 12:46.

5:6a See Colossians 3:6, and the note there regarding the same warning; also Galatians 6:7; Hebrews 12:5-8; Revelation 3:19.

5:9a Galatians 5:22-23.

5:11a Participation in them leads to Hell! 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21. It is likewise a gross sin to fail to warn others of the deadliness of such sins.

5:13a People need the light of God's truth to shine

into their souls to reveal to them how wicked they really are, the consequences of that wickedness, and the remedy thru faith in Christ as their Savior and in surrender to His will.

5:14a ... with His blessings, with the end result that you will live with Him eternally.

5:18a You receive the continual filling of the Holy Spirit only by daily communion with God thru prayer and meditation, and by daily reading His word and rejoicing in all that it reveals of God—His glory, His promises, teachings, warnings, and com-

joyfully singing and praising the Lord.

²⁰And several times a day, give thanks to our God and Father for everything you have received from Him thru our Lord Jesus Christ.^a

Wives and Husbands

²¹Always be submissive to one another, as this is so pleasing to God.

²²Wives, always submit yourselves to your own husbands in the same way that you do to the Lord,^a

²³because your husband has authority over you just as Christ has authority over His Church, which is His body, of which He is the Savior and Protector.

²⁴So just as the Church is under the authority of Christ, in the same way wives are to submit to their husbands in everything.^a

²⁵And husbands, you must always love your wives in the same sacrificial way that Christ loved the Church.^a He gave His very life for her!

²⁶Then, in order that He might make the people of His Church pure, He used His words as water to wash and cleanse them.^a

²⁷He did this so that He might present to Himself a glorious Church, one having no stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, being pure and unpolluted.^a

²⁸So husbands should love their wives in the same way that they love their own bodies. A man who loves his wife is really loving himself.

²⁹After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he cherishes and takes care of it, in the same way that Christ takes care of the Church.

³⁰Because we are the various parts of His body. We are His “flesh” and “bones”.

³¹**That's why a man is to leave his father and mother and be united to his wife. The two are then to become as one person.^a**

mands.

5:20a Thru His Son, God created us, saved us, and sustains us.

5:22a The wife's submission is a demonstration of her obedience to Christ. Obedience offered to the husband is obedience offered to Christ.

5:24a In everything that is not contrary to the will of God.

5:25a Just as Christ practiced self-denial and gave His life to save His Church and now lives to protect and preserve her, in the same way the husband is to be the savior and protector of his wife. When a wife has such a loving, sacrificing and protecting husband, she doesn't find it hard to obey him.

5:26a We are *justified* by faith that Christ died for us, and rose again. We are *regenerated* (born

³²There's a great secret truth in that Scripture. I see it as applying to the relationship between Christ and His Church.

³³But it also applies to you. Each of you men must love your wife in a very special way. You must always love her in the same way that you love yourself. And wives, you should always highly revere your husband.

Children and Parents

6 Children, you must always obey your parents in a way that will honor the Lord, because this is the right thing to do.

²**Always honor your father and mother.** This is the first of God's Ten Commandments that's given with a promise.

³And the promise is: **If you honor your father and mother, things will go well with you, and you will have a long life on the earth.^a**

⁴And, parents, you must never be severe, demanding and expecting so much from your children that they rebel against you in anger; instead, you must always discipline and instruct them in the loving, considerate, and wise way that Jesus would if He were in your place.^a

Employees and Employers

⁵Employees, always obey your human employer.^a Respect and fear him, and have real heart-concern to serve him well. Work as if you were working for Christ.^b

⁶Don't be faithful only when the boss is watching, as some do who are only concerned about making a good impression. But work as servants of Christ, working from the heart in the way you believe God would have you work.

⁷In other words: Put your whole heart into your work, as if you were serving the Lord, and not men,

again) by allowing His words to cleanse and renew our minds and hearts. Both justification and regeneration are necessary for us to be saved. Luke 24:47; Acts 20:20-21; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:2; Revelation 16:15.

5:27a Not all members of the visible church are members of Christ's true Church. It is in this life that all of this purification is to take place, because Christ will not present to Himself any who have not been *made pure by allowing God's words to cleanse and purify them.* v 26. Don't judge yourself by others who claim Christ, but by what the word of God says.

5:31a Genesis 2:24.

6:3a Deuteronomy 5:16

6:4a Love spoken and love shown are the greatest

⁸because you know it's the Lord who will reward you for the good you have done, whether you're working for others or serving others in your own business or profession.

⁹And employers, always treat your employees with the same heart-concern that you expect from them. Don't threaten them, because you know that the One who is both your Lord and theirs is watching from Heaven, and He has no favorites.^a

Serve and Fight from Strength

¹⁰Finally, my brothers and sisters, you must continue to draw your strength from the mighty arsenal of the Lord's power.

¹¹You must put on all the armor that God provides, if you are to be able to stand up against all the skill and cunning snares of the devil.

¹²Because we are not fighting against beings made of flesh and blood, but against the rulers of evil spirits, against powerful forces, against the rulers that have produced the present evil darkness of this world, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm.

¹³So you will need to put on all the armor that God provides, if you are to be able to stand and fight against these enemies in these evil times. And after you've made every preparation for battle, take your position and effectively resist every attack.

¹⁴In order to successfully stand against these evil forces you will need to buckle the wide belt of truth^a around your waist. Then you will need the breastplate of always aiming to please the Lord.^b

¹⁵And your feet will require the shoes of eagerness to prepare and run with the message—the Great News that everyone can now have peace with God.

¹⁶In addition to all of this, take up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to deflect all the

flaming arrows your evil enemy will hurl at you.

¹⁷And for a helmet, be sure you have well-founded reasons for the assurance you have of your salvation.^a For a sword, you will need to use the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸Pray about every situation by means of all kinds of prayer and earnest pleading.^a Pray in the Spirit, and especially be watchful and vigilant in earnest and persevering prayer for all who are dedicated to God.

¹⁹And pray for me. Pray that as I open my mouth to speak I will be given the words to use and boldness to speak them, as I share the secret about the Great News.

²⁰Although I'm Christ's authorized messenger, I'm in chains because of preaching that Great News. So, pray that I may continue to be fearless when I speak, which is the way I should always be.

Final Greetings

²¹But so you may also know my true situation and how I'm doing, I'm sending Tychicus to you for the special purpose of giving you a full report. He's a dear brother and a faithful servant of the Lord.

²²Besides bringing you the news from here, I want you to receive the encouragement he will be to you.

²³May the peace that Christ purchased for you both fill you and thrill you. And may God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ grant to all you dear friends true love to accompany your faith.

²⁴May God in a most special way bless all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love that is unfading, indestructible, and imperishable. So be it!

Most sincerely,
Paul

powers on earth, aside from the power of God.

6:5a ... or the one he has appointed to supervise your work.

6:5b ... for in reality you are.

6:9a The same applies to all business and professional people. The quality of goods or service, the prices charged your customers, patients, or clients, the heart-concern you have for your customers, patients, clients, employees and their families—all of this is observed by God and judged by Him. 2 Chronicles 16:9a; Proverbs 5:21; 15:3; Matthew 7:12.

6:14a You must have strong convictions as to what the truth really is before you can convince others. And the truth is available only as you are

willing to spend time in reading and studying God's message. Only as you arm yourself with the truth will you have bold and boundless confidence in your stand. *Truth* here can also include your own sincerity and honesty.

6:14b Integrity, holiness, purity of life, sincerity of purpose to obey all of Christ's commands (never choosing the deceitful and fatal low road of selective obedience).

6:17a No soldier can fight well unless he has the sure hope that he will win. See Romans 8:16 and 1 Thessalonians 5:8.

6:18a James 5:16.

Finally, my brothers and sisters, you must continue to draw your strength from the mighty arsenal of the Lord's power.

¹¹You must put on all the armor that God provides, if you are to be able to stand up against all the skill and cunning snares of the devil.

¹²Because we are not fighting against beings made of flesh and blood, but against the rulers of evil spirits, against powerful forces, against the rulers that have produced the present evil darkness of this world, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm.

¹³So you will need to put on all the armor that God provides, if you are to be able to stand and fight against these enemies in these evil times. And after you've made every preparation for battle, take your position and effectively resist every attack.

¹⁴In order to successfully stand against these evil forces you will need to buckle the wide belt of truth around your waist. Then you will need the breastplate of always aiming to please the Lord.

¹⁵And your feet will require the shoes of eagerness to prepare and run with the message—the Great News that everyone can now have peace with God.

¹⁶In addition to all of this, take up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to deflect all the flaming arrows your evil enemy will hurl at you.

¹⁷And for a helmet, be sure you have well-founded reasons for the assurance you have of your salvation. For a sword, you will need to use the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸Pray about every situation by means of all kinds of prayer and earnest pleading. Pray in the Spirit, and especially be watchful and vigilant in earnest and persevering prayer for all who are dedicated to God.

—Ephesians 6:10-18

Paul's Letter to the PHILIPPIANS

My Dear Friends in Philippi, Greece:

Greetings, to all of you there in Philippi, who, along with your pastors and deacons, are dedicated to Christ Jesus.

This is from Paul and Timothy, slave-servants^a of Jesus Christ.

²May you enjoy peace and all the other undeserved blessings of the Christian life from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul's Thanksgiving and Prayer

³I thank my God for you every time I think of you dear friends.

⁴Every time I pray for you, I do so with joy, as I think and meditate on your partnership with me in reaching out to everyone with the Great News.^a

⁵You've been true partners of mine from the very first day that you yourselves heard the Great News, until now.

⁶So there's one thing I feel very confident about, and that is that the Lord will continue the good work He has begun in your lives until He brings it to completion on that Great Day when Jesus Christ returns.^a

⁷It's only right that I feel this way about all of you,^a because you've come right into my heart. And the way you did it was by all of you having such a vital part with me, encouraging me in all I

was able to do when I was free to defend the truth and preach the Great News, and strengthening me now that I'm here in chains.

⁸God knows how deeply I long for all of you. I have the same deep, tender affection for you that Jesus Christ has.

⁹I pray that your love^a will keep on growing in an ever greater way. This will result in ever greater knowledge and deeper insight,^b so that you will set your hearts only on those things that are truly excellent.

¹⁰This deeper insight and understanding is absolutely necessary if your lives are to be filled with all the truly good qualities with which Jesus Christ wants to fill them, so that you will be found to be pure and blameless on the Day when He returns.

¹¹As this disciplined love continues to grow, you will not only honor God but cause others to praise Him as well.^a

Paul's Optimism and His Challenge

¹²But I want you dear friends to know that my being here in jail has had the opposite of its intended effect. It's actually resulted in the Great News going out in greater ways than ever.

¹³The entire palace guard and everyone else in Rome know that I'm in chains because of the uncompromising and unflinching stand I've taken

1:1a See Romans 1:1.

1:4a Paul came to Philippi and brought the Great News in response to a vision he received one night in Troas. Acts 16:6-40. His obedience resulted in the start of a movement that swept an entire continent and the whole of western civilization.

1:6a Paul was very confident about the ultimate salvation of these people in Philippi. But he wasn't so sure about some in Corinth and Galatia, when he wrote to those churches. Even in this letter he gives some woeful warnings in 2:12-13 and 3:18-19. One great reason for his confidence was because the Philippians were obedient to the Lord in their true concern for the salvation of others. They were doing what they could in sharing the Great News with those who were still lost.

Noted Greek scholar, A. T. Robertson, in *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Vol. 4, p. 436), wrote

in regard to their ultimate salvation, "God began and God will consummate it ... but not without their cooperation and partnership."

1:7a They had given firm proof that they were sincere Christians. Having such proof, it was proper that Paul should believe they would finally reach Heaven.

1:9a ... *love for the Lord and His word, for each other, and for the lost, ...*

1:9b ... *in regard to the choices you make of things and ambitions to love, ...*

1:11a By your faithfulness to God, you can be a real encouragement to new Christians, and also to people who haven't yet surrendered to Christ as Lord and Savior. Non-Christians are watching you to see if it's possible to consistently live as Christ demands. Don't disappoint them. To some person you are the best Christian they know.

for our Messiah.

¹⁴And because of my chains, most of the Lord's followers now have greater courage to speak out and tell others about Him. They're fearlessly sharing the Great News about Christ with more boldness than ever before.

¹⁵True, some are preaching about Christ out of hatred toward me, because they're jealous of the way God has used me. But others are doing so from pure motives.

¹⁶Those mentioned first are not sincere. They preach about Christ only because of their selfish ambitions. They're hoping to make me jealous and miserable while in jail.^a

¹⁷But the latter are serving Christ because they love Him. They know I've been put here because of my defense of the Great News about Him.

¹⁸So what's the situation? Well, in one way or another, people are being told the Great News about Christ, whether in a false show or in sincerity. So the message is going out, and I'm happy about that. And I'll continue to be happy about it.

¹⁹I'm sure that thru your prayers and the further help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the result will be my release from jail.

²⁰I eagerly expect and hope that I'll have no reason to be ashamed of anything I do or say,^a but that now, as always, with all the courage and boldness necessary, I'll be able to honor Christ, whether I do so by living or dying.

²¹Because to me, to be able to continue living means to continue to live for Christ. But if I die, I'll only gain by that.^a

²²But if I continue living in this body, I'll be able to do more worthwhile work for the Lord. So what should I prefer? I really don't know!

²³I'm torn between the two. I have a deep longing to leave this life and be with Christ, which would be far better than staying here.

²⁴But for your good, it's more important that I stay around awhile.

²⁵And because I'm sure of this, I know I'll be staying. That means I'll be able to help all of you continue to grow in the faith and be extremely happy in it.

²⁶You'll also be able to superabound in your boasting about Christ Jesus when you see me in your presence once again.

²⁷But whatever happens, you must continue to conduct yourselves in every situation in a way that's worthy of those who have accepted the Great News about Christ.^a If you do that, then, whether I'm able to come and see you or not, I'll rejoice in the good reports that you are standing firm, in perfect harmony and agreement, and enthusiastically working together as one to bring others to faith in Jesus as you share the Great News.

²⁸Don't be at all terrified by those who are opposing you.^a Your courage, in both living in obedience to Christ and in faithfully telling others about Him, are convincing them that they are headed for damnation.^b And your faithfulness is a continual assurance to you that you will be saved.^c Both convictions are from God.

²⁹In the cause of Christ, it's not only your privilege to believe in Him, but it's also your privilege and duty to always be willing to suffer^a for His sake.^b

³⁰*When you preach the truth without compromise,*^a you can expect the same severe opposition you saw me experience, and which, as you hear, I still experience.

2 Have you found real and wonderful encouragement in your situation with God because of Christ, true comfort from His love for you, fellowship with Him thru His Spirit—tenderness, compassion?

²If so, then make my joy complete by having the same deep concern for each other that Christ has for each of you—loving each other as Christ loves you—being united in what you plan and do, as if

1:16a ... and make trouble for me in the churches.

1:20a He's no doubt expressing concern about his coming trial before Caesar.

1:21a Is death really gain? See Appendix 216.

1:27a , ... by continuing in obedience to Him, and by faithfully telling others that they too can have forgiveness, peace, and everlasting life thru Him.

1:28a You can expect persecution from all sides when you give out the full truth. Mark 10:30. But it's our responsibility to do so, because anything less than the full truth is a lie!

1:28b John 5:29; Revelation 14:11; 20:10-15.

1:28c Romans 10:9-10.

1:29a Present tense, denoting continuous action.

1:29b Romans 8:16-17; 2 Timothy 3:12.

1:30a Implied.

2:4a Or *Don't be selfish, rejoicing only when the good things come your way. Be just as concerned for others, and just as happy when they receive the good things.* That's why we must be deeply concerned about the salvation of others. We should be just as concerned as Christ is, and just as concerned for others as we need to be about our own salvation.

2:6a John 14:28.

you were only one person.

³Don't do anything out of selfish ambition, or from a cheap desire for attention and empty glory. But with a sincere, humble attitude, always look upon others as being of more importance than you are.

⁴Don't be concerned only about what will benefit you, but also with what will benefit others.^a

Be Humble and Unselfish Like Christ

⁵You must continue to have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had:

⁶While He is just like God, He didn't consider being like God a highly prized possession^a that He must tenaciously hang on to for His own good.

⁷But for our good, He willingly gave up all that He was and all that belonged to Him in Heaven, and came to earth in human form as a servant.

⁸And in His human form He was obedient to His Father's plan, even to the point of humbling Himself and allowing Himself to be put to death; and not just death, but death on a cruel cross.

⁹For that reason, God has raised Him to the very highest position in His Kingdom, at His right hand, and has given His name honor that is far above all others.

¹⁰He did this so that in adoration of the name of Jesus, everyone in Heaven, on the earth, and under the earth should fall to their knees and worship Him,

¹¹and openly and joyously declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Be the Person God Wants You to Be

¹²Therefore,^a my dear friends, in the same way that you were always diligent about obeying God while I was there with you, now that I'm absent, you must be even more diligently occupied in the business of your own salvation, working at it in fear and trembling to bring it to completion.^b

¹³Because God is always at work within you. He is helping you first of all to desire and determine

to do what is pleasing to Him, and then helping you to do it.^a

¹⁴In everything you are called upon to do, always do it cheerfully without murmuring or complaining,^a so that your blameless and pure lives as children of God will be above criticism.

¹⁵In contrast to the many dishonest and perverted people among whom you live and work, your lives will then keep shining like brilliant stars as you share with them the message of Life.^a

¹⁶If you do that, I will have cause to greatly rejoice on that Great Day when Christ appears from Heaven,^a because that will mean that all my work among you was not wasted effort.

¹⁷Yes, even if my life's blood must be shed in order to make my ministry effective in producing worship, obedience, and service on your part that's acceptable to God, I will rejoice even in that possibility. And I rejoice with all of you.^a

¹⁸For the same reason, you must also be glad and rejoice with me.^a

Timothy and Epaphroditus

¹⁹But I hope the Lord Jesus will enable me to send Timothy to you real soon, so that I can be further encouraged when I receive his report as to how you're coming along.

²⁰No one else so genuinely shares my concern for your welfare as he does.

²¹All the others are more concerned about the things that interest them than about the things that are of greatest concern to Christ Jesus.

²²But you all know the genuine concern of Timothy. He's worked alongside me like a faithful son working with his father, as together we've given out the Great News.

²³So I hope to send him to you just as soon as I find out what's going to happen to me here.

²⁴And I'm confident that the Lord will also enable me to come to you shortly.

²⁵But I feel it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to you immediately. He's my dear brother, my

2:12a Therefore, my dear friends, *seeing that we have such an example of obedience, humiliation, and dedication as we have in Christ ...*

2:12b What's this all about? For the answer turn to Appendix 217, page 480.

2:13a Does God really do everything for us? See Appendix 218, page 482.

2:14a This applies to our relationship to our employer, but it also applies in many other situations. It applies to obedience of the child to parents, of marriage and business relationships, etc. And because of the truth in the previous verse, no doubt

the primary reference is in regard to cheerful obedience to God. We are told that God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7), and surely He loves the one who desires to always cheerfully obey Him.

2:15a Romans 10:9-10.

2:16a Matthew 24:29-30; 25:31-46; Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 19:11-16.

2:17a ... *for the way God is enabling me to guide you safely Home.*

2:18a ... *because of what God has chosen to do thru me, even if I must die because of it.*

fellow worker and fellow soldier. But he's also your messenger, whom you sent to look after my needs.

²⁶He's very eager to see all of you. But he's been upset that you'd heard he was sick.

²⁷And indeed, he was seriously ill. He almost died. But God was good to him, and not only to him but to me also, because if he had died, I would have had sorrow heaped on top of sorrow.

²⁸That's why I've been more than eager to send him on his way to you, so that when you see him again, you may rejoice, and my concern will be lessened.

²⁹So receive him as a blessing from the Lord, and let your joy overflow.

³⁰You should honor men like him, because he came close to death as a result of working so hard for the Lord. He didn't spare himself at all, as he tried to do everything for me that you were unable to do.

Only Christ and His Acceptance

3 In addition to that, my dear friends, you must continue to rejoice in who the Lord is, and in all that He means to you! I told you these same things when I was with you in person. Now I write them to you for your added protection. Be assured that it's not a tiresome task for me to do so.

²Watch out for those men who behave like dogs, those workers of evil who insist you must be circumcised if you are to be saved.

³We are the ones who have been truly circumcised, we who serve and worship God in spirit.^a We have no confidence in external rites or ceremonies. Our boast is about Christ Jesus, about who He is and what He has taught us and has done for us.

⁴Concerning external advantage and the earthly way of thinking, I certainly could brag about my

credentials. If anyone ever had reason to believe he would be saved because of his heritage and faithful observance of Jewish Law, I have even more reason than he.

⁵I was circumcised eight days after I was born. My ancestry can be traced back in Israel's history thru the tribe of Benjamin. I'm as Hebrew as anyone can be. As a Pharisee, I strictly obeyed the Law of Moses.

⁶As for zeal, I was one of the leading persecutors of the Church of Jesus Christ. As for the Mosaic Law, I did my best to obey it to perfection.

⁷But because of what Christ has taught me and done for me, I now look upon all those things which I once considered so very important, as being totally worthless.

⁸Indeed, as far as things are concerned, I consider all of them totally worthless in comparison with the incomparable value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things. I look upon the totality of them as less desirable than worthless trash, in order that I may make certain that I belong to Christ.

⁹My whole desire is to be so unified with Him that there will be no question on Judgment Day as to whom I belong. But in no way am I depending on gaining peace with God by my own efforts, by obeying and observing religious laws and ceremonies. I'm depending on right standing with God by faith in what Christ suffered for me, a righteousness which is mine by faith in what God has done for me thru Christ.^a

¹⁰My urgent goal now is to become fully acquainted with all that Christ means to me, and to be overwhelmed with the truth of all that His resurrection can mean for me and for all others.^a My firm desire is to share with Christ in suffering for the sake of all who are still lost, even as He did, even to be like Him in dying to all self-interests so

3:3a To worship in spirit means to worship God with an utterly sincere mind, to offer one's whole heart to God, not depending on external rites and ceremonies. It is true and sincere worship that comes from deep within your heart. See John 4:23-24 note.

3:9a For important comments about *righteousness* see Appendix 219, page 482.

3:10a Just how important is Christ's resurrection to our salvation? See Appendix 220, page 483.

3:11a How little there is here of the spirit of those who claim they are as sure of Heaven as though they were already there. Paul knew he was still on probation, until his life here was finished, even though he had God's promises of life. Most, if not

all, of God's promises are conditional, although you won't always find the conditions in the same verse or chapter as the promise.

Paul did not take his salvation for granted just because he had once trusted Christ for justification. He realized that regeneration, the new birth (see John 3:1-17 and comments there), was likewise essential if he were to *be included among those who will be raised from among the dead*. The two Greek particles translated *so that* are used when an end is proposed but the possibility of failure to reach it is recognized.

3:12a But we each must sincerely *aim* at perfection if we are to be a Christian at all. The true Christian is always humbled by the contrast

that others may also live.

¹¹My whole desire and concern is to be so filled with Christ, so like Him—no matter what the cost—so that I may be sure of being included among those who will be raised from among the dead to live with Him forever.^a

Running Hard toward the Goal

¹²I'm not claiming I've already arrived, or that I'm now perfect.^a But I keep pressing on, so that I may become and thereby obtain all that Christ Jesus endured for me that I might achieve.^b

¹³So, my dear friends, while I can't yet claim to have an altogether secure hold on the resurrection to eternal life, there's one thing I am doing: I am totally forgetting about all the things in the past,^a and I'm straining forward toward what's ahead.

¹⁴I'm running straight toward the goal^a in pursuit of that most highly valued prize of eternal life and blissful happiness with God, to which He is inviting us because of what Christ Jesus has done and is yet doing for us.^b

¹⁵All of you who are mature in your understanding of the truth should have the same deep concern that I have.^a And if there are some of you who haven't yet seen the absolute need for such complete dedication, I'm sure that God will soon make even this most vital truth clear to you.

¹⁶And in those areas where we have reached maturity of understanding, let us now live according to the light we have, and keep on doing so.

¹⁷My dear friends, join those who are following my example. Take note of the lives they're living, and use our lives as a pattern for your own.

¹⁸But there are many others whom you must not imitate! I've told you often, and I now tell you with bitter tears that many in the churches are enemies of the cross of Christ!^a

between what He is and what he desires to be.

3:12b Paul also recognized that this walk with Christ thru life in conformity to His will is not some past accomplishment, but it is a daily accomplishment—a daily dying to self. Jesus put forth His most utmost effort (no matter what the cost) in order that He might be able to offer us eternal life and the glory of God. We must likewise lay hold of Christ and eternal life thru Him (no matter what the cost) by means of both the faith and obedience that God demands of us.

3:13a All past sins, failures, mistakes, and even successes.

3:14a Paul knew he must run according to the rules, and with all his heart and strength. He never

¹⁹Their destination is destruction in Hell, because their real god is all the various appetites of their body. Many of these so-called Christians actually glory in their shameful behavior.^a Their minds are continually centered on the things of this world and this very brief life.^b

²⁰But our heart and citizenship are in Heaven. And we are most eagerly waiting for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to return from there.^a

²¹When He returns, He will transform our weak bodies that die into bodies just like His own glorious, incorruptible body. He will use the same mighty power to accomplish this transformation that He'll use to bring all things under His control.

4 So for that reason, my dearly loved brothers and sisters, you must always stand firm in your total dedication and devotion to the Lord. Oh, how I long to see you dear friends! I have such joy as I think of you! You represent my joyful reward, my crown!

²Euodia, I plead with you, and with you, Syntyche, that you work together in harmony as you serve the Lord.

³And I plead with you also, faithful Synzygus,^a that you give these dear women some genuine assistance. They worked side by side with me so faithfully in giving out the Great News. They also worked with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in God's Book of Life.

The Confidence Christians are to Have

⁴You must all make a practice of always rejoicing when you consider who the Lord is, and what He means to you. I say it again, always rejoice!

⁵Let your gentle and patient attitude be evident to everyone. Always remember that the Lord is right there with you.^a

taught an easy way to Heaven.

3:14b Thru Christ's sacrifice for us (our justification), and thru His enabling us now to obey His teachings and commands (our regeneration).

3:15a ... and should be diligent in putting forth the same effort that I do.

3:18a, 19b Who are these in the church who are enemies of the cross of Christ? See Appendix 221.

3:19a ... and call it freedom in Christ.

3:20a Matthew 24:29-31; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

4:3a A name meaning *partner* or *yokefellow*.

4:5a You have no need to worry about anything. Always talk to the Lord about the problem, and trust Him to work it out. Matthew 28:20.

⁶So never allow yourselves to get uptight and anxiously concerned about anything.^a But in every situation, you must earnestly continue to plead with God in prayer about your problem and the needs you have. And be sure to thank Him for the way He will work everything out, for His great interest in you, and for His many blessings of both the past and present.

⁷When you pray earnestly, with confidence, the peace of God, which is way beyond anything anyone understands or can adequately describe, will guard your hearts and minds from anxiety and irritation,^a because you have then given yourselves to Christ Jesus to work out His will in the entire matter.

⁸And finally, my dear friends, you must continue to fill your minds with thoughts of whatever is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, excellent, good, and worthy of praise.

⁹You must also continue to put into practice all you have learned and received from me—both from my instructions and the example of my life. If you do, the God who gives everlasting peace will be with you.

Paul's Thanks for their Gifts

¹⁰I've been wholeheartedly rejoicing and praising the Lord that your concern and support for me has finally been revived. It's not that you didn't have concern before, but you didn't have any way of getting your help to me.

¹¹I'm not saying that I'm in need, because I've learned to be content in whatever circumstance I find myself.

¹²I've learned how to live on next to nothing, as well as with plenty. I've learned to be content in any and every situation, whether I'm well-fed or hungry, whether I have plenty or am in need.

¹³Because I have the strength to meet and overcome every difficulty and circumstance, thru the power that Christ gives me.

¹⁴But you certainly did well to share with me in this time of trouble here in jail.

¹⁵You friends in Philippi also know that when I left northern Greece after I first brought you the Great News, not one church, except you people, had any concern about collecting contributions to give toward my needs.

¹⁶Even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent gifts toward my needs more than once.

¹⁷It's not that I'm so overly interested in your money, but I'm looking for ever-increasing profits and dividends from your lives, which will be credited to your account in Heaven.^a

¹⁸Yes, I now have all I need, and more. I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent with him. They are like fragrant incense, an acceptable sacrifice that pleases God very much.

¹⁹*And because of your generosity,*^a my God will supply all your needs from His glorious riches, which are available to you thru Christ Jesus.

²⁰May God our Father receive all the glory forever and ever! May that indeed be absolute and unqualified.

²¹Greetings to everyone who is dedicated to Christ Jesus! The Lord's followers who are here with me send you their greetings.

²²Everyone else here in Rome who is dedicated to Jesus, especially those who work in the emperor's palace, send you greetings.

²³May our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you to bless you. So be it.

Sincerely in Christ,
Paul and Timothy

4:6a Why should you ever be upset, when Christ has promised to be with you always, to strengthen, help, and direct you? Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5-6.

4:7a Psalm 119:165; Isaiah 26:3.

4:17a See Luke 16:9 note, and Appendix 222.

4:19a These words are not in the text but are definitely implied. God doesn't automatically supply all the needs of everyone—not even of every Christian. The promise is to those who meet the conditions of Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6-9, etc. And the Philippians had met those conditions.

Ay whole desire and concern is to be so filled with Christ, so like Him—no matter what the cost—so that I may be sure of being included among those who will be raised from among the dead to live with Him forever.
—Philippians 3:11

Paul's Letter to the COLOSSIANS

My Dear Friends in Colosse:

This is from Paul, sent out by God's will and decree as a messenger of Jesus Christ, and from our brother Timothy.

²Greetings to all of you dear ones there in Colosse in Asia Minor,^a who are dedicated to Christ and faithful to Him. May God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord give you peace of mind and heart and literally shower you with undeserved blessings.

³We are constantly praying and thanking the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for you,

⁴after hearing of your faith in Christ Jesus, and how you have shown such love toward all who are dedicated to Him.

⁵And your faith and love are inspired by the irrefutable hope^a you have of what God is planning and keeping safe for you in Heaven, which you heard about when the truth of the Great News was first made plain to you.

⁶That Great News is now going out thruout the whole world, in the same way that it came to you. With great success, it's changing lives, just as it's been doing among you from the first day you heard the full truth and understood the true nature of the rich favor God has granted us.

⁷Our dear fellow servant, Epaphras, thru whom you learned these truths, is so faithfully working for Christ for your good.

⁸It was Epaphras who told us how the Holy Spirit had filled your hearts with such love.

⁹That's why we haven't stopped praying for you since the day we heard his good report about you. We're asking God to fill you with all the wisdom and spiritual understanding you need, so that you will know exactly how He wants you to live, and

what He wants you to do in serving Him.

¹⁰We pray this so that each of you may live a life that will be an honor to the Lord, pleasing Him in every way as you do what is right and honorable, and that you will constantly grow in an ever fuller knowledge of God.

¹¹Then you will continually be strengthened with unlimited power, because you will be connected to God's glorious power, enabling you to patiently endure every test and trial with joy,^a and to be long-suffering toward those who oppose you.

¹²Likewise, continually thank the Father with joy, as you think of the fact that He has made us eligible to share in the inheritance of all the marvelous things He has prepared in His Kingdom of Light for those who are truly dedicated to Him!^a

¹³He rescued us from the gloom and darkness of Satan's power over us, and transported us into the Kingdom of the Son whom He loves so dearly.

¹⁴By means of His suffering, bleeding, and dying for us, we have been rescued from sin and its terrifying consequences. By His sacrifice, He made it possible for God to offer us forgiveness for our sins.

The Incomparable Christ

¹⁵As we look at Him, we see what God is really like,^a because He is like God in every way, except that God is invisible. He is God's firstborn Son, whom God has placed in authority over all creation.^b

¹⁶God created all things by Him—everything in the heavens and everything on earth. This includes everything that can be seen and also everything that's invisible, such as the spirit world with its kingdoms, powers, rulers, and authorities. God created all things thru His Son and for Him.^a

¹⁷Yes, God's Son existed before anything was cre-

1:2a Presently western Turkey.

1:5a The Old Testament prophesied (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; 53:1-12; Micah 5:2; Psalm 22:1-21) that the Son of God would come to earth and live and die as He did, would lead a perfect and miraculous life on earth, and would rise from the dead and ascend to Heaven. All of these facts are irrefutable proofs that we can—without a doubt—depend on all that Christ has promised us.

1:11a Matthew 5:11-12.

1:12a 1 Corinthians 2:9.

1:15a John 14:8-10.

1:15b Or *He is the firstborn of all creation*. The Inspired Letters translation translates this: *Christ was born before anything was created*.

1:16a Referring to the Son of God, whom we know as Jesus. John 1:1-3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9; Hebrews 1:1-2. He is the one Lord who is Lord over all of God's creation. 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 1:10; 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 19:16.

ated, and all things are now held together by Him.^a

¹⁸He is also the Head of the vast throngs who are His followers, the Church. And just as He has seniority and superiority in time and in power, He was also the first to rise from the dead,^a so that He might be first in all things.

¹⁹Because the Father took great delight in having all the fullness that He Himself is, to also be present in His Son.^a

²⁰And God chose to reconcile all things to Himself by means of His Son. This included things on earth and things in Heaven. He made peace possible by means of the blood that Christ Jesus shed in His death on the cross.^a

²¹There was a time when you had no interest at all, nor any desire, to please God. You were actually enemies of God because of your evil thoughts

and behavior.

²²But now you have been restored to friendship with Him by means of the suffering and death of Christ in His physical body. Now you can stand before God as pure and blameless in His sight as if you had never sinned—

²³if you are indeed continuing in the faith, deeply rooted, unflinching, fixed in your direction, and are not allowing yourselves to be seduced^a and led away from the hope^b that came to you when you heard and accepted the Great News. This Great News of which I was made a messenger has now been proclaimed to everyone thruout the whole world.

How Paul Served the Church

²⁴And even right now,^a I'm rejoicing that it's my privilege to suffer for you. Because I am merely

1:17a By all known scientific laws the electrical forces in each atom should cause them to explode, but Jesus, the Creator, in some unknown way holds them together.

1:18a ... *to live forever*, ... Lazarus and others rose before Him, but they no doubt died again.

1:19a "That is, that in Him should be such dignity, authority, power, and moral excellence as to be fitted for the work of creating the world, redeeming His people, and supplying everything needful for their salvation ... This is to us a most precious truth.

"We have a Savior who is in no respect deficient in wisdom, power, and grace to redeem and save us. There is nothing necessary to be done in our salvation that He is not qualified to do; there is nothing we need to enable us to perform our duties, to meet temptation, and to bear trial, which He is not able to impart ... We may go to Him with all our troubles, weaknesses, temptations, and needs, and may be supplied from his fullness—just as, if we were thirsty, we might go to an ocean of pure water and drink."—*Barnes' Notes*.

1:20a "This does not mean that He had actually brought about peace by His death, but that He had laid the foundation for it; He had done that which would now make it possible for God to forgive our sins and thereby restore us to friendship with Himself." Adapted from *Barnes' Notes*.

1:23a ... *by false teachers teaching a false hope, by promoting an easy, soft way to Heaven; and by your own selfishness and sinful desires* ...

1:23b Here's another case where the condition is laid down as to what is necessary to be ultimately saved. We must *continue* believing the Great News that we have God's forgiveness and eternal life thru Jesus, and *continue* believing what He taught and

commanded. And we believe what He commanded only if we obey Him. We must persevere and give continued proof that we are indeed born again. If we do, we will be presented to God as being pure and blameless; if we don't, we won't be. See John 8:31; 10:27-29; 15:1-11; Acts 14:22; 1 John 2:24.

* * *

A pastor in a large Protestant denomination was having trouble with some of his young people. They kept coming to him with such remarks as, "Pastor, it doesn't seem from this Scripture, or from this one here, that we're so eternally secure that there's no possibility that we could finally be lost."

The pastor, Rev. Shank, didn't know of anything he could give them that would fully convince them that they were indeed unconditionally, eternally secure, so he finally decided to make a thorough study of the subject and write a paper he could give his young people that would answer their questions.

In making the study, he was amazed at how many Scriptures warned of the possibility of falling from the faith and being finally lost. He finally wrote a book on the subject, entitled, *Life In The Son*. You should read that book.

Some Christian bookstores refuse to carry it, but they can order it if you insist on having it. Some ministers and others wish the book would go away and become out of print, so they give it the silent treatment and won't even tell their people about it. Many people who oppose it haven't even read it, so they don't know what they are opposing. Pastor Shank's denomination strongly opposed it when it was first published, but at this writing, at least 50 percent of their seminaries now recommend that their students read it.

* * *

No book has been published refuting the infor-

doing what is still needful when I suffer for Christ in my body, for the sake of His body, which is the Church.^b

²⁵ God, in carrying out His plan to use various people for various purposes, appointed me to be a servant of His to the Church. He appointed me to reveal to you His complete message.

²⁶ He appointed me to reveal the secret that's been hidden from all generations in past centuries, but which has now been revealed to those who are dedicated to Him.

²⁷ God took great pleasure in making known to you and to everyone else, that which was previously unknown—that the great magnitude of His glory can now be shared by the Gentiles too! And their hope of sharing in that glory can be received when they too invite Jesus to live within them.^a

²⁸ So it's about Jesus that we preach. We warn everyone and teach everyone with all the wisdom

given us, with the aim of being able to present everyone possible to God as persons who are altogether dedicated to Christ Jesus.

²⁹ So that's my aim and goal when I work for God. And the energy I put forth is energy given me by Christ, which is working in and thru me in a powerful way.^a

2 I want you to know how much I am battling for you in prayer, and for those in Laodicea, and for the many others who haven't seen me personally.

² I'm earnestly praying that all of you will be encouraged in heart, and knit together in love. May all of you also attain the great wealth of having full assurance that you understand the mystery of what we may know about God and His plans, and what the real relationship is between the Father and Christ.

mation set forth in *Life In The Son*, for the simple reason that *the truth* is presented here, and its enemies are unable to prove it wrong. A second reason no book has been published against it is because those who oppose it don't want to give the book any publicity.

One man was so opposed to the book that he had letterheads printed with the name of the publisher of the book, and wrote a letter as if from the publisher. He sent this letter to Christian bookstores thruout the country, stating that Mr. Shank was now dead and that the book was no longer in print, and that before he died Mr. Shank had said how sorry he was that he had ever written the book. But the truth is, Mr. Shank is still very much alive at this writing, and the book is available in unlimited quantities. And he is glad, not sorry, that he wrote the book.

Any bookstore can get a copy for you, even the book department of your department store, because it's listed in *Books In Print*. Ask for *Life In the Son*, by *Robert Shank*, published by Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, MN 55438.

* * *

The first three chapters of the book are an introduction, so you may wish to begin with Chapter four and get right into the heart of the matter. But be sure to read the introduction by Dr. William Adams of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. It's a masterpiece.

Rev. Shank is a brave man. Like many brave men of the past and present, he was willing to put his career on the line and teach the full truth as he saw it, and leave the results with God. The same was true of Dr. Adams, who wrote the introduction. God grant that He will be able to say the same of you in that Great Day, for according to Revelation 21:8,

none who are cowardly about taking a stand for the Lord and His truth will even be there. See also Romans 11:22.

* * *

Two ministers discussing the subject of eternal security were in disagreement. Finally one asked the other, "Have you read the book *Life In The Son* by *Robert Shank*?" "No," was the reply. The first minister then said, "Until you read *Life In The Son* you are not qualified to discuss the subject of eternal security." We agree.

If you are sincere about wanting the truth, be sure to get a copy of that book. But of course, if you are one who is determined to believe only what you want to believe, or are not willing to have your conclusions tested, you must be classed with all others who refuse to read anything that might turn the light on and dispel the darkness. But we want to believe better things about you. Read the book and ask God to reveal to you whether or not Rev. Shank's conclusions are true.

* * *

Someone has so truly stated, "The vast majority of people have no real interest in searching for the truth. But they are searching. Their search, however, is for someone who can convince them that *what they want to believe* is the truth." And sad to say, this is also true of a great many attending church, as well as those outside of it. Are you willing to search—in all honesty? Are you willing to accept the truth, whatever it turns out to be?

1:24a ... *in jail here in Rome* ...

1:24b Not the church building, but all who are a part of the assembly of God's people.

1:27a ... *as their Lord and Savior*.

1:29a Luke 11:13; 24:49; Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-21.

³Because all the wisdom and knowledge about God's plans are hidden treasures that are in the treasure house that is Christ.^a

⁴I say this in order to keep you from being deceived and led away from the truth by someone coming to you with smooth, logical-sounding, false arguments.

⁵Because even though I'm not with you in person, I so often think about you. And I'm so glad to hear that you are living as you should, and that your faith in Christ is so resolute and strong.

Real Life Is to be Found in Christ!

⁶Always remember that in the same way that you earnestly accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must now continue to live as Christ would have you live.^a

⁷With your roots deeply and firmly rooted in Christ, allow Him now to build you up by continuing to strengthen and establish you in the faith you were taught.^a Then, as you think about all that God has done for you and promised you,^b joyfully overflow in your thanksgiving to Him.^c

⁸Make sure you don't allow anyone to rob and plunder you of your pure faith and hope thru the ideas and conclusions of their hollow and deceptive reasonings. Their arguments may sound ever so reasonable, but they are based on man's feeble and worldly-wise conclusions, not on the teachings of truth that Christ brought us from God.

⁹Because in Christ the totality of all that God is in the fullness of His divine nature^a exists in a body that can be seen.

¹⁰Thru Him you have been purified and forgiven, and have no need of help from any other spiritual

powers, because He is the Head over every power and authority.

¹¹At the time you acknowledged Christ to be your Lord and Savior, you were also circumcised—not by human hands, but by Christ, when He cut away the chains and freed you from sin's power of rule over your life.

¹²By the picture that baptism portrays, you were symbolically buried with Christ. Then, in that same baptism, you were raised again, showing that by your faith in the fact that Christ was raised from the dead by God's power, you too have now been raised up by God to live a new life.^a

¹³So when you were morally and spiritually dead in your sins, (still stupefied by the sinful cravings of your flesh), God reached down and made you alive, and gave you a new life together with Christ.

¹⁴After forgiving our sins, He blotted out the charges against us for not obeying the handwritten Laws and regulations He had formerly given Moses, which had been oppressive and burdensome, and actually a real hindrance to us. He also totally revoked those Laws, declaring them null and void, by nailing them to Christ's cross.

¹⁵By His suffering on the cross, and dying, Christ disarmed and stripped away the rightful authority and power that the Jewish religious leaders formerly had.^a He made a public spectacle of their power, publicly crushing all their rules and authority, and leading those rules and regulations along, as it were, tied up as captives on display in the victory parade.

¹⁶So don't let anyone point to the Law of Moses and tell you what you may eat or drink, or that you must attend some religious festival or a celebra-

2:3a ... and are to be found only in Him.

2:6a In other words, when you were converted to Christ you gave up your life to Him to obey Him as Lord, as well as receiving Him as Savior. Only those who do this are born again. And you must continue to do so. See 1:23, and note.

2:7a We are strengthened and established by reading and studying God's word and by meditating on the truths there, and by sharing them with others. To grow spiritually, we must obey Christ's commands, believe and act upon His promises, and live in a state of constant praise and thanksgiving to God. True worship is not to fear God, nor even to love Him, but to love Him with such total surrender that we thoroughly and extremely delight in Him to the utmost limits, by giving Him our all.

2:7b ... both for now and forever ...

2:7c ... because the potential for your brief future here, and for your eternal future, is so

great!

2:9a It appears evident thruout Scripture that when the Father begat the Son in eternity past, He endowed Him with all the attributes that He Himself possessed—all knowledge, wisdom, power, etc.

2:12a Romans 6:1-14.

2:15a This certainly refers to the rulers and authorities in the Sanhedrin (the Jewish council of supreme authority) and to the rulers in the synagogues. Christ's sacrifice on the cross put an end to the rightful authority these men previously had, to make certain that the Law of Moses was conformed to. The next two verses verify this conclusion.

2:22a There is nothing wrong with the use of material things, unless by the use of them you bring harm to yourself or to others. Then their use is indeed wrong.

2:23a "The radical error of those who practice self-punishment is in their belief that evil resides in

tion of the new moon, or that you must observe the various Jewish Sabbath days.

¹⁷ Because these were only temporary rules that ended when Messiah died as our sacrifice on the cross. They were a mere outline, a lifeless shadow of what was to come. The real and the permanent rules were given to us when Messiah came.

¹⁸ Don't let anyone fool you, and rob you of your prize of eternal life with God by pretending to be so humble while encouraging you to worship angels. They're intruding into areas they know nothing about! They're puffed up by their own ideas of how great they are, and by their own imaginations.

¹⁹ Such a person is not continuing to hold to the true teaching about Christ, the Head of the Church. But it's from Him that the whole Church body receives its nourishment, resulting in the muscles, joints, and ligaments being knit together, and growing as God causes it to grow.

²⁰ So if you died with Christ to the temporary things of this world, why do you act as though you still belong to it, by giving in to its religious rules, such as,

²¹ "Don't handle that! Don't taste this! Don't touch that!"?

²² All these prohibited things affect only our physical self, and they are worn out or consumed as they are used.^a And besides, any of these religious rules that are merely man-made have no real spiritual value anyway.

²³ These rites and ceremonies and prohibitions indeed make one appear to have a deep knowledge about divine things, along with their show of sorrow, their false humility, and severe treatment of

the body. But these are of no value at all in restraining physical passions.^a

Rules for Christians to Live by

3 So if you have been raised up to new life with Christ from among those who are dead,^a you must now continue to be thoroughly ambitious for, and set your heart on, those positions and pleasures which are in Heaven, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.^b

² Be so filled with intense desire to live to please God and faithfully serve Him,^a that your mind will be totally centered on the eternal rich inheritance that can be yours forever in Heaven. No longer love the trivial, temporary, unsatisfactory, and breakable things of this life, which can be forever taken from us tomorrow.^b

³ Because you died,^a and the treasure that your new life is, and the treasured dividends from serving God in the new life, have all been safely and securely hidden away in the treasure vault that is Christ, in God.

⁴ When Christ, who is our very life, appears on earth to judge and to reign, then you too will appear with Him in the glory that has been promised you.^a

⁵ That's why you need to ruthlessly kill every last one of those evil inclinations of your earthly nature that relentlessly plague you, such as: sexual immorality,^a all kinds of uncleanness,^b various evil passions, evil desires, and the greedy desire of always wanting more of the things of this world, which is the same as worshiping idols.^c

⁶ Because of just such sinning, God's judgments are continuing to fall^a on those who continue in

matter. Not the body, but the soul, is the source of sin. The body is sinful because the soul is sinful. Sin exists as a thought and concept of the heart before it exists as an act of the flesh."—*The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*.

The attempt to be virtuous by punishing and saying "no" to the body is like battering the outer defensive walls of the castle but leaving the castle untouched.

The only solution is to bring the soul into a right relationship with God, thru Jesus Christ. Then, with God's help, the soul will control what the body does. Philippians 2:13.

3:1a Though alive physically, they are dead spiritually, and under God's condemnation and judgment.

3:1b Matthew 20:20-23; Luke 16:1-9 (see v 9 note). Regarding pleasures in Heaven see Psalm 16:11; 36:8.

3:2a Serve Him by prayer, by helping those in need, by witnessing to others, by giving so that others may go forth and witness. Serve Him with true love for all whom God loves.

3:2b James 4:14.

3:3a You died ... *to your former life of ignoring and disobeying God, and selfishly living for all you could be and experience and obtain for your own pleasure, advancement, and glory in this present brief and uncertain life.*

3:4a Romans 5:2; 8:17-18,30; 1 Corinthians 15:43; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; Hebrews 2:10; 1 Peter 5:1.

3:5a See Ephesians 5:3 note.

3:5b Such as impure thoughts, and all forms of unclean sexual acts, etc.

3:5c ... *the worship of money and things instead of God.*

3:6a This is present tense in the Greek, showing

their disobedience toward Him.

⁷And all of you at one time went right along with people who live like that. You thought very little about how evil your lives were when you were living the same way yourselves.

⁸But now you must also put all these things out of your lives: violent outbursts of anger, bitter hatred, and cursing. And you must stop using your lips to say anything that is filthy or insulting and humiliating.

⁹And stop lying to each other. You have turned away from your old life and all the wrong things you once did.

¹⁰You are now living an altogether new life,^a that is constantly receiving new knowledge so that you can become altogether like the One who created you.

¹¹So it's of no importance at all whether we are Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian or Scythian, slave or free. Our only concern must be that Christ has become our everything in all of life.

¹²So as God's chosen people who are dedicated to Him and loved by Him, conduct yourselves with great concern for the welfare of others, showing compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

¹³Always be considerate of others, especially if you have a grievance against someone who has done you wrong. Always be ready and willing to forgive. Forgive them in the same wholehearted way that Christ has forgiven you.

¹⁴But to all these things add an overflowing love for one another. Love is what binds all of these other virtues together in perfect harmony.

¹⁵Then you must also allow yourselves to be governed and controlled by the profound peace that God gives, because God has called us to be united in one body,^a in peace. And always be thankful in every situation.^b

¹⁶And you simply must allow the truths of Christ's words to continually take full possession of your hearts and minds.^a Then use all possible wisdom in teaching, correcting, and challenging one another in regard to those same truths. Also, sing out those truths in psalms and hymns and other kinds of spiritual songs, doing so with joy that comes from deep within your hearts in sincere adoration and thanksgiving to the Lord.^b

¹⁷And whatever you say or do, make sure it will please and honor the Lord Jesus. And continue to thank God our Father thru Jesus for whatever you're able to say and do for Him.

¹⁸Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands,^a as this is definitely proper for a woman who is trusting in the Lord.

¹⁹Husbands, you must always be loving and kind toward your wives. Never be harsh with them.

²⁰Children, obey your parents in everything.^a You make the Lord very happy when you do.

²¹Parents, never drive your children to anger by expecting too much from them, or they may get discouraged and give up.

²²Employees, always obey the instructions of

present, continuous action—punishments being received now by those who live in sin. This is not the future judgment, as some translations read, although this will also be true for those who refuse to turn from their sinning to obeying God. The sinner does not receive all of his hell in this life—far from it. Nor does the true Christian receive all of his blessings in this life. The greatest of both are yet to come.

3:10a 2 Corinthians 5:17.

3:15a Ephesians 4:4-6.

3:15b 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Romans 8:28.

3:16a There are various ways to receive the teachings of Christ—thru other Christians, by listening to Bible teaching, preaching, and singing, and by reading it for yourself.

Before the modern era of prepared food for babies, mothers would chew the food, then take it from their mouth with a spoon and feed it to the baby. That's the way most people still wish to receive their spiritual food. They want the Bible teacher or preacher to do all the studying, and then

spoon-feed it to them.

But you need to grow up spiritually as quickly as possible and read and study the Bible for yourself. For one thing, you need to make sure you are being given the full truth. And you need to dig for the truth so you can share it with others. In a true Bible-believing church, you are encouraged to bring your Bibles, and you are encouraged to read and study them thruout the week.

3:16b Some believe the teaching here includes teaching by songs. Yes, there is much great need for more songs that teach deep spiritual truth. Most modern songs and choruses are songs of worship and praise, and that's fine. But we also need songs and choruses and choir anthems that challenge us to obedience to God and to witness for Him. There is a real need here for someone, or for several, to fill. Let us challenge one another, and our own hearts, in song.

A theologian of the past said, "If I were allowed to write the songs of a nation, I wouldn't care who wrote its laws." Our songs are indeed that impor-

your human employer.^a Don't obey only when the boss is watching, as those who are only concerned about pleasing men, but enter into your work with superabounding sincerity, knowing that God is watching,^b and that you are accountable to Him for everything you do and the way you do it.

²³ Whatever you may be doing, do it with all your heart, with enthusiasm, as if you were working for the Lord instead of for men.

²⁴ In fact, always keep in mind that even when working for others, you really are working for Christ the Lord, and that it's from the Lord that you will receive the reward of the inheritance that will be yours forever.

²⁵ But those who cheat their employers of time and effort (and in other ways), will also be rewarded for the wrong they have done.^a And God judges everyone by the same standard.^b He doesn't play favorites with anyone.

4 Employers, always give your employees wages and other benefits and treatment that are just and fair. Remember, you also have an Overseer, in Heaven.^a

² If you want answers to your prayers, you must keep praying, and not give up.^a And as you continue to wait before God for what you are praying, fill your prayers with praise and thanksgiving.

³ And as you pray, be sure you continue to pray for us as well. Keep asking God to open doors of opportunity for us to preach His message, reveal-

ing the secret that God has also included the Gentiles in His salvation plan, even though I'm in jail because I preached that message.

⁴ Pray that I'll have courage to continue to tell everyone about it, which is the only right thing for me to do.

⁵ Always be wise and considerate in the way you conduct yourselves toward those who are not followers of the Lord.^a But never fail to make use of every opportunity to speak out^b and tell them the Great News.

⁶ In doing so be gracious and kind. However, in every conversation, take the opportunity, or make the opportunity, to include a warning about our ultimate meeting with either Jesus as Lord and Savior or Jesus as Judge.^a And as you are challenged with objections and arguments for which you don't have an answer, pray and investigate, so that the next time you'll have the answer.

Final Greetings

⁷ Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He's a much-loved brother, a faithful minister and a fellow servant in the Lord's work.

⁸ I'm sending him to you for the very purpose of finding out how you are coming along, and to encourage you.

⁹ Your own faithful and much-loved brother, Onesimus, will also be coming. They will also give you a full report of what's happening here.

¹⁰ Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you

tant! Another has stated, "As those who make the songs of a nation can shape its political and moral life, so the hymn writers have in a large degree shaped the theology of the Church."

If God has given you the gift of song writing, here's an opportunity to serve Him in a much-needed way, by challenging God's people in their solemn duty to obey Him and to witness about Christ to those who are still lost. These matters are not optional for Christians, they are mandatory! So they certainly should be included in what we sing.

Charles Wesley used to write as many as 18 verses to his songs for the express purpose of teaching theology, and in their song services they would sing all 18 verses! It was a catechism as much as it was an act of worship. Much of the Christian music of today focuses on feelings and not on God—a tragedy.

3:18,20,22a ... *in everything except where obedience would mean to go against your conscience or to disobey some command of God.*

3:22b 2 Chronicles 16:9; Proverbs 5:21; 15:3.

3:25a Galatians 6:7-8.

3:25b Revelation 20:11-15.

4:1a ... *who decides whether your business will be blessed, or not.* See Psalm 75:4-7.

4:2a See Genesis 32:24-29; Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8. And there are many others. See Luke 17:6 note.

4:5a If you claim to be a true follower of Christ, make sure that you now treat others in the same way that you want others to treat you. Unbelievers are much more concerned about your honesty, integrity, and compassion, than they are about what you believe and how faithfully you worship and serve the Lord. You aren't ready or even qualified to speak to others about Christ if you are not obeying your Lord in truth, especially in your dealings with others. You are then in need of true conversion yourself.

4:5b Romans 10:9-10.

4:6a The Greek for this sentence is *season with salt*. In other words, don't fail to put something into the conversation that will help to preserve the soul of the one to whom you are speaking. Consider both of these verses in the light of Romans 10:9-10.

greetings, and so does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. You've already been told to warmly welcome Mark if he comes your way.

¹¹ And Jesus, who is called Justus, sends greetings. These are the only Jewish followers of the Lord here among my fellow workers for the Kingdom of God, and they have been such a comfort to me!

¹² Epaphras, who is also one of you and a devoted servant of Christ, sends greetings. He's always wrestling in prayer for you, praying that God will help you to obey Him in everything, perfectly and completely.

¹³ I can testify to the fact that he has great zeal for you, and also for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

¹⁴ Our dearly loved Doctor Luke also sends greetings, and so does Demas.

¹⁵ Give my greetings to all in Laodicea who love

our Lord, and to Nymphas, and to all who meet as a church in his home.

¹⁶ After you read this letter, be sure that it's also read by the church in Laodicea. I want you in turn to read the letter I sent to the Laodiceans, which they will send to you.

¹⁷ And there's this message for Archippus: "Have real concern for the assignment the Lord gave you, and keep working diligently at it so that you may complete it."

¹⁸ *I, Paul, write this final greeting with my own hand.* Remember to pray for me here, chained in jail. May God's special blessings be with all of you. So be it!

Most Sincerely,
Paul and Timothy

There was a time when you had no interest at all, nor any desire, to please God. You were actually enemies of God because of your evil thoughts and behavior.

²² But now you have been restored to friendship with Him by means of the suffering and death of Christ in His physical body. Now you can stand before God as pure and blameless in His sight as if you had never sinned—

²³ if indeed you are continuing in the faith, deeply rooted, unflinching, fixed in your direction, and are not allowing yourselves to be seduced and led away from the hope that came to you when you heard and accepted the Great News.

—Colossians 1:21-23

Paul's First Letter to the THESSALONIANS

Dear Friends in Thessalonica:

Greetings, to all you dear friends in the church there in Thessalonica who are united in mind and heart with God our Father, and with Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is from Paul, Silas, and Timothy. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ richly bless each one of you and give you peace!

The Life and Faith of the Thessalonians

²As we talk to God about you in our prayers, we always thank Him for every one of you.

³We are continually reminding Him about the great work you've accomplished thru your faith in Him, and all the things you've done because you love Him. Also, about how patient you've been thru all the trials you've endured because of the sure hope you have of eternity in Heaven with God our Father because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us.^a

⁴We pray this way because we have full confidence, dear brothers and sisters who are loved by God, that He has chosen you to be His very own.

⁵We are sure of this because when we brought the Great News to you, we didn't bring you only words. But the Holy Spirit was there, powerfully convicting and fully convincing you that we were telling you the truth. And you remember the kind of lives we lived among you; our only concern was for your well-being.

⁶And you followed our example and that of the Lord, because even in spite of severe persecutions, you gladly embraced our message; and God blessed you with great joy from the Holy Spirit.

⁷As a result, you became examples to all the believers thruout Greece.

⁸As a matter of fact, by broadcasting the Lord's message as you did, you made an impact not only in Greece, but everywhere else as well. News about your faith in God has gone out to such an extent that we don't need to say anything about it.

⁹People are now telling us how effectively our message entered your hearts, turning you from idols to serve the living and true God.

¹⁰They tell us how you are now waiting for God's Son, Jesus, to come from Heaven. He is the One whom God raised from the dead, and who is our Rescuer from the coming fierce anger that God will unleash against the ungodly.

Paul's Work in Thessalonica

2You friends know that our visit with you was not ineffective.

²As you remember, we came to you right after being insulted and severely beaten and jailed in Philippi.^a But in spite of the great strain we were under, even when we were with you,^b with God's help we spoke out with boldness and gave you God's Great News.

³There was nothing false or impure in the earnest instructions we gave you. We didn't come with impure motives, or to trick you.

⁴Instead, whenever we speak we are overwhelmed with the fact that God has considered us worthy of being entrusted with His Great News. So we don't tailor our messages in any way in order to make them fit the desires of certain people. Our only concern is to please God, who is continually testing the sincerity and honesty of our hearts.^a

⁵You also know that we never flattered you in order to gain your approval. And God is our witness that we didn't avoid offending you in order to receive a big offering.

⁶Nor at any time did we seek the praise of anyone, neither from you nor anyone else.

⁷As apostles of Christ, we could have been a burden to you, demanding our rights,^a but like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children, we were gentle and kind.

⁸Since we have such extreme love for you, we deeply wanted to give you not only God's Great News, but our own lives as well. You have become that dear to us.

1:3a Dying for us, and then constantly helping us to live to please God. Philippians 2:13.

2:2a Acts 16:16-40.

2:2b Acts 17:1-9.

2:4a Preacher, preach the whole truth (without

addition or deletion) and leave all the consequences with God! Acts 20:27.

2:7a ... by asserting our authority over you, and by demanding your financial support.

⁹You remember, dear friends, how we worked and slaved night and day to earn our own living,^a in order to keep from being a burden to any of you as we were bringing you God's Great News.^b

¹⁰You are witnesses, and God is too, that we were faithful in living holy, upright, and blameless lives among you, our fellow followers of the Lord.

¹¹You also know how earnestly we corrected and comforted each of you, in the same way that a loving father does with his own children.

¹²We challenged you to live your lives for God in a way that is fitting and proper for those whom He is inviting to share His own Kingdom and glory.^a

¹³Here's another reason why we continue to thank God without ceasing: When you heard what God had to say to you thru us, you didn't consider the message you were hearing to be coming to you from men, but from God! And God truly was speaking! And what God was saying, and still says, is continuing to work effectively in the lives of those of you who are believing Him.

¹⁴This is confirmed, my brothers and sisters, by the fact that you have become just like God's assemblies of His people in Judea who are united with Christ Jesus. You yourselves have suffered the same treatment from your own countrymen that they have from the Judeans.^a

¹⁵It was the Judeans who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and it was they who drove us out. They continue to displease God, and are hostile to everyone.

¹⁶By forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles so that they too might be saved, they were acting as they

always have, piling up their sins to the limit. But now God's wrath is striking them in full measure.

Paul's Desire to Visit Them Again

¹⁷But, my dear brothers and sisters, ever since we were torn away from you for a short time—away in person, that is, not in our thoughts—our eager desire has made us most zealous in our attempts to see you.

¹⁸We so much wanted to come your way again—at least I, Paul, did, more than once—but Satan has always blocked us.

¹⁹What are we hoping for then? What would make us truly happy? When we receive the promised rewards as we are ushered into the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming,^a what would climax that joy? You would!

²⁰Indeed, it is you who make up both the glory and joy of that anticipated reward.^a

3 Because of this great affection for you, when I couldn't stand it any longer, I finally decided it would be best if I sent Timothy to you, while I stayed on in Athens alone.

²As a servant of God, and as my fellow worker in telling the Great News about Christ, Timothy is a dear brother. I sent him to strengthen you, and to encourage you concerning your faith.

³I didn't want any of you to be shaken from your stand for Christ by the tests and trials you are presently meeting up with. But you yourselves know that as faithful followers of Christ we can expect this kind of treatment.

2:9a They worked and supported themselves. See Acts 18:1-3; 20:33-34.

2:9b ... *about what He had done and would yet do for you.*

2:11-12a Paul was altogether faithful as a devout Christian and as a Christian minister. He did not fail to *earnestly correct, comfort, and challenge* every person in his care. He did so *in the same way that a father does with his own children.*

The particular charge and correction for the Thessalonians was that they *live their lives for God*, because their calling was to an eternally glorious Kingdom. They, and all others since Jesus' death and resurrection, have been *invited to share God's own Kingdom and glory*. We are not invited simply to be citizens of His Kingdom, but to be princes and priests and rulers in *His Kingdom*—ruling together with Him.

Too often we consider Heaven as merely a wonderful place where we will be able to relax and enjoy ourselves. Far above that, however, God has

promised to exalt us to the position of being fully like Him, as His children in His family. The wonder of it all is that we who are now so weak on earth will be so mighty and so glorified together with Him in Heaven. Therefore, it is essential that we *live our present lives in a way that is fitting and proper* for such a wonderful God and Father, so that we may indeed attain to the high calling which can be ours thru Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.

2:14a See 3:4 and 2 Timothy 3:12.

2:19a Matthew 16:27; 1 Corinthians 3:8-15; Revelation 22:12.

2:19-20a Paul is speaking here to people he had won to faith in Christ. He evidently had reference to such Scriptures as Daniel 12:3, which states, *Those who are wise will let their light shine as brilliantly as the noonday sun. And those who turn many to right standing with God and to right living will shine as the stars forever and ever*, and Proverbs 11:30, which states, *And the person who wins souls is wise*. Paul knew from such Scriptures

⁴When we were with you, in fact, we kept telling you in advance that we would be persecuted. And as you well know now from experience, it's happened as I told you.

⁵That's why, when I couldn't stand the suspense any longer, I sent Timothy to find out how you were enduring the test of your faith. I was deeply concerned that by some means the tempter might have succeeded in luring you away from the Lord Jesus.^a Then all of our hard work among you would have been for nothing.

⁶But now Timothy has just returned to us from you with the great news about your lasting faith in Christ and your loving concern for us. He says you still have such good memories of our time with you, and you still have the same burning desire to see us that we have to see you.

⁷So in the midst of all of our distress and persecution, dear brothers and sisters, we have been so greatly encouraged by your uncompromising and lasting faith!

⁸Now we can survive, if you continue to stand firm in your faith and obedience to the Lord.

⁹How can we thank God enough for you? How can we sufficiently thank God for all the joy we experience as we rejoice before Him because of you?

¹⁰Both day and night we talk to God about you, in exceeding measure, asking Him to make it possible for us to see you again, so that we may be able to finish out whatever is still lacking in your faith.

that he would be rewarded by Christ according to the number of people he had influenced and won to follow Jesus, and according to the quality of faith and dedication he had built into these people.

This is surely something for all of us to bear in mind. No doubt our rewards will be determined by many other factors as well, but the winning of others and the building up of the faith of believers will be a prime consideration on the part of our Lord.

3:5a The temptations that Satan uses are many. There are the various allurements of the world, including time-wasting entertainments that do nothing for our eternal souls or the souls of others, the seeking of wealth for selfish reasons, and the desire for possessions for the sake of ease, pride, and power—and so many more.

Then there are the many appetites of our body that Satan keeps tempting us to satisfy in a wrong way. And old friends will come around and do their very best to tempt us to return to our sinning.

There's also the danger of false teachers leading

¹¹May God our Father, Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ open the way now for us to come to you!

¹²And may the Lord cause your love for each other and for everyone else to increase and to literally abound, in the same way that our love does for you.

¹³This will result in your hearts being firmly established in holy dedication to Him. The end result will be that you will then be without guilt when you stand before our God and Father on that great Day when our Lord Jesus Christ comes with all His holy ones.^a

A Life that Pleases God

4 In addition, let me say this, dear friends: You learned from us how you should live to please God. And, in fact, that's the way you are living. But we urge and beg you by the authority of the Lord Jesus that you be even more concerned than ever to live to please Him.^a

²Because you know what the instructions were that we gave you from the Lord Jesus.

³God wants all of you to live in absolute purity—especially that you keep yourselves from committing sexual immorality.^a

⁴This means that each of you is to learn to control your body in an honorable way, in moral purity,

⁵not yielding to any lustful desires, as the people of the world do who don't know God.^a

⁶So you must never go beyond the bounds God

us astray.

And the severity of persecution is not easy to endure.

Satan has many methods of seducing us even after we have been converted to Christ. But God is far more powerful than Satan. Call on Him urgently for help when you are tempted! And keep your mind on the prize ahead. Those who are lost have only Hell to look forward to. What a sad and awful future! Remain true to Jesus, no matter what the temporary consequences may be! The future with Him is so bright. "It will be worth it all when we see Jesus!"

3:13a 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Matthew 24:29-31.

4:1a Never feel that you have arrived spiritually. There are ever greater heights and depths to attain in our dedication to Christ, and in our obedience and service to Him.

4:3a See Ephesians 5:3 note.

4:5a Romans 1:18-20.

has set, and cheat another man by sinning with his wife.^a As we have told you and so strongly warned you before, the Lord never fails to severely punish all such sinning.^b

⁷Because when God called us to follow Him and inherit His Kingdom, He didn't tell us we could continue to live impure lives. No, He has called each of us to live a holy life!^a

⁸The one who rejects this instruction, then, is not rejecting man, but God, who also has given us His Holy Spirit.^a

⁹Now I certainly don't need to write you anything about loving others who love and obey the Lord, because God has already taught you to love one another.

¹⁰In fact, you have already shown your love for all of God's people thruout all of northern Greece. But we urge you, dear friends, to abound in your love toward them.

4:6a This also includes sinning with another woman's husband. And all sex among singles is cheating the person you may eventually marry, as well as the person who may eventually marry that one with whom you are sinning.

4:6b Don't ever think you will get away with it. God always sees what you are doing (Proverbs 5:21; 15:3) at all times. And you will be rewarded or punished according to how you are living (Galatians 6:7-8), without fail. Sooner or later you will pay dearly for your sin. Instead, live in such a way that God can and will bless you.

4:7a But we need His constant help in order to do this. And He has promised that help. John 15:1-5; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 1. And the rewards for faithfulness are so great, both now and forever—but the alternative so horrendous!

4:8a ... so that we may be able to live holy lives.

4:13a One fact about which God does not want His people to be ignorant concerns those who die as true Christians. It is His sure promise that they will be resurrected to life everlasting at Christ's second coming. Christians are not to grieve at the passing of a saved loved one in the excessive manner as the people of the world. It is natural to deeply miss a loved one taken by death, and the Christian grieves at the separation. But greater than the grief is the wonderful joy that comes with the knowledge that the loved one is with the Lord and is happier than he or she ever was in this life. ... to be with Christ, which would be far better ... Philippians 1:23.

4:14a Paul had talked with those who had seen, eaten and talked with Jesus after He had risen from the dead. Paul had also seen Him and talked with

¹¹Also, make it your goal to lead an orderly, peaceful life, minding your own business and working industriously, as we already taught you.

¹²In that way, you will gain the respect of those who are not followers of the Lord, and you won't have to depend on anyone for the things you need.

The Coming of the Lord

¹³And listen, dear friends, I don't want you to be ignorant about what's happened to the true followers of the Lord who have died, so that you don't grieve over them as others do who have no hope.^a

¹⁴For since we are fully convinced that Jesus died and then came back to life again,^a we know that all who have found forgiveness and new life thru Him, and have fallen asleep in death, God will raise back to life again. He will bring them all back with Jesus when He returns.

¹⁵I can tell you exactly what the Lord has said

Him. He had solid proof that Christ had indeed risen.

Christ's death on the cross is the Christian's assurance of God's forgiveness of his sins. And Christ's resurrection from the dead is his assurance that he too will rise and live forever. These assurances should give every child of God the hope and the knowledge that when Christ returns, He will bring with Him all of His who have already left this life.

4:16a Matthew 24:29-31; John 5:28-29; Acts 1:9-11.

4:15-16b Paul wanted these new believers in Thessalonica to know positively that what he has to say here is *what the Lord has said about this*. His letters were inspired by *the Lord*, of course, but these verses contain the direct word to Paul *from the Lord*. The message is: *When the Lord returns, those of us who are alive will clearly not rise up to meet Him ahead of those who have died*. In other words, when the Lord comes, *the dead who belong to Christ will be the first to rise*.

The Lord Himself will come down from Heaven with a powerful shout of command, together with the voice of an archangel and the sounding of the trumpet of God. What a display of splendor and power that will be! And what a joyous occasion it will be for the Lord, for His angels, and especially for all of us who have longed and waited and looked for His coming. The *archangel* will announce the coming of the King! *The Lord Himself* will come with rejoicing and *with a powerful shout of command*! He will command the dead who belong to Him to rise back to life, and those still alive to be changed, to receive their glorified bodies.

Concerning *the trumpet of God*, compare Isaiah 27:12-13, Matthew 24:29-31, 1 Corinthians 15:51-

about this: When the Lord returns, those of us who are alive will clearly not rise up to meet Him ahead of those who are asleep in death.

¹⁶Because the Lord Himself will come down from Heaven with a powerful shout of command,^a together with the voice of an archangel and the sounding of the trumpet of God! The dead who belong to Christ will then come back to life and be the first to rise.^b

¹⁷Then we who are living for the Lord and are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. From that moment on, we will always be with the Lord!^a

¹⁸So continue to encourage one another with this Great News!^a

Be Ready for the Lord's Coming

5 But, my brothers and sisters, you don't have any need for me to write you about the period

53; Revelation 8:1-2; 11:14-19; 15:1 to 16:21. These Scriptures all point to the same event. This trumpet sound is called *the last trumpet* in 1 Corinthians 15:52, so this event coincides with Matthew 24:29-31. Clearly, the Rapture of God's people will take place soon after the Battle of Armageddon. That's when *the last trumpet* of this age will sound. No Scripture declares a Rapture before the Great Tribulation.

Be sure to read the note for Matthew 24:30 and Appendix 201, page 467, in regard to the Rapture.

4:17a Then, after the dead who belong to Christ have been raised, *we who are still alive will be caught up with them*. And there, together, we will *meet the Lord in the air*. There will never again be a separating of loved ones or of friends. Most wonderful of all, there will never again be a separation from our wonderful Lord. *From that moment on we will be with the Lord forever! We will be with the Lord*, to see Him, to live with Him, and to enjoy Him forever.

4:18a And, oh, what comfort this Great News is! This is our hope, our expectation, and our goal. Therefore keep your eye on the goal, daily, hourly, and moment by moment. See also Luke 21:36; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

5:1-2a When will the Day of the Lord come? See Appendix 223, page 484.

5:3a Not annihilation, but ruination, as when a body is ruined but still living, as in 1 Corinthians 5:5.

5:3b The time when people were saying *Everything is so peaceful and safe now* in greater measure, perhaps, than before or since, occurred just before World War I. Many of the churches were preaching that their destiny included *ushering in*

of time or the date when all this will happen.

²Because you yourselves know as well as I do that the Day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief coming in the night.^a

³It will happen when people are saying, "Everything is so peaceful and safe now." Then sudden destruction^a will overwhelm them! It will come suddenly, like birth pangs when a woman is about to give birth to a child,^b and there will be no escape.

⁴But you, my brothers and sisters, are not in the dark^a about such matters. So the great Day should not surprise you like a thief.

⁵You are not people of the night, whose understanding is befogged in darkness. You are all children of the day, who have light and understanding about these matters.^a

⁶So let's not be asleep, as others are.^a But let's continually be on the alert, always in control of

the Kingdom of God. Everything was getting better and better, they said. Soon there would be no more war. They claimed that the people of the world were too civilized to ever again use war as a means of settling misunderstandings and disputes.

It was following such talk and the false sense of security this brought, that World War I broke loose in all its fury on mankind. Never before had there been a war involving so much of the entire world. It was the beginning of the *birth pangs* of Matthew 24:8; Mark 13:8b. The rebirth of Israel has already resulted from these *birth pangs*, and the birth of the Kingdom of Christ on earth will soon be the final result.

The first birth pang was World War I. Since then there have been many pangs. And the pangs will increase in frequency and intensity as the coming of the Lord draws ever closer.

5:4a Prior to that day, or that period, Christians need not be in darkness as to what is happening, or as to the general working out of God's timetable. Jesus told His followers that no one knows or would know "the day and hour" of His return. Mark 13:32. But thru Paul He tells us here that we should be alert and awake to the promises and signs of the Lord's coming. The Lord has *not* left His own *in darkness* in regard to *that Day*. The Lord has given us much information about the end time.

5:5a You have light because you have God's message to mankind, from which you can discover how God would have you live. You can then be ready at all times, no matter when He comes, or if He calls you by death, even today. You also have God's many words of prophecy.

5:6a We dare not be asleep or insensible to God's instructions to us. Those in such a state are in

our desires and passions.

⁷Because those who sleep do so when darkness falls,^a and those who get drunk get drunk in the darkness of night.^b

⁸But those of us who belong to the light of day need to take every precaution to make sure that we are fully awake spiritually, and in full control of our lives.^a So put on the breastplate of faith and love,^b and as a helmet, make absolutely certain that you have the Scripture-based hope that you will be saved.^c

⁹Because we know that God has not appointed us to be destroyed by His wrath,^a but to be saved by means of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁰He died for us, so that whether we are still alert and watchfully living for Him when He comes, or have died in true hope, we will live together with Him forever.

¹¹So for that reason, continue to encourage and build each other up,^a just as you are doing.

Final Instructions and Greetings

¹²Now, dear friends, we urge you to respect and

honor those who work so hard among you, who continue to make sure you are living for the Lord, always warning and admonishing you.^a

¹³Always have the highest loving regard for them because of the life-saving and life-building work they are doing. And live in peace with each other.

¹⁴Seriously consider now these words of counsel: Warn those in the church who are wasting their lives and are neglectful of their duties, and are actually lazy and unconcerned about their responsibilities to the Lord and their fellow men.^a Encourage the timid,^b strengthen the weak, and be patient with everyone.

¹⁵Let no one pay back evil for evil to anyone, but encourage them to look for ways to help each other, and to help others too.

¹⁶Always be joyful.^a

¹⁷Pray continually.^a

¹⁸Give thanks to God in whatever circumstance you find yourselves,^a because God desires this kind of thankfulness from you because of all He has done for you thru Christ Jesus.

¹⁹Don't muzzle the Holy Spirit!

darkness, facing sure judgment. Only those who are ready will enter God's Heaven. Matthew 24:36-51; 25:1-13; Luke 12:35-40; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.

5:7a Darkness falls when God's message is ignored or unheeded.

5:7b Stupefied by their sinful, self-centered indulgences.

There is the danger of even us Christians becoming drunk with pleasures, possessions, or even the cares of this life. Our preparations for the Great Day of the Lord's coming, and our thoughts and desires concerning that Great Day must always have top priority!

5:8a ... *and not stupefied by the pleasures and goals of this brief and uncertain life. Today* is the Christian's *day*. It is not a day in which to be *asleep*! This is the day of opportunity to serve the Lord with diligence and with power. This is the day just before our Lord's coming! But those who are of *the night* are sound *asleep*. They are drunk with various desires, appetites, and successes of the world. While they are living for what they can gain from this brief day of darkness, the true Christian is looking forward to the everlasting Day of Life (multiplied billions of trillions of years without end) promised us by the Lord!

5:8b Faith in God's promises, and love for both God and man in a very real sense.

5:8c Are you claiming *the sure hope that you will be saved* according to God's complete message? Or

do you choose to ignore certain warnings and commands in the New Testament, believing they are nonessential as far as you are concerned? Nothing in God's word is to be taken lightly! In the same measure that you value your eternal soul, you must give diligent heed to all of God's word. 2 Peter 1:10.

5:9a What is Paul actually saying here? See Appendix 224, page 485.

5:11a We Christians are to continually encourage one another to continue to live in faithful obedience to Christ, in all matters. Colossians 1:23.

5:12a If they are not doing this, you have no business keeping them as ministers of the Lord's truths for yourself, your family, and others! The issues that deal with your relationship with God and the endless eternity before you are too all-important to be neglected or dealt with lightly!

5:14a The Greek word *atáktous* encompasses all of this statement, and more, in its full meaning. The word can also mean, *not at one's post*. That's a military term, and we are indeed at war! A war against evil and its awful consequences. We dare not be lazy or cowardly, or we face court-martial! Matthew 25:14-30 and Revelation 21:8 apply here.

5:14b Timid about witnessing or taking a stand for Christ. This can include other timidity as well. Christians need to learn to be bold and courageous in every situation, as they look to the Lord to undertake for them. Kneel to conquer!

5:16a Romans 8:28.

5:17a Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:4,6-7.

²⁰ Don't despise prophecies.

²¹ But do carefully test everything that is said,^a and accept whatever passes the test.

²² Refuse to have anything to do with any kind of evil.

²³ Now may God Himself, the God of peace, purify you completely. May your entire spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ returns.

²⁴ The One who calls you to Himself is faithful, and He will do what He has promised.^a

²⁵ And, brothers and sisters, keep on praying for

us too.

²⁶ Greet every follower of the Lord with a most heartfelt greeting.

²⁷ I bind you under oath before the Lord that this letter be read in the presence of all who are genuine followers of Christ Jesus.

²⁸ May God's richest blessings abound toward all of you thru our Lord Jesus Christ. So be it!

Sincerely in Christ,
Paul, Silas, and
Timothy

5:18a Romans 8:28.

5:21a ... *to make sure that it agrees with the word of God.*

5:24a 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 2:12-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Hebrews 2:18; 1 John 1:8-9.

And listen, dear friends, I don't want you to be ignorant about what's happened to the true followers of the Lord who have died, so that you don't grieve over them as others do who have no hope.

¹⁴For since we are fully convinced that Jesus died and then came back to life again, we know that all who have found forgiveness and new life thru Him, and have fallen asleep in death, God will raise back to life again. He will bring them all back with Jesus when He returns.

¹⁵I can tell you exactly what the Lord has said about this: When the Lord returns, those of us who are alive will clearly not rise up to meet Him ahead of those who are asleep in death.

¹⁶Because the Lord Himself will come down from Heaven with a powerful shout of command, together with the voice of an archangel and the sounding of the trumpet of God! The dead who belong to Christ will then come back to life and be the first to rise.

¹⁷Then we who are living for the Lord and are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. From that moment on, we will always be with the Lord!

¹⁸So continue to encourage one another with this Great News!

—I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Paul's Second Letter to the THESSALONIANS

Dear Friends in Thessalonica:

Greetings, to all of you there in God's assembly in Thessalonica who are united in mind and heart to God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is from Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

²May our God and Father fill your lives with rich blessings, and give you joyous peace thru Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Judgment at Christ's Coming

³It is only fitting and right that we continue to thank God for you, dear brothers and sisters, because of the outstanding way your faith is growing, and for the way each of you continues to abound in your love for each other.

⁴In fact, we are continually speaking highly of

you to the other assemblies of God's people, telling them about your faithfulness and endurance thru all the persecutions and testings you're going thru.^a

⁵And let me tell you: Your genuine faith and love, and your uncomplaining patience in suffering for God's Kingdom, give clear evidence that God will be doing what's right when He judges you worthy to inherit His Kingdom.

⁶For the same reason, He will also be doing right when He heaps misery upon those who are now heaping such misery upon you,^a

⁷and then gives you, who are now receiving such ill treatment, rest and tranquillity together with us. This will happen when Christ is revealed,^a coming from Heaven with His powerful angels.^b

⁸With flaming fire^a He will punish all who have

1:4a The spiritual growth at the church in Thessalonica was so extraordinary that Paul encouraged *other churches* to follow their example. They were not having an easy time of it. They were in the midst of a time of *persecution*.

One of the things for which Paul commends these people is their *endurance*. They knew that for them the end of this life simply meant stepping into the presence of God. They realized, as we must also, that while life is extremely brief, eternity is entirely without end. Therefore they were willing to hang in there and endure *persecutions and testings* for Christ, knowing that the rewards they would receive would make the suffering seem as no cost at all.

1:6a Paul tells them that their patience and faith while suffering for Christ was ample reason for the righteous judgment of God upon the wicked who were persecuting them. It is wonderful for the Christian to meditate about a glorious eternity with God. But likewise, the ungodly should rivet their eyes upon the terrible loss and misery that will be theirs in an eternity without Christ.

Though Christians may receive tribulation now for a brief time, the ungodly will receive untold tribulation in eternity, with no promise of an end, or even a brief rest.

1:7a Notice that we're told here when the Rapture will occur. It will happen when Christ is *revealed* in the heavens for all to see, *coming from Heaven with His powerful angels*. See Matthew 24:29-31.

1:7b The great hope of the Christian, whether he or she lives or dies, is the glorious meeting with *Christ* when He returns—and then to be with Him forever.

Have you ever compared life here with eternity? Let's draw a short line, one inch in length, to represent our present life on earth, and a longer one to illustrate eternity. Let us say that the one inch line represents 100 years, which is far beyond the time most people will live. How long should we make the line that represents eternity? That's right—it will be a line without end. It will go across the page, across the room, across the nation, across the ocean, out into space beyond the moon, beyond the sun—beyond the stars.

Is it not then real wisdom to devote this one inch line—representing our brief life—to the Lord? Where can you make an investment that will pay greater dividends? Our Lord simply asks our love, trust, and obedience. He certainly deserves all of that, when He is the One who brought us into existence, and made us in His very own image and likeness, with desire that we be His children forever.

If you haven't yet done so, why not turn right now to the back of the Book and read Appendix 247, page 520, entitled, *The Amazing Story of God*. There you will discover who you really are, and what your destiny can be, and what to do about it.

1:8a When the Lord returns, it will indeed be *with flaming fire*. His judgment of fire will fall upon the

willfully ignored God.^b The same will also happen to all who are not obeying the Lord's instructions and commands contained in the Great News.^c

⁹They will suffer the punishment of destruction^a that will last forever,^b shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His majestic power.^c

¹⁰This will happen on that glorious Day when Messiah comes to receive great praise from those who are truly dedicated to Him. All who have believed will be astonished and filled with wonder

armies gathered at Armageddon, as, *Out of His mouth came a sharp sword, which would enable Him to strike down the nations.* Revelation 16:12-16; 19:11-21. Following Armageddon, many areas upon earth will evidently be literally bathed in fire. 2 Peter 3:10-13. His judgment of fire will also fall upon those on His left hand at the judgment of the nations, as they are sent from Him *into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.* Matthew 25:41.

At the judgment seat of Christ, the works of service of true Christians will be tested by fire, and the foolish and ineffective works will be burned up. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. And at the Great White Throne Judgment, following the first 1,000 years of our Lord's reign on earth, the ungodly of all time will be *thrown into the lake of fire.* Revelation 20:11-15.

Will this *fire* be literal fire as we know it? Well, if it's not, we can be sure it will be just as devastating and just as awesome and awful. If the term *fire* is just a symbol, the reality for which it stands may actually be far worse.

1:8b Romans 1:18-20; 2 Peter 3:3-7.

1:8c Romans 2:6-16; 6:11-16; Hebrews 5:9.

1:9a Not annihilation, but ruination, as when a human body is ruined by disease or malfunction of organs, but still lives, as in 1 Corinthians 5:5. The same Greek word is used here, also in 1 Timothy 6:9.

1:9b Will the ungodly really be punished by the Lord with *destruction that will last forever*? Will they be conscious all that time? This is the only information God has given us, that they will be. Matthew 25:41,46; Revelation 14:11; 20:10. We might say that we would never treat anyone that way, and surely God will not. But just because we would not do something doesn't mean that God will not. We can hope that somewhere, sometime, God will give them another opportunity, but there is nothing in the word of God which would lead us to believe that anyone will be given a second chance. Therefore, we must warn the lost of the terrible judgment which awaits them unless they turn from

at His powerful and majestic presence. You will be there, too, because you believed^a all that we shared with you.^b

¹¹That's why we are constantly praying for you,^a that our God may judge you worthy of the place and position to which He has called you. May He enable you to fulfill every one of your good intentions regarding the good things you desire to accomplish. By faith may you serve Him effectively thru His power.

¹²We pray all this so that the very name of our

their sin and accept God's offer of His love and forgiveness.

Even if the words *forever and ever* in Revelation 20:10 are to be translated literally *to the ages of the ages*, they say the same thing. It's *time out of mind*. Some believe the lost will have a second chance after being in the lake of fire after many, many thousands of years, after *ages upon ages*. But who in his right mind would be willing to be tortured for even 100 long years in exchange for the very temporary satisfaction of some sin? Right now, this moment, is the time you can accept God's mercy and be forgiven, and live! You have no assurance of another tomorrow.

1:9c We do not know how much the lost will be made aware of our Lord's *glory and power*. Perhaps they, too, will finally *know as they are known* and will have full realization of what it is that they have despised. Such knowledge would certainly add to their anguish and punishment.

1:10a ... and acted upon ...

1:10b There will be many in Heaven *because Paul's testimony was believed*. Let us likewise give an earnest and clear testimony to others (Romans 10:9-10), together with earnest prayer for them, that our Lord may *be glorified* in the many we are able to present to Him.

1:11a Paul *prayed* for the Thessalonians that they would be genuinely converted to the Lord, and not later prove themselves to be mere pretenders. So many today pretend to be Christians, but they reveal their hypocrisy, because they refuse to really obey the Lord. They don't even take the time to read His word to find what His will is for them.

Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians was that they would be genuine Christians, filled with God's Spirit, serving Him in *His power*. We need to earnestly pray for ourselves in the same way. We need to pray for our fellow Christians, our fellow church members, our "Christian" nation.

2:1-2a (Concerning *the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* see the notes on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.) The last words of v 1, *and our being gathered together to be with Him*, make it very clear that the

Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified thru you. May you also be glorified by the undeserved ways our God and the Lord Jesus Christ bless and use you.

***The Astounding Happenings
Just Prior to Christ's Return***

2 Now, my dear brothers and sisters, let me clear up some things for you concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to be with Him.

²In the first place, do not allow yourselves to be

easily shaken up or terrified by a supposed message from the Holy Spirit, or by a verbal report or letter said to be from us, saying that the Day of Christ is already here.^a

³Don't let anyone fool you by any means! Because that Day will not come until there is first a great rebellion against God, and the utterly vile person who will glorify sin, the man utterly devoted to lawlessness and destruction, has appeared on the world scene and has been clearly revealed for who he really is.^a

apostle is speaking again of the second coming of Christ, when He will gather His own to Himself. Our *being gathered together to be with Him* will take place at the Rapture. Matthew 24:29-31; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18.

In v 2 he tells them that they are not to be easily shaken up or terrified by anyone who tries to tell them that the *Day of Christ is already here*. The term, *the Day of Christ*, is not to be confused with the term, *the Day of the Lord*. *The Day of the Lord* refers to judgment, the period when Christ will come to judge the earth, while *the Day of Christ* refers to Jesus' coming to set up His Kingdom on earth. The term, *the Day of Christ*, is mentioned in only three other Scriptures: Philippians 1:6,10, and 2:16.

Almost all modern translators have translated the phrase here in 2 Thessalonians 2:2, *the Day of the Lord*, instead of *the Day of Christ*. But they have used the words *the Day of Christ* in the Philippians verses. This is absolutely not warranted. The Greek very definitely states *the Day of Christ* in all four verses. Why change the wording here to *the Day of the Lord* when this Scripture so definitely speaks about the Rapture in relation to *the Day of Christ* and not in relation to *the Day of the Lord*?

The apparent reason these modern translators have used the words *the Day of the Lord* here is because they have followed the Greek text of Westcott and Hort. That Greek text came out in 1881, and omits and changes much of the word of God. The old Received Text (the Textus Receptus), from which the King James translation was made, in our opinion is the reliable Greek text. The text you are reading in this translation has been translated from the Textus Receptus.

Here are the verses in Philippians translated from the phrase *the Day of Christ*.

1:6 So there's one thing I feel very confident about, and that is that the Lord will continue the good work He has begun in your lives until He brings it to completion on the Day when Jesus Christ returns.

1:10 This deeper insight is absolutely neces-

sary if your lives are to be filled with all the truly good qualities with which Jesus Christ desires to fill them, so that you will be found to be pure and blameless on the Day when He returns.

2:16 If you do that, I will have cause to greatly rejoice on the Day when Christ appears from Heaven, because that will mean that all my work among you was not wasted effort.

In reading these verses, it is very clear that Paul was not looking forward to *the Day of the Lord*, which will be the time of judgment upon the earth, but to *the Day of Christ*, which will be that day when we shall have been either resurrected or taken up to be with Christ from that point on, forever. *The Day of Christ* appears to refer both to the time of Christ's coming to set up His Kingdom on earth, and also to the endless time of His reign.

2:3a Paul indicates that before Christ returns to gather together His own to Himself, *two conditions will prevail*. The first condition is termed *the great rebellion against God*. According to v 7, this rebellion was already trying to assert itself in Paul's time. Today we see evidence of this rebellion everywhere.

Some of the Bible students who believe in a pre-tribulation Rapture of the Church claim that the Greek word *apostasia* (translated *rebellion* here) means to *depart*. They point out that the verb form of *apostasia*, which is *aphistemi*, is used in many other instances to indicate a departure from a certain place. But the verb form is not used in this particular verse. The noun form, *apostasia*, is used, which means *rebellion, abandonment*; and in the religious sense *falling away, apostasy*.

That's exactly what's happening today—the world is rebelling against God's moral standards, and the Church is apostatizing and preaching an easy way to Heaven, which will not get you there!

The Bible students who translate this Greek word to mean a *departure* from a certain point, believe that the words *until there has first come the great rebellion against God* really should read *until there has first come a great departure*. The departure meant, of course, is the departure of the

⁴He will continually oppose everything that is called God or is revered and worshiped, and will glorify himself above them all.^a He will even sit as God in the Most Holy Place in God's Temple,^b arrogantly proclaiming that he himself is God.^c

⁵Don't you remember that I told you all this while I was still there with you?^a

⁶You also know what it is that's now holding him back, so that he can't come on the scene until it's time for him to come.

⁷The fermentation of rebellion against God is already secretly at work, and only the restraining power of the One^a holding this rebellion down is keeping it in check. And He will continue to do so, until He steps out of their way.

⁸That's when the lawless one will be revealed, the one whom the Lord will later destroy with the breath of His mouth and bring down to nothing by the brilliance of His coming.^a

⁹When this wicked one appears, he will come

with all the awesome powers of Satan himself. With Satan's power, he will perform miracles, and by fraud he will cause various other wonders to happen.

¹⁰He will use all kinds of evil deception to encourage those who are on their way to a living death in Hell to thoroughly indulge themselves in sin. They will be like clay in his hands because they did not open themselves to a love for the truth, so that they might be saved.^a

¹¹For that reason, God will send them strong misleading influences^a so that they will believe the lie,^b

¹²so that all who have not believed the truth but have delighted in living immoral and self-indulgent lives might be justly judged and condemned.^a

Stand Firm! Be Faithful!

¹³But we have strong reason to always give

Church of Christ from earth—the Rapture. But notice, that while the Greek word *apostasia* definitely does not have this meaning, also, the context does not support such an interpretation. The apostle Paul is talking about what will precede *our gathering together to be with Christ*. v 1.

If *apostasia* should be interpreted as the strict pre-tribulation rapturists desire, Paul would actually be saying, *The Day of our gathering together to be with Christ cannot occur until we have first departed to be with Christ*. This of course doesn't make sense.

It should be obvious, then, that the term *the great rebellion against God* refers to a great apostasy, a great abandonment of truth on the part of many who pose as ministers of Christ, and violent rebellion by the world against God's moral standards and against His true people, which we are now witnessing. This is one of the signs the Lord has given which will precede His coming to *gather together* His own to Himself.

For more information about this *great rebellion and falling away*, read the notes on 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-7, 12, 13; 4:1-4. Each of these Scriptures indicates that both the Church and the world have now entered this time of rebellion.

* * *

The second condition to be evident before *our being gathered together to be with Christ is that the man of sin must be clearly revealed for who he really is*. Paul is speaking of the Antichrist. Read the notes in this connection in Revelation 13:1-10. The false christ will be positively identified when he sits in the Temple in Jerusalem (which has not yet

been rebuilt at this writing), *proclaiming that he himself is God*. v 4.

One thing to bear in mind in studying this verse is that Paul was strongly warning the people of the Thessalonian Church that they were *not to let anyone fool them by any means* about the time of *their being gathered together to be with Christ*. If Paul gave such clear instructions to the Church in that day, that they were not to expect the Rapture of the Church until the two stated conditions had been fulfilled, the same instructions surely apply today.

If it were possible to question Paul today about when Christ would gather us to be with Himself, he would certainly say the same words he wrote to the Thessalonians.

Some pre-tribulationists admit that Paul evidently referred here to a gathering of Christ's own at *the Day of Christ* when Christ returns to earth to reign. Matthew 24:31. But they claim that there will also be a Rapture of the Church before that time. But how can there be a Rapture before, when Paul says here that we will *not* be gathered together to be with Christ before the *two conditions* exist that are mentioned here? Let's be honest with the truth, and not tenaciously hang on to a teaching just because that's the way most people in our church believe or because that's the way we want to believe. Why not believe God's word?

2:4a His great and constant obsession will be to oppose and destroy everything and everyone who has anything to do with God. It appears from this Scripture that he will even oppose non-Christian religions, demanding that he alone be worshiped. Daniel 8:23-25.

thanks to God for you, dear brothers and sisters, who are so dearly loved by the Lord, because from the very beginning God chose to save you^a by the purifying work of the Holy Spirit in your lives and by your belief in the truth.

¹⁴God used our preaching of the Great News as His means of calling you to Himself, so that you might obtain the glory^a of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁵So, my dear friends, continue to stand firm in your determination to live only to please God. And continue to hold on to all the truths you were taught, both what I taught you in person and what I've written by letter.

¹⁶Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father—who have loved us and given us such great encouragement about the ages to come, along with a hope that is absolutely sure, thru favor we don't deserve—

¹⁷encourage and strengthen your hearts in every good thing you say and do.

Pray for Us

3 Finally, my brothers and sisters, continue to pray for us. Pray that the Lord's message may continue to be broadcast in a great way, and that it will be highly prized and revered, just as it was by you.

²And pray that we will be kept safe from bad-tempered and evil men, because not everyone is willing to receive the truth.

³But the Lord is faithful, and He will make you strong and protect you from Satan's evil intentions.^a

⁴And we have confidence that the Lord will be faithful in reminding you to both do, and continue to do, what we told you.

2:4b So the Temple in Jerusalem must be rebuilt before this can happen.

2:4c Some claim this means that Antichrist will reign from the Temple in Jerusalem. No, he will sit there briefly in puny, contemptuous defiance of Almighty God. But then, according to Daniel 8:11 he will order the Temple torn down. Antichrist will reign during his brief time from Babylon. Isaiah 14:4 (14:1-7); Jeremiah 50:43; 51:31 (51:1-58).

2:5a Paul had evidently spoken earlier to the Thessalonians about these revelations. Somehow, they had been confused by other teachers and had been led to believe that they could expect the Lord's coming for them at any moment, or that He had already come.

2:7a The Holy Spirit. In God's time, the Holy Spirit will step aside and will no longer hold sin in check, but will allow mankind to reveal just how sinful they truly are. When the rebellion is full blown, the Antichrist will appear. Daniel 8:23. Many believe the Holy Spirit has already stepped aside, and that God is now allowing the world-wide rebellion against Him to take its course. The end of this age appears to be very near! *Prepare now to meet your God!* Remember, Heaven is real—but so is Hell!

Many believe that the Rapture of the Church is what takes place here. But in the Greek text, it is referring to one person; it's in the singular, referring to the Holy Spirit. It's in the singular all the way. If it was referring to the Rapture of the members of Christ's Church, it would have been in the plural, referring to many. The literal Greek is *until out of the midst be gone*. If Paul was referring to the Rapture of the Church, he would have used the Greek word *ekaíro*, which means *to lift up*

from, or to take up out of any place.

2:8a Antichrist will wreak havoc in the world for at least three-and-one-half years while he is coming to power, and for an additional 3 1/2 years while he is in power. Following this seven-year period, Antichrist will be *destroyed by the brilliance of Christ's coming*. See notes on 1:8-9; Revelation 19:11-21.

2:9-10a Antichrist will be able to do *miracles and wonders* to deceive the world, because he will be empowered by Satan. Daniel 8:24a. God, in His turn, will allow the world to be deceived *because they did not open themselves to a love for the truth, so that they might be saved*. They are determined to go in their own sinful way, so God will give them up to do just that. But then, they must accept the wages that sin pays. Romans 6:23.

2:11a Or *erroneous beliefs, mistaken convictions, false impressions*. Literally *a working of error*.

2:11b Romans 1:24-25.

2:11-12a Even though these Scriptures of prophecy will be very understandable in the last days to those who diligently study them, those who determine to go their own way will be blinded by *misleading influences* from God. They will *believe the lies* of the Antichrist, *so that all who have not believed the truth but delighted in living immoral and self-indulgent lives might be judged and condemned*. Therefore, let everyone who is presently a rebel against God and His will, cry for mercy while the door to eternal life is still open!

2:13a Romans 8:28-29.

2:14a Romans 3:23; 8:18; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; Hebrews 2:10.

3:3a See Hebrews 2:18 refs., and notes.

⁵ May the Lord Jesus in a most victorious way^a lead you to love God with all your hearts, and to endure your trials as patiently as He did His.

Warning Against Laziness

⁶ And, dear friends, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I command that you withdraw from association with any members of your fellowship who loaf around and refuse to follow the instructions we gave them!^a

⁷ You yourselves know that it's only right that you should follow our example. We didn't waste our time in a lazy manner when we were with you.

⁸ We didn't eat anyone's food without paying for it. But we worked and toiled day and night, so we wouldn't be a burden to any of you.

⁹ We didn't do this because we didn't have any right to expect your support, but we did it in order to set an example for you to follow.

¹⁰ Because even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If anyone refuses to work, refuse to feed him."

¹¹ We say this because we hear there are some among you living undisciplined lives, doing no work at all, but always meddling in other people's business.

¹² By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, we order and urge such people to get to work, to mind their own business, and eat their own food!

¹³ As for the rest of you dear friends, never get discouraged doing the good you're doing.

¹⁴ If anyone refuses to obey our instructions in this letter, take special note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, so that he'll be ashamed of himself.

¹⁵ However, don't consider him an enemy, but admonish him as a brother who needs your help.

Final Words

¹⁶ Now may the Lord Himself, who is the source of our peace, give you peace continually in every circumstance and situation. May the Lord be with each of you at all times.^a

¹⁷ *Please notice that I, Paul, am writing these last words of greeting with my own hand.* I do this in every letter to give you proof that this is really from me, by the way I write.

¹⁸ May God continue to be most kind to all of you thru our Lord Jesus Christ. So be it.

Sincerely in Christ,
Paul, Silas, and
Timothy

3:5a In the Greek text, the optative mood. The mood of strong possibility.

3:6a 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.

3:16a Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5-6.

Now, my dear brothers and sisters, let me clear up some things for you concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to be with Him.

³ Don't let anyone fool you by any means! Because that Day will not come until there is first a great rebellion against God, and the utterly vile person who will glorify sin, the man utterly devoted to lawlessness and destruction, has appeared on the world scene and has been clearly revealed for who he really is.

—2 Thessalonians 2:1 & 3

Paul's First Letter to TIMOTHY

My Dear Timothy:

This is from Paul, a messenger of Jesus Christ, sent out by a command from God our Savior, and from the Lord Jesus Christ who is our hope.

²Timothy, you are my true son in the faith.^a May God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord continue to grant you favor you never could have earned, resulting in God being merciful to you and giving you great peace.

Warning Against False Teaching

³As I urged you when I left for northern Greece, be sure to stay in Ephesus so that you may command certain men to stop spreading their false teachings.^a

⁴Demand also that they stop wasting their time reciting mythological tales and the endless lists of their ancestors. Subjects of that nature cause only arguments, while preaching God's truth results in building up the Lord's followers in the faith.^a

⁵Now the result you are aiming for in giving this command is to promote love for both God and man, coming from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a faith that is genuine.

⁶But some of your preachers and teachers are way off course, and their teaching is actually without aim or purpose.^a

⁷They want to be known as teachers who can clearly explain the real meaning of the Law of Moses. But they don't even understand the true intent of the Law, so they know nothing about what they are so strongly teaching as truth.

⁸Now we know that the Law does indeed serve a

good purpose if a person has a right understanding of it and properly explains it.

⁹One must first realize that the Law is not directed at people whose main goal in life is to please God, but at lawbreakers and rebels, at the ungodly and the sinful, at the unholy and disrespectful, at those who even kill their fathers and mothers, and at all other murderers.

¹⁰It's also directed at fornicators^a and sexual perverts,^b at kidnappers and liars, at those who lie by giving false testimony, and at all who act in a manner contrary to wholesome teaching.

¹¹These regulations are also a vital part of the glorious Great News which has been entrusted to me by our marvelous God.

Thanks Be to God for His Kindness

¹²I'm so grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord for regarding me as one whom He could trust, and for that reason appointing me to serve Him, and then giving me the strength to do so.

¹³Even though I used to curse Jesus and speak violently against Him, being cruelly insulting and rude to His followers and persecuting them in a most violent way, I was shown mercy because I did it without realizing what I was actually doing. I honestly didn't believe that Jesus was our long-awaited Messiah.

¹⁴So the mercy God showed me was far beyond anything I deserved, resulting in wonderful faith and love toward Christ Jesus on my part.

¹⁵A trustworthy statement that deserves to be wholeheartedly accepted by everyone is this: **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.** And of all sinners, I was the worst.^a

1:2a He was won to Christ by Paul, and served the Lord in the same selfless spirit that Paul did.

1:3a There is good reason to believe that the church in Ephesus was scattered in many homes, headed by an elder or bishop (overseer). Some think these home groups numbered in the hundreds.

Each group was headed by a congregational leader or elder, and training was something that essentially took place within each group. Though Paul's letters dealt with current problems in the churches, they were essentially training instruc-

tions for pastors and church leaders.

1:4a ... *and in winning the lost to faith in Jesus Christ.*

1:6a ... *preaching that makes no meaningful, lasting impact on the hearts of people for the glory of God.*

1:10a Fornication is voluntary sexual intercourse between persons of the opposite sex, who are not married to each other.

1:10b See Romans 1:26-27 note.

1:15a If God can forgive and give a new life to the worst sinner, He can forgive and give a new life to

¹⁶But I obtained mercy because Jesus Christ wanted to use me as object lesson number one, so He could show all others, by the inexhaustibly patient way He dealt with me, the worst sinner, how very merciful He wants to be to everyone else who will believe^a in Him, and that they will live forever by doing so.

¹⁷May the King who rules thruout all ages, who will never die, be given honor and glory forever and ever! Human eyes cannot see Him, but He alone, our God, is the only One who has complete wisdom in regard to all things! And so may it ever be!

¹⁸Timothy, my son, here are my instructions to you: If you are careful to faithfully follow the instructions you received when those prophets prophesied about you, then you can continue to fight well in the Lord's battles.

¹⁹Continue to live in obedience to the faith!^a By doing so, you will always have a clear conscience.^b Some have believed that they don't need to obey the commands and obligations of the faith, and by following thru in that belief, they have made a shipwreck of their faith.^c

²⁰Included among those are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to punish until they learn to stop speaking abusively against God's plain truth.^a

How to Pray

2 Here, then, is what I urge upon all followers of the Lord: Our first duty is to plead before God

you.

1:16a What does it mean to believe in Jesus? See Luke 14:26-33; John 3:36; Acts 16:31; Galatians 3:11, and the notes there.

1:19a This sentence is translated from just two words in the Greek text, *Holding faith*. Holding is in the present tense, denoting present continuous action. The implication here is obedience.

This is not referring to being faithful by continuing to believe with the mind, but to believe from the heart (Romans 10:9-10) by realizing what one's Christian duty is, and obeying all of Christ's teachings. No selective obedience is allowed from any soldier in any army. The expectation is total obedience to all commands—or court-martial will surely follow. And God's commands are no less demanding. Galatians 5:19-23; 6:7-9.

1:19b Again, this does not mean that God demands sinless perfection. He knows how weak we are. But He does demand perfect intent. That means that you will need to study the instruction manual, the New Testament, continuously, to be

for everyone. Intercede and plead most earnestly in prayer for them.^a And don't fail to thank God for the way He is working in answer to your prayers.^b

²Pray in the same way for the top government leaders, and for all who are in places of authority in our government, industry, and elsewhere. This will hopefully lead to our being allowed to live a peaceful and trouble-free life as we worship and serve God, and as we obey Him in our conduct toward our fellow men.

³It is only right that we pray in this way, and God our Savior is pleased when we do.

⁴Because it is His earnest desire that everyone should come to know what the truth really is, and be saved.^a

⁵Put briefly, the truth is this:

There is only one God,^a and there is only one Person who can act as a go-between between God and man. That Person is the Man whom we know as Christ Jesus.

⁶He's the One who gave Himself in suffering and death as a ransom to rescue all of us.^a And this news will be given to all mankind at the proper times.^b

⁷It's for this purpose that I've been appointed by God to be a preacher and missionary. Christ is my witness that I'm telling the truth and not lying when I state that I have been sent to tell the Gentiles^a that they too can be saved by believing this truth.

⁸So I want the men to pray everywhere, men

reminded of what Christ expects from you. A study of the Old Testament is also needful.

The Christian faith is not only a fellowship, but also an army! It's an awesome army, with each member having awesome power thru its Commander. The opposition trembles when confronted by even a single truly dedicated Christian soldier.

But we are powerless if we are insubordinate. To refuse or neglect to obey any command of our Lord means insubordination! And God will deal with insubordination just as severely, and even more severely, than any earthly army officer ever did. So let's determine to shape up in all matters—immediately! Romans 2:6-11; 6:11-16; Galatians 6:7-9; Hebrews 5:9.

1:19c Jude 12.

1:20a They were evidently speaking against God by teaching that it was not necessary to *fully obey* what Christ and His apostles taught.

2:1a And surely we must follow our prayers with our witness for Christ to all who are yet unconverted. It is sinful to expect God to send someone else

who can lift up their hands to God from a life that is pure, and is not fouled up by anger and heated arguments.

⁹I also want the women to dress modestly and sensibly, not trying to call attention to themselves with elaborate hair styles, gold ornaments, pearls, or expensive clothing.^a

¹⁰The main adornments appropriate for a woman who professes to love and obey the Lord are her good deeds.

¹¹She should learn in quietness and be fully submissive.

¹²Nor do I permit a woman to teach men or to have authority over men. She is to remain silent,

¹³because God made Adam first, then Eve.

¹⁴It wasn't Adam who was fooled by Satan to believe a lie; but it was the woman who was deceived, and who then fell into sin.

¹⁵But women will also be saved as a result of the birth of the Child,^a if they continue in faith toward Christ, showing true love for God and mankind, being ever watchful to live holy lives, and control their appetites of the body, and other desires.

Qualifications of Church Officers

3 Here's a statement that is indeed true: Any man wanting to be a pastor^a is desiring to do very worthwhile work.

²But a pastor must be one who cannot honestly

be charged with doing wrong. He must have only one wife, be cool-headed, wise in practical matters, and well-behaved. He must enjoy opening his home to entertain guests, and be a good teacher of the Scriptures.

³He must not be addicted to wine, nor one who is always wanting to fight. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome. He must not be greedy for money, always wanting more.

⁴He must be a man who manages his household well, whose children highly respect and love him and quickly obey without whining.

⁵Because if he doesn't know how to manage and control his own family, how will he be able to properly manage the church of God?

⁶He must not be a new follower of the Lord, or he may become conceited by being chosen so soon. Then he would be judged guilty of being proud, and would receive the same judgment as the devil.^a

⁷In addition, he must have the respect of those outside the Church. If he is morally weak, he will surely fall into the devil's trap and become the laughingstock of the world.

⁸Deacons, too, must be men who are worthy of respect, not saying one thing and then saying the opposite to someone else. They must not be drinkers of much wine, and must not be greedy for money, especially for money gotten by ignoble or

to witness to them when it's in our power to do so. See vss 4-6.

We must also pray for our fellow Christians and our Christian leaders. Here also we must follow our prayers with action, by speaking to them, especially if it's a minister who is preaching an easy way to Heaven, which is heresy. Don't just leave the church, speak up! Do your part in presenting to Christ (when He returns) *a glorious Church, one having no stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, being pure and unpolluted*. Ephesians 5:27.

2:1b By faith thank God for all He is now doing in their situations and in their hearts, and will yet do, as you and others continue to pray for them and witness to them.

2:4a But not everyone is willing to accept the truth and obey it, and God will not force anyone to be saved. However, God has given each follower the responsibility of offering them the opportunity.

2:5a John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6.

2:6a But the rescue provided must be accepted, and the conditions for rescue must be agreed to (that is, turning from sin to living to obey God).

2:6b The Greek word *kairois* is plural, and is correctly translated *proper times*.

2:7a All who are not Jews.

2:9a This is God's will for today as well.

2:15a This word is singular in the Greek, referring to the single fact of bearing children, or to a single birth. We believe this refers to the birth of Christ, for the following reasons: It's only by means of Christ that anyone can be saved, certainly not by childbearing. That would be salvation by works, which Paul so often declared was impossible. If women were saved by bearing children, then every woman would need to bear a child in order to be saved. Virgins, and married women who find it impossible to bear children, would have no chance to be saved.

If it means that God will spare the physical lives of women when they give birth to children, if they live holy lives, what about the many godly women who die while giving birth to a child? The only sensible conclusion is that this refers to the birth of Christ. Only because He was born, lived, died for us, and rose from death, can any of us be saved.

3:1a All pastors were *bishops*, meaning *overseers* in the early church. Only with the coming of the papacy did a hierarchy develop.

3:6a Isaiah 14:12-15; Jude 6.

dishonest means.

⁹They must not only continue to believe the truths revealed to us by the Great News, but they must also have a clear conscience, by living by what those truths reveal and command.

¹⁰These men should first be tested in less responsible positions in the church; and only then, if no problems are found with their lives and service, should they be allowed to serve as deacons.

¹¹Their wives^a too must be women who are worthy of respect, not malicious gossipers, but women who are self-controlled and faithful in everything.

¹²A deacon must be the husband of only one wife, and must manage his children and household well.

¹³Those who have served well as deacons gain great respect,^a and great confidence that their faith in Christ Jesus is genuine.

¹⁴Although I'm writing these things to you, I'm hoping to come your way soon.

¹⁵I'm writing this so that even if I'm delayed you'll know how the people ought to behave as members of the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation

support of the truth.

¹⁶And no one can dispute the fact that the mystery—as to why God has so graciously done so much for His people—is indeed great:

- God appeared to us in a human body.
- He was proved to indeed be the Son of God by the way the Holy Spirit worked thru Him.
- Angels were present and testified at His conception, His birth, His resurrection, and His ascension into Heaven.
- He has been proclaimed as the Savior who came to redeem people in all nations.
- In spite of the wickedness of the human heart, great numbers of people thruout the world have come to believe in Him.
- Then the triumphant Son of God was received back up into Heaven as His followers watched Him go.

Instructions to Timothy

4 But in spite of all of this, the Holy Spirit continues to clearly warn that in the last days some will abandon their faith in Christ^a and attentively listen to lying spirits, to teachings that actu-

3:11a Or women who serve as deaconesses, etc.

3:13a ... which no doubt will result in further rewards in Heaven.

4:1a We find a most serious warning here to believers in Christ. Some will *abandon their faith in Christ* in these last days. They will "apostatize." This certainly teaches that it is possible to apostatize, to *abandon* the faith. No one can *abandon* something that he is not in or does not have. Only unbelievers find it impossible to *abandon their faith*, for they have no faith to abandon. Christians are warned in Hebrews 3:12, *So take warning, my brothers and sisters, and make sure there isn't an evil heart of unbelief in any of you, causing you to turn back from following the living God.*

4:1b Many evil spirits exist—*lying spirits*—who seek to lure both the godly and the ungodly to sin. An increasing number of Christians are yielding to their temptations these days. The *teachings of demons* encourage Christians to *abandon their faith* by living sensuous lives, living for the gratification of the flesh and for other God-condemned enjoyments of this brief life.

Every teacher who denies the reality of God, or denies the true teachings of the Bible, is as much of Satan and the demons as the Bible and Christianity are of God! Make sure that you are willing to accept and declare all the counsel of God—not subtracting from or adding to it in order to force it to fit into your system of belief. Any denial of any true teach-

ing of God is of Satan—it is a teaching inspired by demons!

Not every inner witness is authentic. The Bible warns against both self-deception and deceiving spirits. We are to *test the spirits* to make sure it is the Holy Spirit who is speaking, and not a demon. 1 John 4:1. The peril is real. To be preoccupied with inner feeling is dangerous and wrong. You are safe when you go by the teachings of God's word. Anything that does not agree with God's written truth is from the enemy! Beware!

4:2a We need not go into details concerning the lies and hypocrisy of those teachers and preachers who have *abandoned their faith*. Their *consciences* are literally *seared by a hot iron*. The warnings in their hearts appear to be completely burned out.

4:3a Acts 15:29; 21:25; Romans 14:14-23; 1 Corinthians 10:18-33.

4:4-5a Various foods were off-limits for the Jews, but this is not to be the case during the New Testament age. Paul gives instructions concerning this in the references given for v 3. But this doesn't mean that *everything God created* remains good.

Both men and angels were good as they were first made, but many of the angels fell, and all of mankind has fallen. Nor does it mean that all that God has made is good for every object to which it can be applied. Lumber from trees is good, but it is not good to be eaten. God has made apples and

ally come from demons.^b

²These teachings will be taught by those who are liars and hypocrites, whose consciences are as dead as if they had been seared by a hot iron.^a

³They will forbid certain people to marry, and forbid the eating of certain foods. But God created these foods to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.^a

⁴Because everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected. You are to receive all of it with a prayer of thanks.

⁵When prayer is offered and God's word on this matter is believed, that food is blessed by God for your use.^a

⁶If you continue to warn your assembly about these lies, you will be doing your duty as a worthy minister of Jesus Christ. In this way, you will be feeding them the true message of faith and sound doctrine, and bringing them to maturity in the faith by the same true teachings that you yourself have so closely followed.

⁷But have nothing to do with using godless, worthless stories in your sermons, which aren't worth telling. Instead, you must continue to per-

form every exercise necessary to keep spiritually strong.^a

⁸Exercising your body is indeed profitable for a short while, but taking care to build up your spiritual strength is profitable in every way you can think of, both for your present life, and for the next life too.

⁹That is a statement of utmost importance, and should receive everyone's most serious attention.

¹⁰It's because we have hope in all that God has promised that we work hard, even while we're being accused and criticized. We work and persevere because we believe in a living God who is a Savior of all men,^a but the Savior especially of all who are His true followers.

¹¹So you must continue to teach these things, and you must continue to demand that the people hold firmly to them.

¹²Don't let anyone find any reason to despise you because of your youth. But you must earn their respect by being an example to the believers—by the things you say and the way you say them, how you live, by the genuine love you have for all, by the spirit in which you work and accept situations,

peaches good, and they are still useful and proper as food. The same is true of wheat, rye, and Indian corn, but that doesn't mean that all that people can make from them is necessarily good.

When people make poisonous liquids from these foods, and then say that *everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected*, they are perverting the Scriptures. Those who take license from this Scripture to drink alcoholic beverages will have to answer to God for their perversion.

The terrible price the drunkard and his or her family are forced to pay, and the frightful cost to others who are harmed and otherwise affected by the drunkard should cause us real concern. Many claim they drink only socially, but every drunkard began as a social drinker; he never planned to become a drunkard. Ten percent of all moderate drinkers become drunkards, and none of them intended to be ensnared!

In the U.S.A. today there are over 12 million drunkards and another 12 million problem drinkers. These numbers could actually be much higher in reality. And every drunkard is making life miserable for at least six other people, in the home, place of work, and elsewhere. This is a Satanic curse!

How does a person get to be a drunkard? By drinking moderately. Every moderate drinker is a potential drunkard. If you are a moderate drinker, by your "moderation" you are not only endangering

yourself, but you are also a stumbling block to your family and to others as well. Many following your example will also become moderate drinkers, and some of them will become drunkards.

Another factor of concern in our day is that, of the approximately 52,000 people killed by auto accidents in the USA each year, over one-half are killed by drunken drivers. Consider the needless deep heartaches in these thousands of homes each year, where a loved one is gone just because someone insisted on his right to drink. Consider also the pain and suffering and the needless expense of the multiplied thousands of others who were seriously injured by those drunken drivers. Thousands each year are maimed for life.

You, of course, would never drive while drunk, but by your drinking you are part of the problem, by your influence. You cannot escape your responsibility. Paul never condoned any actions that would result in so much heartache and death.

4:7a Feasting on God's word, spending time with God in prayer and meditation, witnessing to the lost, enjoying fellowship with other Christians, taking a determined and brave stand for the Truth.

4:10a ... *who experience any kind of deliverance* ... This can also refer to the fact that the atonement of Christ is not limited to just certain people; it is available to all. Hebrews 2:9; Acts 2:21; Revelation 22:17.

by your faith, and by the purity of your life.

¹³Until I come your way, devote yourself to both the private and public reading of the Scriptures, to the teaching of its meaning, and to the challenging of your hearers to put the truths of those Scriptures to work in their lives.

¹⁴And you must stop neglecting to use the gift God gave you when the elders of the church laid their hands upon your head and the prophecy was given concerning you.

¹⁵Continue to give serious attention to these things. In fact, give your full attention to them, to the extent that everyone will clearly see the progress you are making.

¹⁶Always pay close attention to both how you live and what you teach. Continue to be concerned about how truthful and effective they both are, because in doing so you will both ensure your own salvation and the salvation of those who listen to you.

Rules for Living with Others

5 Correct an older man gently, not harshly; plead with him as you would with a father. Correct the younger men as you would your brothers,

²older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with utmost care to maintain purity.

³See to it that widows who are truly alone and in need are cared for.

⁴But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn to first put their religion to work at home by repaying their parents and grandparents for all the blessings they have received from them. This is not only the right thing to do, but it also pleases God.^a

⁵Now the widow who is left utterly alone is a widow indeed. She has only God to look to for help, so she continues to pray for His help day and

night.

⁶But the widow whose main interest is in satisfying her own personal desires is dead already, even while she's alive.^a

⁷So continue to warn the people about these things, so that no one will have any legitimate reason to sneer at the widows you support.

⁸But anyone who doesn't provide for his own relatives when they're in need, and especially for his own family, has renounced the Christian faith. He's worse than a heathen!^a

⁹No widow should be put on the list of those the church should help unless she is over 60, and had been faithful to her husband.^a

¹⁰She should be well known for the good she has done—for bringing up her children in a faithful way, showing kindness and concern for strangers, helping fellow followers, assisting those in distress, and devoting herself to doing good at every opportunity.

¹¹But don't put the younger widows on the list, because when their physical desires are aroused, they may decide to marry and renounce their vows to serve Christ.

¹²By breaking the promise they made when they first became widows, they would then be judged by God.^a

¹³Also, there's the danger they'll become idle, wandering around from house to house. Then they wouldn't only be idle, but in danger of gossiping and meddling in other people's affairs, and talking about things that are none of their business.

¹⁴So my advice to younger widows is that they marry again, have children, and take care of their homes. In that way, they won't be giving the enemy any opportunity to make abusive remarks.

¹⁵Because some widows have already turned from their devotion to Christ to follow Satan.

5:4a Because He knows all and sees all.

5:6a Physically alive, but spiritually dead.

5:8a Even most unbelievers are concerned enough to give of what they have, and care for their relatives and immediate family.

But concerning the giving of food, the same is true spiritually. Anyone who claims to be a Christian, but refuses to share his faith with those who are in need of knowing what he knows, because it will cost him something to do it (time, or maybe rejection, and embarrassment), is under the same indictment. Ezekiel 3:18-19; Romans 10:9-10.

5:9a Literally *had been the wife of one man*.

5:12a It appears that the widows receiving support from the church did not receive this help as a

hand-out, but pledged themselves to serve the Lord thru the church for the rest of their lives. If they had made this vow under the influence of strong emotions immediately after becoming a widow, the younger ones especially might have second thoughts about this arrangement as time went on. But God doesn't take our promises lightly, even if we sometimes do. God plans to fulfill all of His promises, and He expects us to do the same. So promises broken are treated by God as sin, with punishment sure to follow.

5:18a Deuteronomy 25:4; 1 Corinthians 9:7-11.

5:18b Luke 10:7.

5:22a In other words, investigate a man thoroughly before calling him as your pastor, or before

¹⁶ I will again say: If any man or woman who is a follower of the Lord has widowed relatives who are in need, it is their responsibility to help them, instead of expecting the church to do so. Then the church can help those widows who are truly destitute and have no one to help them.

The Treatment of Pastors

¹⁷ Pastors who are in charge of the work of the church, who do their work well, should be paid generously. This should be especially true of the pastor who always works hard at both his preaching and teaching.

¹⁸ Because the Scripture says,

You must not tie up the mouth of an ox to keep it from eating while it's treading out the grain,^a and The one who works deserves to be paid.^b

¹⁹ Don't pay any attention to an accusation against a pastor unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.

²⁰ Those who are found to be sinning are to be rebuked in front of the whole congregation, so that all others will fear the consequences of doing the same.

²¹ I call on God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels to be my witnesses as I earnestly charge you to follow these instructions without showing favoritism to anyone. You are to give special consideration to no one!

²² Never be in a hurry to ordain a man or call a pastor.^a Don't have any part in the sins of others by calling or ordaining men to work for God who are living in sin. Keep yourself absolutely pure in this regard.

²³ Stop drinking only water, but use a little wine^a for the problems you are having with your stomach, and for your other frequent ailments.

²⁴ The sins of some people are obvious, being known by the public before they face the Day of Judgment. But the sins of others won't be known

until they are uncovered on Judgment Day.

²⁵ The same is true with good deeds. The good deeds of some people can be seen by everyone. But the good deeds not seen won't be hidden forever.^a

6 If you are employed^a by someone, give full honor and respect to your employer by obeying orders and working industriously, so that God and His teachings are not ridiculed because of you.

² If your employer is a follower of the Lord, don't be jealous of him or think you don't need to work as hard for him because he's a fellow follower. Instead, work even harder, because the one you are benefiting believes as you do, and he is loved by the Lord. Timothy, you must make a practice of teaching and emphasizing these things.^a

False Teaching and True Wealth

³ If anyone teaches otherwise, and doesn't agree with the sound teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, teachings that promote godly living, he is conceited and lacks understanding.

⁴ He has a sick desire to dispute and argue the fine points of the meaning of words, which results in envy, quarreling, malicious charges, and evil suspicions.

⁵ Such people's minds are corrupt, majoring in arguments of no real value or importance. They have no personal acquaintance with the truth. They're only interested in religion if it increases their wealth. Withdraw yourself from such people!

⁶ But when we are contented to believe God and faithfully obey Him, we can look forward with solid assurance to a rich eternity with Him. And that indeed is great wealth.

⁷ Because we didn't bring anything into this world, and nothing is more sure than the fact that we can't carry anything out when we go.^a

⁸ So if I have food, clothing, and a roof over my head,^a I'll be content with that.

ordaining a man as pastor, deacon, elder, etc. Allow a new Christian to mature and prove himself to be a truly dedicated follower of the Lord before giving him a responsible position in the church.

5:23a ... as a medicine ... Notice, it's a *little* wine, not for social reasons, but as medicine.

5:25a On Judgment Day all who have obeyed and served the Lord faithfully (both the well-known persons and the unknown) will be rewarded by the Lord. We will no doubt be surprised at the great rewards received by persons no one ever heard of. Matthew 6:19-20; 1 Corinthians 3:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10.

6:1a Literally if you are a slave. But today the

term would be *an employee*.

6:2a In other words, all these things that Paul is telling Timothy to teach in the churches should be earnestly and constantly taught by pastors and Bible teachers today!

6:6-7a We entered this world empty-handed, and we will leave it in the same way. But it is impossible to imagine the riches we have in and thru Christ, both now and in eternity, if we have found the Lord during this life and are living for Him! If we have been God-fearing, content with such material things as He has brought our way during this brief life, our lives have been the most rewarding of any to be lived on this earth.

⁹But those who have a continual desire to get rich fall into temptation to do all kinds of evil things to gain that wealth. Trapped into always wanting more money, together with foolish and harmful desires for more and more experiences and possessions, they finally drown in ruin and damnation.^a

¹⁰Because the love of money^a is a root that burrows deep into the very soul of man and finally grows into a force that results in all kinds of evil. Some have even strayed from their faith in Christ because of their greed for money. The final result has been that they themselves have been the cause of their finally being pierced thru with all kinds of sorrows.

Paul's Charge to Timothy

¹¹But as for you, man of God, you must constantly turn your back on these things and run from them. Instead, constantly go after all that is right and honorable, after godliness, faith, love, gentleness, and the kind of patience that causes you to continue to hang in there.

¹²Continue to fight the good fight that must be fought in living the Christian faith.^a Take real care, with eager intensity, to maintain a firm grip on eternal life, because it is God who has called you into it. In the past, you have given a good testimony of your faith, in the presence of many witnesses.

¹³But now in the presence of God, who gives life

to all that lives, and before Jesus Christ, who gave a faithful confession while testifying before Pontius Pilate,

¹⁴I charge you to obey all the orders He has given you; that you keep yourself altogether pure and blameless, from now until our Lord Jesus Christ appears in the heavens as He returns to earth to receive His Kingdom.

¹⁵His appearing will be brought about at the proper time by God, who is the revered and only Ruler, the true King of kings and Lord of lords.^a

¹⁶It is He, God alone, who has immortality,^a existing in light so utterly brilliant that no man can approach Him. No man has ever even seen Him, nor is any man able to see Him.^b May we all highly honor Him, and acknowledge that by His power God will rule forever. So be it!

¹⁷Now here's how you must continually warn and instruct those who are rich in this present life:

"Don't be proud and arrogant! And don't put your trust in wealth, that can disappear so quickly. But do put your trust in the God who is alive, for it is He who in such wonderful ways gives us all that we need to enjoy life.

¹⁸Continue to do good by being generous with what you have. By being ready to give freely, and by being willing to share, you will become truly rich by means of the good you do.

¹⁹Because in this way, you will be storing up wealth and laying a good foundation for the

6:8a The Greek word Paul uses means *anything that serves as a cover*, which would include both clothing and housing. We can certainly afford to be content with only the essentials of life if we are laying up treasure in Heaven that will be ours to enjoy forever. Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 16:9, and the note.

Materially speaking, what does a person really need besides *food and clothing*? Yes, he needs a home in which to live, but even that doesn't need to be his own. It certainly doesn't need to be luxurious to afford happiness. A Christian is just a pilgrim on this earth. Any place of shelter out of the weather should be thankfully received as from the Lord, because we are just passing thru on our way home.

6:9a We often envy the *rich*, not recognizing the snare in wealth. The temptation is severe on most rich people to worship their wealth and to put their trust in it instead of in the Lord. And there is great danger of these riches leading them into *foolish and harmful desires* ... that can finally lead to their *drowning in ruin and destruction*. Revelation 20:10,14-15.

6:10a We all need and use money in some form or other. Paul doesn't say that money is evil. It's *the love of money* that does so much harm. But the rich aren't the only ones who are in danger of loving money. Many who do not have wealth, but desire it, *love money* just as certainly as the richest miser.

6:12a Many have said, "But it's so hard to live the Christian life." Yes, it is a hard battle. No Scripture ever said it would be easy. Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 13:24-28. But the moment you step into Heaven, you will realize so overwhelmingly that it was worth it all. Your battle against the flesh and the devil must be won! To settle for the alternative is unthinkable!

6:15a For verification that the Father is the true King of kings see v 16 and 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.

6:16a ... *in the very essence of His being*, ...

6:16b But we have the promise that in the future in our glorified state, we will see God. Matthew 5:8.

6:19a We receive forgiveness from God for our sins only by our faith in the suffering and death Jesus experienced as He made restitution for our

greatest possible happiness and honor in the life to come. This is also necessary for you to do even to gain eternal life.”^a

²⁰ Oh, Timothy, guard what God has given you for safe-keeping. Don’t allow yourself to be influenced in any way by empty chatter, or by those who contradict God’s truths and teachings by what they falsely claim is better knowledge and under-

standing.

²¹ Some who once believed have been taken in by such false teaching, and have strayed away from their faith in Christ. May God bless and keep you. So be it!

Most sincerely,
Paul

sins. He is our justification.

But we also must be regenerated—born again—converted from living for ourselves to living to please God! We can’t be just half converted and make it to Heaven. We can’t give God all of ourselves—except our money, or except anything else,

and still claim we are born again. To be born again means, on our part, to unconditionally give all of ourselves and all that we have, to all that we know of God. See Matthew 6:19-21; 7:13-27; 19:16-30, and especially Acts 20:20-21 note.

Even though I used to curse Jesus and speak violently against Him, being cruelly insulting and rude to His followers and persecuting them in a most violent way, I was shown mercy because I did it without realizing what I was actually doing. I honestly didn't believe that Jesus was our long-awaited Messiah.

¹⁴So the mercy God showed me was far beyond anything I deserved, resulting in wonderful faith and love toward Christ Jesus on my part.

¹⁵A trustworthy statement that deserves to be wholeheartedly accepted by everyone is this: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And of all sinners, I was the worst.

¹⁶But I obtained mercy because Jesus Christ wanted to use me as object lesson number one, so He could show all others, by the inexhaustibly patient way He dealt with me, the worst sinner, how very merciful He wants to be to everyone else who will believe in Him, and that they will live forever by doing so.

—I Timothy 1:13-16

Paul's Second Letter to TIMOTHY

My Dear Son Timothy:

This is from Paul, chosen by God to be a messenger of Jesus Christ. And the message I'm to give is that God now promises everlasting life to mankind because of what Christ Jesus suffered for us.

² May God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord continue to grant you favor you never could have earned, resulting in God being merciful to you and giving you great peace of mind.

Encouragement to Faithfulness

³ I thank God for you, Timothy—the God whom I serve with a pure conscience, just as my ancestors did—as I continually remember you in prayer, both day and night.

⁴ I so deeply long to see you, and it will be pure joy when we meet again. I remember so well how your tears flowed as we parted.

⁵ When I think of the genuine faith you have, it awakens memories of the faith that was first so real in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice. And I'm sure that your faith is now just as strong and sincere as theirs.

⁶ That's why I'm reminding you to continue to fan into flame the gift God gave you when I laid my hands upon your head and prayed that God would bless and use you.

⁷ Because God has not given us a cowardly spirit^a; He wants us to serve Him courageously, with power, love, and mature judgment.

⁸ That's why you should never be ashamed or fearful to speak out^a and tell everyone the Great News about our Lord. Nor should you be ashamed of me either, a prisoner of the Lord because I refuse to be silenced. Instead, you should take your stand with me, and, with God's power strengthening and sustaining you, endure whatever sufferings God may allow as you give the full

message of the Great News!

⁹ *Ob, what a God we have!*^a Not only did He save us and call us to live holy lives, but He also did all this in a way so praiseworthy and honorable. He didn't save us because of anything we ourselves had done, but before there was even an earth or a sun by which time could be reckoned, in His eternal mind He gave us Christ Jesus.^b He did this for His own reasons and out of the kindness of His great and loving heart.^c

¹⁰ But it wasn't until recently that all of this was revealed to us thru the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ. And the heart of the Great News is that Jesus has utterly destroyed the strangle hold that death had on us, and He has made it clear that we can now receive life that will never end!

¹¹ And God has appointed me to be a messenger to preach and teach this Great News to everyone everywhere.

¹² That's also why I'm suffering here in jail.^a But I'm not ashamed about being here, because I know I can fully rely on the One in whom I have put my trust. I'm absolutely certain that He will take good care of all that I've entrusted into His care, until that Great Day.^b

¹³ When preaching the Great News, stay with the outline of solid truth you've heard me preach. The main points are faith in who Jesus Christ is, and in what He has done for us. Then point out the genuine love we must have for such a One as He is, and for everyone else as well.

¹⁴ Be sure to carefully guard the great treasure of truth which has been entrusted to your care. Look to the Holy Spirit, who lives within each of us, to be your help in preserving it.^a

¹⁵ As you know, everyone who came here from the province of Asia has now deserted me, including Phygellus and Hermogenes.

¹⁶ But not Onesiphorus. He has so often encouraged and cheered me up, and has never been

1:7a Revelation 21:8.

1:8a Romans 10:9-10.

1:9a Implied.

1:9b ... to suffer and die for us. 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8b.

1:9c Ephesians 1:3-5.

1:12a ... because the Jews don't want me to

preach to everyone. They think they are the only ones God will save.

1:12b ... when He returns to earth to glorify all who have been true followers of His, and to reign on earth as King of kings and Lord of lords!

1:14a ... Don't let anything be added to it or taken from it.

ashamed of my chains. May God show mercy to him and to all his family.

¹⁷In fact, when he arrived in Rome he looked all over for me until he finally found me.

¹⁸You know all about the many ways he helped me in Ephesus. May the Lord God grant that he will find mercy from the Lord Jesus on that Great Day.

A Loyal Soldier for Jesus Christ

2 As for you, my son, continue to be strong in your stand for the truth, with all the strength at your disposal^a thru the undeserved kindness of Christ Jesus.

²And the foundation truths of our faith, which you heard me declare so often in the presence of many witnesses, those same truths you must now teach to trustworthy men who are qualified to teach them to others also.

³As a good soldier of Jesus Christ, you must demonstrate endurance in times of trial and hardship.

⁴In the first place, no one truly engaged in warfare allows himself to get entangled in civilian affairs, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

⁵Then look at it from an athlete's viewpoint: No one is crowned as champion unless he competes according to the rules.

⁶Likewise, a farmer knows he must first of all work hard if he expects to enjoy the fruits of a good harvest.

⁷Think over what I've written here, and may the Lord help you to see how it all applies to you.

⁸Be sure to remember that the Great News I

preach is that Jesus Christ, who was born into King David's family, came back to life after being dead.^a

⁹And for preaching that truth, I'm suffering as a criminal, even to being chained. But God's Great News isn't chained.

¹⁰That's why I'm willing to endure everything necessary in order to bring God's message to those He has chosen,^a so that they too may obtain the salvation and eternal glory which He so graciously offers thru Christ Jesus.

¹¹Here are some very true statements:

If we have indeed died with Christ,^a we will also live with Him.

¹²If we don't give up^a as true followers of the Lord, we will also reign with Him.

But if we disown Him, He will also disown us.^b

¹³But even if we are unfaithful, He will always remain faithful, because He cannot be unfaithful to either His promises or His warnings.^a

An Approved Workman

¹⁴You must continually remind the preachers and teachers of these vital truths. And earnestly warn them and everyone else that you are calling on God to be your witness as you charge them that they must stop quibbling about certain words and their shades of meaning. Such unprofitable, dry preaching, which isn't spiritually helpful, will result in the spiritual ruin of those who listen to them.^a

¹⁵Be diligent in making sure that your work for God meets His approval! Be a faithful worker who won't need to be ashamed when God finally tests your work with fire.^a Be absolutely honest and correct in presenting the truth when you are

2:1a Ephesians 6:10-18; Philippians 2:13.

2:8a After faithfully serving God and suffering as His soldier, even unto death, God raised Him back to life. He will do the same for you if you continue faithful. Colossians 1:22-23.

2:10a Romans 8:28-30.

2:11a See Romans 8:12-14; Mark 8:34-38.

2:12a The Greek word here means to patiently suffer temptations and trials, and refuse to yield to those temptations or allow the trials to discourage us. The word also means to *endure*, meaning to endure temptations and trials, and persevere in the faith, continuing firm in faith and practice.

Keep short accounts with God. If you should fall to temptation, and sin, go to God immediately and ask forgiveness. 1 John 1:9. Also ask Him to help you to overcome that temptation, and persevere with Him. Only those who persevere against the temptations to sin will reign with Christ!

2:12b That is, if we disown Him by what we say or how we live—or by what we refuse to say or live. Take a bold stand for Christ, both in your living for Him and in your witnessing for Him, and be willing to take whatever consequences come. A Christian soldier must always be on the offensive for Christ, always looking for someone to help and someone to speak to for Jesus.

2:13a You can always count on God to keep His word.

2:14a ... *when such vital issues are at stake, and need to be dealt with.* Such preaching is a waste of intellectual energy, a waste of time for those who listen, and causes loss of interest and doubt in the true message. In other words, emphasize the main intent of the message in the Scripture, instead of using a text as a springboard to take off on all kinds of unprofitable issues! See 4:1-5.

2:15a 1 Corinthians 3:5-17.

teaching God's word.^b

¹⁶Continue to avoid godless, empty chatter that has nothing to do with God and right living. The result of such hollow preaching only drives people farther away from God.

¹⁷Such ineffective and spineless teaching will slowly eat away and spread like cancer.^a Hymenaeus and Philetus are examples of such teachers.

¹⁸They've strayed so far from the truth that now they're teaching that the time of the resurrection of the dead has already come and gone; as a result they are destroying the faith of some.

¹⁹But the solid foundation of God's truth stands firm, and cannot be moved. It has these words written on it: "The Lord knows who those people are who truly belong to Him," and, "Everyone who claims to be a follower of Christ must stop living in sin!"

²⁰In any large mansion there are not only containers made of gold and silver, but also of wood, and some of clay. Some are used for noble purposes, while others are for humble, ordinary use.

²¹So if you thoroughly clean out whatever is impure and sinful in your life, you will be an honorable container, clean and serviceable, ready to be used by Christ Himself for His most noble assignments.

²²For that reason, you must make it your practice to literally run from impure thoughts and desires that plague youth. Instead, you must earnestly pursue right living, faith, love, and peace of mind by enjoying the companionship of those who call out to the Lord from lives that are pure.^a

²³Always refuse to get involved in foolish and

unprofitable arguments that only cause hard feelings and angry disputes.

²⁴A servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome; he must be gentle with everyone, skillful in teaching, and he must be patient when teaching those who are wrong in their understanding of the truth.

²⁵Be humble in your attitude when you are trying to teach those who are in error and who oppose the truth, in the hope that God will lead them to change their minds^a and admit the truth.

²⁶Hopefully, they will come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, who has taken them captive to do whatever he wants them to do.

Warnings About the Last Days

3 Now here's something else you need to know: During the last days fierce and savage times^a will come.

²Most people will love only themselves and money. They will be boastful and proud, foul-mouthed, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, and thoroughly sinful.

³They won't even love the members of their own family! They'll be unforgiving, and always ready to tear down the reputation of others—without self-control, and brutal. They will hate and despise anyone who stands firmly for what's good and right.

⁴They will be treacherous traitors, reckless and headstrong in their sinning, and conceited. They will be lovers of pleasure instead of lovers of God.^a

⁵Many who go to church will go thru all the motions of worshiping God, but they won't allow God to control them.^a Don't have anything to do with such people!

2:15b Be most fearful to tamper with God's word, or to water it down to please yourself or others.

2:17a ... *until the people's dedication to Christ is dead.*

2:22a Determine in your heart with strong resolve to do and say only what pleases God, at all times and in every situation!

2:25a *God's word is alive and powerful, and pierces the mind and heart like a two-edged sword.* Hebrews 4:12. God pierces the heart when His truth is given, but even then He never forces His will on anyone. But we must speak out and give God's message to others so it may do its work.

3:1a The Greek word here can also be translated: *hard, difficult, violent, dangerous times.*

3:1-4a We are right now in the midst of those *perilous times*, and the perils will increase. But the frightful thing is that many of these sinful people will be members of churches. v 5. They may even

be members of good evangelical churches.

3:5a They may be called Christians, but they are still in rebellion against God, and lost. To be born again means to surrender to the will of God, and to be obedient to Him. Romans 2:8; 6:16; Hebrews 5:9.

They will *go thru all the motions* ... Whom do they think they are fooling? Evidently they are trying to fool our all-wise God. But *God looks upon the heart.* 1 Samuel 16:7. Their false worship is a very thin cover-up for their self-centered living.

They won't allow God to control them. They excuse their sins by claiming that salvation is "all of grace". They feel, therefore, that they have absolutely no responsibility. But the Lord tells us here, thru the apostle Paul, *Don't have anything to do with such people!* We should try to help them realize the lost condition of their souls, but never agree that they are one with us in Christ—for they are not. See Philipians 3:9-14.

⁶They're the kind who gain the confidence of families, and then captivate weak-willed women in those homes who are already loaded with the guilt of their sins and driven by all kinds of evil desires.

⁷They are always learning, but they never seem to understand the real nature of what the truth really is.^a

⁸Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, the same is true with these who oppose and resist the truth. Their minds have been utterly ruined, and as far as their standing with God is concerned, they have utterly failed the test.

⁹But they won't get any further, because their foolishness will finally be right out there for everyone to see, just as was the case with Jannes and Jambres.

Paul's Last Instructions to Timothy

¹⁰But you, my son, are well acquainted with what I teach, how I live, my only goal and purpose in life, my faith, patience, love, perseverance, and the persecutions and sufferings I've endured for the sake of the truth.

3:6-7a Many times it is these who claim everything by "grace, plus nothing" who turn the liberty of the Great News into license to sin. There has been no dying to self in their experience. They are still alive to all the lusts of the flesh. They live for the pleasures of life. They have no real, honest concern for the souls of others. Their only real concern centers in themselves. Many of these may even be diligent Bible students. *They are always learning, but never able to admit that it's the truth* that must now be put into action in their own lives.

3:12a Don't be surprised when persecution and rejection come, even from some members of your own church, as you insist on teaching the full truth of God's word, and live it. A true Christian is a marked person. A true Christian lives to do the will of Christ, and he *will suffer persecution* and isolation just as surely as this Scripture is true. See the notes on Romans 8:16-17.

Additional Scriptures about Christian persecution include Matthew 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; 16:33; 17:14; Acts 14:22; Hebrews 11:32-38; 1 Peter 4:12-14; Revelation 7:13-14. The real fulfillment of the words of this verse are taking place in our own time, in the days of the end.

3:15a Our faith in Christ must be twofold: Faith in what He did for us on the cross (our justification), and obedient faith in what He taught us about how we must now live and serve (our regeneration). Instead of *regeneration* here, some would call it *the process of sanctification or continued obedience*.

¹¹You know all about the persecutions I endured at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. But the Lord rescued me out of all of them!

¹²In fact, everyone who determines to live for Christ Jesus in a way that will truly please God will be persecuted.^a

¹³But evil men, many of them even pretending to be Christians, will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived themselves.

¹⁴But as for you, my son Timothy, you must continue to believe and live by the things you learned and are convinced are the truth, because you know the lives of those from whom you learned them.

¹⁵Remember that you were taught the Holy Scriptures from the time you were an infant. And it is those very Scriptures that have the power to give you the wisdom necessary to realize that you can obtain salvation only by a sincere and active faith in Jesus Christ.^a

¹⁶All Scripture has been given to us by inspiration from God, and is profitable for teaching us, showing us our guilt, correcting us, and training us as to what is right and pleasing to God,

See Acts 20:20-21, and the note; Deuteronomy 18:15; Hebrews 5:9.

3:16-17a Just consider from these two verses how very important it is to bathe your soul in the Scriptures daily, and to allow them to mold you into the very likeness of Christ. To be blessed and used by God, we *must* read and obey the Scriptures!

4:1a When Christ returns, He will *judge both the living and those who have passed away*. Christians who are alive and those who are in their graves will all rise to meet Him at His coming. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. Christians will be *judged* at the Judgment Seat of Christ for rewards. See notes on 1 Corinthians 3:1-23.

As for the unconverted, only the living will be *judged* at Christ's return. See notes on Matthew 25:31-46. The ungodly dead will not be *judged* until Christ has reigned on earth 1,000 years. Revelation 20:5, 11-15. But they will be in Hell during all of that time. Luke 16:19-31.

4:2a What does it really mean to *preach God's message*? See Appendix 225, page 486.

4:2b How can I be most effective in witnessing to others about Christ? See Appendixes 212 and 226.

4:3a Are you one of the unregenerate people in our churches making these demands? If so, consider your latter end! *Unless you are living a holy life you will never see God!* Hebrews 12:14. See also 2 Peter 2:1-9.

4:4a Even in many so-called evangelical churches today, the preaching is so soft and shallow that it

¹⁷so that every person who truly belongs to God may be perfectly prepared and thoroughly equipped to do every good work that God has for him to do.^a

4 Because of the seriousness of the above words, I call on God, and on the Lord Jesus Christ who will judge both those who are still living and those who have passed away,^a when in majesty and power He appears to set up His Kingdom, to witness this most solemn charge which I now give you:

²Preach God's message!^a Be prepared to preach it every chance you get: when people are anxious to listen and when they're not, when you feel like it and when you don't, when it's convenient and when it's not, when you have a large audience or only one person. And as you do so, give the full message: preach the warnings that will convince of guilt, rebuke them for their sin, and encourage them with God's wonderful promises. Do all this with great loving patience and careful instruction.^b

³Because the time will come when the people

will not allow the full truth of the Scriptures to be preached in their churches. But in order to satisfy their own desires, they will surround themselves with preachers and teachers who will compromise and teach them only what their itching ears want to hear, nothing more.^a

⁴They will actually turn their ears away from the truth, and instead listen to half-truths and statements that aren't true at all.^a

⁵But as for you, Timothy, be constantly vigilant in proclaiming the whole truth. Never be afraid of suffering for the Lord for doing so. Faithfully explain the Great News by giving a complete explanation of all that's involved.^a

⁶As for me, I am already being poured out as a drink offering. The time has come for me to leave this life.

⁷I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. Without compromise I have remained true to the faith.

⁸What's ahead for me now is to receive the crown that's been reserved for me for saying and doing what was right,^a which the Lord, the Judge who always does what's right, will give me on that

convicts no one, moves no one to action or decision, and is not really intended to do so, and is therefore worthless trash!

But this worthless rap is the type of preaching most people want. So, many of our evangelical churches are well on the way to modernism.

The people have *itching ears*, Paul says. They want to be told what they want to hear—nothing more. They want wimpy preachers who will allow them to continue in their sins of omission and commission without making them feel uncomfortable. They will praise the preacher for a sermon that feeds their ego and jolts them just a little. But woe to him if he proclaims the commands and warnings as they are written. They like to play church. 2 Timothy 3:5. But they don't want real Church.

When this happens, they literally turn their ears away from the truth, and instead, listen to half-truths, which in reality are lies. In fact, they are worse than lies, because it's like a capsule of deadly arsenic coated with *some truth*.

Many of the great teachings of the Bible are totally ignored today by many preachers—especially the warnings. If they do preach on these portions they either explain away the warnings or skip the verses which may cause them trouble with the people. Often God tells His people "Thou shalt NOT," as well as "Thou shalt." We must warn against the poison as well as point out the good food. And inasmuch as the people are seldom, if ever, encouraged and

challenged to read the Bible for themselves, they remain unconverted. A half converted person is still unconverted—and therefore lost!

* * *

The apostate preacher, who once knew the real truth but has turned from it to soft, entertaining preaching, will receive even "greater damnation" (2 Peter 2:3), unless he repents, and begins to preach the whole truth in earnest, without compromise.

Just as a rough wash cloth or brush is needed to search out the dirt in the pores of the body, a sermon is often needed that gets down to where the dirt is, in order to flush out the crud that has invaded our lives. A smooth sermon is like a smooth wash cloth; it may feel good, but it is worthless, and accomplishes nothing of any value. It is, in fact, very harmful, by leaving dirt that is life-threatening, and must be removed.

Also, be warned by what happened as a result of erroneous preaching in Isaiah's time. Isaiah 9:13-17.

For a further *most important* note on this matter turn to Appendix 226A, page 488.

4:5a We must believe on Jesus as Savior, but we must also fully surrender to Him as Lord, or there has been no conversion, and therefore no salvation. To accept only half of the truth is to accept and believe a lie. Matthew 7:21-29; Romans 10:9-10.

4:8a The crown for saying and doing what was right is for those who have been faithful. While God

Day, and not only to me but also to all who have looked forward in joyful and keen anticipation to His appearing.^b

Personal Remarks

⁹ Do your very best to come to me as soon as possible.^a

¹⁰ Demas has deserted me. He's gone off to Thessalonica because of his love for the good things of this present life. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia.

¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Get Mark to come with you when you come. He's been a real help to me in my work for the Lord.

¹² As for Tychicus, I've sent him to Ephesus.

¹³ When you come, please bring the coat that I left in Troas with Carpus. Also bring the books, especially the parchments.

¹⁴ Alexander the coppersmith has done me much harm. But the Lord will pay him back for what he's done.

¹⁵ You must also be on your guard against him, because he's violently opposed to everything we teach.

¹⁶ The first time I was brought into court, no one stood with me in my defense. Everyone deserted

me. I pray that this will not be charged against them.

¹⁷ But the Lord stood with me, and He gave me strength to preach the full salvation message for all the Gentiles to hear. I was literally delivered out of the lion's mouth.^a

¹⁸ And the Lord will continue to rescue me from every evil attack, and bring me safely to His Heavenly Kingdom.^a May all the glory be His for ages upon multiplied ages. So be it!

Final Greetings

¹⁹ Greet Priscilla and Aquila for me, and also each member of the household of Onesiphorus.

²⁰ Erastus stayed in Corinth, but I had to leave Trophimus in Miletus because he was sick.

²¹ Do your best to arrive here before winter. Eubulus sends you his greetings, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the other followers of the Lord here.

²² May the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. And may God's blessings literally shower upon you. So be it!

Sincerely in Christ,
Paul

does not demand great successes, He does demand *truth* and *faithfulness*. Paul did not fail to *give the people God's complete message*. Acts 20:27. He was not a people pleaser. As a result, he was stoned, imprisoned, and hated by many. But he was dearly loved by the Lord. This was Paul's only concern.

This *crown for saying and doing what was right* will be given to all who love and look forward to the appearing and return of Jesus Christ. Those who want only part of the Bible preached to them, and that with gentleness, cannot love the appearing of Christ. His appearing for them will be *as judge* and *not as Savior*. The same goes for the preachers who have been willing to apply soothing ointment when there was need for major surgery. Without the operation of the removal of *self will*, the patient will die in his lost condition!

This is not a crown given for having ambition, or

a crown won in struggles for distinction, but a crown given by the Lord to all who have lived and served in obedience to what was right and honorable in God's eyes.

4:8b Only those who live to obey the Lord can look forward with joy to His appearing. For others it can be only a fearful looking forward to judgment.

4:9a Paul was again in prison in Rome. Timothy was in Ephesus.

4:17a Referring to Nero, or to the lions in the arena.

4:18a Paul had confidence that as a faithful servant of the Lord, Christ would bring him *safely to His Heavenly Kingdom*. We can, with Paul, have assured confidence of this also, if we are faithful and true to the teaching of Christ's word, both in teaching it and in obeying it.

Because the time will come when the people will not allow the full truth of the Scriptures to be preached in their churches. But in order to satisfy their own desires, they will surround themselves with preachers and teachers who will compromise and teach them only what their itching ears want to hear, nothing more.

—2 Timothy 4:3

Paul's Letter to TITUS

Dear Titus, my true son in the faith and assurance which is available to everyone:^a

This is from Paul, a slave-servant^b of God and a messenger of Jesus Christ. I have been sent to further the faith of those whom God has chosen,^c so they may recognize and agree with the truth that they must now live new lives that are pleasing to God.^d

²They will then share our sure hope and assurance that we will live forever. It's our God who never lies who promised this, and He did so even before the beginning of time.^a

³Then at the right time, He brought this Great News to light; when God our Savior entrusted me with it^a and commanded me to preach it.

⁴Titus, may God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior grant you favor you never could have earned, resulting in God being merciful to you and giving you great peace of mind.

What Titus Was to Do in Crete

⁵The reason I left you in Crete was to enable you to take care of whatever still needed to be done there among the churches, and especially to appoint church elders^a in every city who would meet the qualifications I instructed you to insist on.

⁶Remember, an elder must be one who cannot justly be charged with any wrongdoing. He must have only one wife. His children must be followers of the Lord, children who cannot justly be accused of being wild and disobedient.

⁷To be an overseer of God's work, he must be blameless in every respect. He must not be one who always demands that things must be done his way, not quick-tempered or violent, not addicted to wine, not greedy for money, especially for money gotten by ignoble or dishonest means.

⁸Instead he must be one who truly enjoys opening his home to guests. He must love what is good and wholesome, be a man of common sense, one who is just and fair, devoted to God, and self-controlled.

⁹He must continue to hold firmly to the truth he has been taught, so that by sound teaching that is without defect, he may be able to further instruct and encourage the Lord's followers, and convince those who oppose the truth that they are wrong.

¹⁰Because there are many who rebel against obeying the truth. Some try to justify their stand by glib and empty talk, deceiving themselves and doing their best to deceive others. This is especially true of those who claim we must be circumcised and obey other Jewish rituals in order to be saved.

¹¹They must be silenced, because they're overthrowing the faith of whole families by teaching things they have no business teaching. Their only concern is to please certain people because of their money.

¹²Even one of their own Cretan prophets spoke against them, saying, "All that these Cretans do is lie! They're like vicious wild animals! What's more, they're lazy, thinking only about having the best food and plenty of it."

¹³This is true. So you must make a practice of scolding such people sharply, so that the Lord's followers there may become sound in the faith,

¹⁴and will not continue to be influenced by Jewish myths or rules laid down by those who constantly reject the truth.

¹⁵Because we, whose hearts have been purified by Christ, look upon all food as pure and acceptable,^a but for those who are legalistic, nothing is pure enough. Even their minds and consciences are impure.

¹⁶Such people say they know God, but the way they live denies their claim. They are detestable,

1:1a This salutation is actually in v 4 in the Greek text.

1:1b See Romans 1:1.

1:1c See Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:4-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9.

1:1d See 2 Corinthians 5:17 note.

1:2a This seems to indicate that before God created anything by which time could be measured He

promised His Son, whom we know as Jesus, that He would grant eternal life to all who would receive Him as their Lord and Savior.

1:3a ... *together with others* ...

1:5a This does not mean that the churches had no say in these choices.

1:15a Romans 14:14, 20; Colossians 2:16; 1 Timothy 4:4-5.

disobedient, and worthless as far as accomplishing anything of present or eternal value.

Instructions for Various Groups

2 But as for you, Titus, keep speaking out and saying all that should be said in support of solid Christian teaching.

²Teach the older men to use self-control, to be dignified and sensible, to be strong in the faith, strong in love, and determined to remain altogether faithful to Jesus until they are finally glorified with Him.

³Likewise, teach the older women to honor God by the way they live. Insist that they not indulge in malicious gossip nor become enslaved to wine. Instead they should be teaching others what is right and good.

⁴Instruct them to teach the younger women to truly love their husbands,^a and to give true parental love to their children.

⁵They should also teach them to be wise and sensible in all their conduct, never to cheat on their husbands, to gladly do the work that needs to be done in the home, and to be kind and submissive to their husbands so that God's word won't be mocked and ridiculed by those who know how they live.

⁶In the same way, you must continue to challenge the young men to be serious-minded about fully obeying God.^a

⁷Of course, you yourself must continue to set a good example for them by always doing what's right, if these challenges are to be effective. So

make sure that when you teach you are in earnest, and serious, giving the whole truth without compromise, not corrupting the word of God.

⁸Use facts and arguments^a that cannot be proven false, so that those who oppose you will be ashamed, because they'll have nothing to criticize regarding how you live or about what you've said.

⁹Challenge those who work for others^a to be obedient to their employers,^b doing their best to please them in everything.

¹⁰They must never talk back, nor steal from them, but always act in such a way that they can be fully trusted. As they deal honorably with their employers, in all situations, they will bring honor to the teaching of God our Savior.^a

¹¹Because God is now offering us kindness we don't deserve by offering forgiveness and eternal life to everyone.

¹²This Great News teaches us that we are to turn from a life that leaves God out, and from living to satisfy improper worldly desires. Instead, we are to live self-controlled, upright lives that please God as we live in this present age.^a

¹³As we do so, we are to look forward with great anticipation to the blessed hope and assurance we have of the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.^a

¹⁴He gave His life to redeem us, so that He might liberate us from living in all kinds of disobedience to God. He also did this to purify us for Himself, to be His very own special people who would be most eager to do whatever is right and good.^a

¹⁵These are the things, then, that you must con-

2:4a ... with the sincere and intimate conjugal love that needs to be constantly experienced between husband and wife ... There's a saying that "Four hugs a day are needed for love to even survive. Four more are needed for maintenance. And a total of twelve hugs a day are needed if love is to grow!"

2:6a ... and gaining the mastery over the appetites and passions of youth, because they never know when they may die and be called to stand before their Maker and Judge. If they continue to live, and live to please God, they will receive a full reward at the judgment for having faithfully obeyed and served their God and Savior thruout life. See 2 John v 8.

2:8a ... mainly from the word of God ...

2:9a Literally *slaves*.

2:9b Literally *masters*.

2:10a ... resulting in others being attracted to Him.

2:12a Leaving God out includes ignoring God

most of the time, even if you claim to be a Christian. He wants your constant companionship! You need to give God twelve hugs a day too (by enthusiastic praise and thanksgiving) (See v 4 note) if your love for Him is to grow. He loves you that much. The grace message of v 11 must include the teaching emphasized in this verse, or there will be no conversion, no born-again experience, no eternal life. Matthew 28:20; Proverbs 3:6.

2:13a As we have accepted the undeserved favor God offers us, and have accepted Christ as Lord of our lives, we indeed have the assurance of that blessed hope of the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Those who believe that Christ will come for the true Christians before the tribulation, claim that Paul had the pre-tribulation Rapture in mind when he spoke of that blessed hope.

But that this verse teaches a pre-tribulation Rapture is not evident. The blessed hope is that we will see Him in all His glory. But the time of His appear-

tinually teach and preach. You must continue to admonish and rebuke with the full authority that is rightfully yours! And don't let anyone at any time have any good reason to despise you.^a

How to Behave as a Christian

3 Constantly remind the people that they are to be in willing subjection to the government in power and to those chosen to enforce the laws. They should obey and be ready to do whatever is good and right.

²Tell them not to speak evil of anyone, or to be quarrelsome, but in the spirit of true humility to be gentle and kind to everyone.

³Because there was a time when we ourselves were foolish, living in utter disobedience to God. We were fooled into living to satisfy only the various desires of our body and mind. So we lived for pleasure.^a But this only resulted in our wanting to hurt others before they hurt us, and being jealous of what others had; hating them and being hated by them.

⁴But all of that changed when God our Savior revealed His kindness and love for us.

⁵This had nothing to do with anything we had done to earn His love. It was only by His mercy that He saved us from such a life. He recreated our lives and made new people out of us by washing and renewing us by the Holy Spirit.^a

⁶It was God who so generously poured out the Holy Spirit on us thru Jesus Christ^a our Savior.

⁷So it was all because of God's undeserved kindness and mercy toward us that we have been made right with Him. And now, because God has also made us His heirs,^a we live in joyful anticipation and assurance that we will live forever!

⁸These are such trustworthy statements! And I want you to constantly and most emphatically

challenge the Lord's followers everywhere with these marvelous truths. This should strongly inspire those who believe God to take great care to keep up the practice of spending their lives in doing what is right and good. They'll all find out that doing so will be for their good, and for their profit.^a

⁹But avoid foolish arguments, such as placing importance on one's ancestors, and arguments and heated debate about the Law. Such arguments don't help anyone. They're so useless!

¹⁰Warn anyone who causes divisions over unimportant matters. But if he refuses to stop after a second warning, have nothing more to do with him.

¹¹You must conclude that such a person has twisted the truth because of his own sinning. But you can also know that his conscience is condemning him.

Final Remarks

¹²I plan to send either Artemas or Tychicus to you. After they arrive, please make every effort possible to come to me at Nicopolis, because I've decided to spend the winter there.

¹³Send Apollos and Zenas the lawyer on their way as quickly as possible, and make sure they have everything they'll need.

¹⁴Also teach our people always to have a vital part in such good projects. Learning to meet urgent needs like this will enable them to make sure that they're not living useless lives.

¹⁵Everyone here with me sends you their greetings. Greet everyone who loves us because of our mutual faith in Jesus. May God's blessings abound toward all of you! So be it!

Sincerely in Christ,
Paul

ing is not stated or even implied in this verse. The time when He will appear to receive His own to Himself is revealed in Matthew 24:29-31.

2:14a This describes the true Christian. A true Christian doesn't obey the Lord just when it's convenient or to his liking. Instead, he earnestly wants to be dead indeed to all selfish desires. He is *eager to do whatever is right and good*. His main desire in life is to please the Lord in everything. He has his eye on the goal: eternity with Christ!

2:15a ... *for being a hypocrite and living in sin,*

or for preaching an easy way to Heaven, in order to please some of the people, instead of preaching the full, true message, and pleasing God. Matthew 24:45-51.

3:3a ... *indulging our various corrupt passions, and our natural appetites in a wrong way.*

3:5a Ephesians 5:26; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

3:6a Acts 2:33.

3:7a Romans 8:14-17.

3:8a Galatians 6:7-10.

Paul's Letter to PHILEMON

Dear Philemon:

What a dear friend and fellow worker for Christ you are! This is Paul, writing to you from jail because of my stand for Jesus Christ. And our brother Timothy joins me in sending you this greeting.

²Greetings also to dear Apphia, and to Archippus, our fellow soldier for Jesus. And greetings to all the members of the church who meet in your home.

³May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ bless and prosper all of you far above what you deserve, and give you great peace of mind and heart.

Philemon's Love and Faith

⁴My dear Philemon, I always thank my God every time I mention you in my prayers,

⁵because I keep hearing such good reports about how much you love the Lord Jesus and of the love you have for all who are dedicated to Him, and of the faith you have in Him.

⁶As you tell others about your faith and hope, and as you tell of all the good things that Christ Jesus has done for you and in you, and of all that He promises to yet do for you in His Kingdom, may your witness be truly effective.

⁷Your love, dear brother, has given me great joy and encouragement, as I think of all the followers whose minds and hearts have been refreshed by you.

Paul's Plea for Onesimus

⁸So although I could be very bold and order you in the name of Christ to do what you should do,

⁹I appeal to you instead to take the right action because of your love. As Paul, an old man, and now also a prisoner for the sake of Jesus Christ,

¹⁰I appeal to you on behalf of my son Onesimus, who has become my son in the Lord while I've been here in jail.

¹¹He wasn't worth anything to you in the past, but he's changed, and now he's of great worth to

both of us.^a

¹²As you receive him back to you now, my heart goes with him.

¹³I have wished that I could keep him here with me, so that he could take your place in helping me while I'm in chains because of preaching the Great News.

¹⁴But I didn't want to do anything without your consent, so that any help you gave would be altogether voluntary, not forced.

¹⁵And perhaps God allowed him to leave you for this brief time, so that he would be converted to the Lord, and then return to be with you for good.

¹⁶Now he returns to you, not as a slave, but much more than a slave. He's now a dearly-loved brother. He's especially that to me, and surely more so to you, because he's now not only a man but your brother in the Lord.

¹⁷So if you look upon me as a close friend, welcome him back as you'd welcome me.

¹⁸If he has wronged you or owes you anything, charge it to my account.

¹⁹***I, Paul, will repay you.*** Notice that I've written that with my own hand. But none of this, of course, takes into account the fact that you owe me for all that you now are.^a

²⁰Yes, brother, let me rejoice in what the Lord has done when I hear that you have gladly welcomed home my friend and brother. As you do this, my heart will truly be refreshed with joy in the Lord.

²¹As I write this I have full assurance that you will not only do what I ask, but even more.

²²And by the way, Philemon, prepare a guest room for me, because I confidently believe that in answer to your prayers I'll be restored to you.

²³Epaphras, who is here in prison with me because of his stand for Christ Jesus, sends you his greetings as well.

²⁴My fellow workers, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, also send their greetings.

²⁵May blessings from our Lord Jesus Christ truly abound toward you. So be it!

Your brothers in Christ,
Paul and Timothy

1:11a The name Onesimus means *useful*.

1:19a Philemon had evidently been converted to

Christ thru Paul. So for the joy of the eternal life he now had, he was indebted to Paul.

The Letter To The HEBREWS

In former times, God spoke to our ancestors thru the prophets. He did this at various times and in many different ways.

² But in this last period of time, He has spoken to us thru His Son. And it was thru His Son that God created the entire universe.^a He has also decided that His Son will inherit everything.

³ The very brilliance of God's glory shines out from the Son, and reveals what God is really like. And it is by the powerful word of command of His Son that God maintains and perpetuates all things in the entire universe. After the Son had provided the means by which we could be cleansed of our sins,^a He sat down in Heaven at the right hand of God, the Supreme Power.^b

God's Son Is Greater than Angels

⁴ The Son has become far greater than the angels—as much greater as the name He inherited from the Father is far greater than theirs.

⁵ Because to which of the angels did God ever say,

**You are My Son; because today I have begotten
You and have become Your Father^a?**

Nor did God ever say about any angel,

**I will be His Father,
and He will be My Son.^b**

⁶ And again, when God brought His first-born Son into the world, He said,

All the angels of God must worship^a Him.

⁷ But when speaking about the angels He said,

**God makes His angels to resemble the winds, serving
Him as swiftly and powerfully as lightning.^a**

⁸ On the other hand, when speaking about the

Son, He said,

**Your Kingdom, O God, will continue on forever
and ever! Your Imperial Dominion will be highly
esteemed for its justice, honesty, and goodness.**

⁹ **You have loved what is right and hated what is
wrong. For that reason God, yes, even Your God,
has flooded Your soul with great joy, far above
that experienced by Your companions.^a**

¹⁰ God also said,

**In the beginning, O Lord, You created the earth.
And the galaxies of stars in the heavens are the
work of Your hands.**

¹¹ **They will perish, but You will remain. They will
all become worn out with age like a garment.**

¹² **Then You will fold them up like a robe, and they
will be changed into something new. But You are
and always will be the same, and Your life will
never end.^a**

¹³ And to which of the angels did God ever say,

**Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a
footstool for Your feet^a?**

¹⁴ He never said that to any of them, because the function of angels is that of ministering spirits. They are constantly being sent out by God to help and serve those who are about to be saved.

Our Salvation is So Great

2 So because of what's been said here, we must be more careful than ever to keep listening and acting on what we've been taught, so that we don't allow ourselves at any time to drift off course from what God has told us.

² Because if God backed up everything He said to us thru angels, and punished us in the way we deserved when we disobeyed the commands He

1:2a John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9c; Colossians 1:15-17.

1:3a ... *by means of His suffering and death on the cross for us* ...

1:3b There is only one Supreme God, (John 17:3), and that's the Father. See also 1 Corinthians 8:6, and the note. Many places in Scripture the Father is called the Most High God. Yes, the Son is also God, but He is God by virtue of the power and glory given Him by the Father. Matthew 28:18; John 14:28; 17:24; 1 Corinthians 11:3.

1:5a But this is what God did say to His Son.

Hebrews 5:5; Psalm 2:7; 89:27.

1:5b 2 Samuel 7:14.

1:6a Imperative mood. God is not begging or suggesting, He is commanding! If angels are under obligation to worship Him, man is most certainly under obligation to do so.

1:7a Psalm 104:4. Or ... serving Him *as flames of fire*.

1:8-9a Psalm 45:6-7.

1:10-12a Psalm 102:25-27.

1:13a But this is what God did say to His Son. Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:44.

gave us thru them, how can we escape His judgment if we neglect^a a salvation that is so great?

³It was the Lord Jesus who first told us about it.^a Then it was confirmed and passed on to us by those who had heard Him speak.

⁴Even now God continues to testify^a to the truth of their testimony by signs and wonders, and by different kinds of miracles. He also gives gifts of the Holy Spirit to His people, according to His own will and purpose.

Jesus Became as Human as We Are

⁵And we know that God has not put the angels in charge of the coming new world of which we speak.

⁶But as one writer of Scripture earnestly and most solemnly declared in a certain place,

What is mankind, O God, that You bother Yourself to even think about us? Why are You so concerned about mere man that You continue to care for us?

⁷**You made us a little lower than the angels. Then You crowned us with glory and honor, putting us in charge of the things Your hands had made.**

⁸**You have put us in charge of everything there is!**^a In putting us in charge of everything, God hasn't left anything that is not subject to us. But at the present time we don't yet see ourselves ruling over everything.

⁹But what we do see is Jesus. Thru God's kindness which we don't deserve, Jesus was made a little lower than the angels for the purpose of suffering and dying, so that He might endure suffering and death for every one of us. But now we see Him

crowned with great glory and honor^a!

¹⁰All things were created by God for His own reasons and purposes. And in order to make it possible for Him to bring many children to Himself to share His glory,^a He did what His love, justice, and wisdom demanded when He made the Founder of our salvation perfect thru sufferings.

¹¹Because both Jesus, who is making us holy, and those of us who are being made holy by Him, have the same Father. That's why He isn't ashamed to call us His brothers and sisters.

¹²He even said to God,

I will tell My brothers and sisters what You have done. When they meet together I will join them in singing Your praises.^a

¹³He also said,

I will put My trust in God.^a

And also,

Here I am, with the children God has given Me.^b

¹⁴And since the children are made of flesh and blood, He was born as they were, taking on Himself a body of flesh and blood. He took upon Himself our humanity so that He could die, because only by dying^a could He crush the power of the one who had the power of death—that is, the devil.

¹⁵He did it so that He might set free those who were enslaved all their lives by fear of death.

¹⁶Clearly, then, He did not become an angel; He became a man, a descendant of Abraham.

¹⁷So He had to be made like His brothers and sisters in every way, so that He could be a merciful and faithful High Priest in matters relating to God. This was also necessary if He were to be able to

2:2a Just who is the writer addressing here? What does He mean? See Appendix 227, page 489.

2:3a ... *and the conditions for receiving it.*

2:4a The Greek *sunepimartuountos* here, is present tense (present continuous action), not past tense as some translate.

2:6-8a Psalm 8:4-6. Oh, the wonder of it all! The main idea in the teaching here is that redeemed people, in their glorified state, as children of God, will rule over all of God's creation. It could be that during the first 1,000 years, while the earth is being subdued, this rule will be confined to the earth. But in reading these verses carefully, one is impressed with the fact that God plans to put *everything* under His children. A summary of *everything* would include the moon, the sun, and all the galaxies of stars. It no doubt will include much more, of which we know nothing at present.

2:9a ... *following His death, resurrection, and ascension to Heaven.*

2:10a 1 Peter 5:1,4,10. This glory is not a place,

but a state of being. It is *we* who will be glorified!

2:12a Psalm 22:22.

2:13a Isaiah 8:17.

2:13b Isaiah 8:18.

2:14a He died so that He could be our substitute, and die in our place. The great purpose for which the Redeemer came was to rescue us from the awful penalty that God has pronounced upon us because of our sin; to restore us to life and hope; to place us in a world where death is unknown.

What undertaking in all the universe has been so grand as this? And Christ has given each and every one of His followers the awesome responsibility of sharing in that great undertaking by telling the Great News to everyone everywhere! Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:9-10.

2:17a ... *to make it possible for God to offer us forgiveness.*

2:18a It hurts to resist temptation. Whatever the temptation, your lower self cries out to be satisfied. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Christ *was tempted in*

suffer and die in order to make amends for the sins of mankind.^a

¹⁸Because of the fact that He Himself suffered when He was tempted,^a He is able to help us as we are now being tempted.

Jesus is Greater than Moses

3 For that reason, dear brothers and sisters, who are dedicated to God and have accepted His invitation to Heaven, I want you to think very seriously about Christ Jesus^a who is both God's Messenger to us and the High Priest of our faith.

²He was faithful to God who appointed Him as High Priest, in the same way that Moses served faithfully in everything having to do with God's house.^a

³But it certainly is agreed that Christ is worthy of far greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house is worthy of far greater honor than the house.^a

⁴Every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.^a

⁵And Moses was indeed faithful in all of his responsibilities as a servant in God's house, even challenging the people to pay close attention to the message that would later be given them by Christ, the Messiah.^a

⁶But Christ is faithful as the Son in charge of God's house. And we are His house,^a if with unflinching determination, unshaken in courage, we indeed continue until the end of life to joyfully boast to others about who we now are^b and the sure hope^c we have.

every way that we are. But not once did He yield to them and sin. Christ suffered the death of self every time He resisted temptation to sin. So He's been there before us—as a human being.

So call on Him for help when you are tempted, because He knows all about your need, and He has promised to help. See 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philipians 2:12-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; James 1:12-15; 1 Peter 1:13-16; 1 John 1:8-9; Jude 1c, and the notes.

3:1a Every person should stand in profound amazement when he considers who Jesus really is, and all He has done for us, and what the results will be for us thruout eternity. We owe Him endless praise and thanksgiving.

3:2a Numbers 12:7.

3:3a Because Jesus, the Son of God, is even the Builder and Creator of Moses. John 1:3.

3:4a ... *who created all things thru Jesus Christ.* See 1:2; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:15-16.

3:5a Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

3:6a ... *in which He lives* ... John 14:23; 1

We Must Continue to Believe and Obey Our Lord God

⁷So as the Holy Spirit warns,

When you realize that your God is speaking to you today,

⁸**don't be stubborn and refuse to obey My commands! That's the way your ancestors acted when they rebelled against Me during the time I was testing them in the wilderness.**

⁹**They, instead, put Me on trial and put My patience to a severe test there,^a even after they had seen all the amazing things I had done for them.^b**

¹⁰**So for 40 years after that I was inflamed with anger against that entire generation. In their hearts they are always going astray, I said. They have no real interest in knowing what I want them to do.**

¹¹**In my anger I solemnly vowed, They will never enter into My rest in the land I promised them!^a**

¹²So take warning, my brothers and sisters, and make sure there isn't a heart of evil desire and doubt in any of you,^a causing you to turn back from obeying what the living God has told you to do and not do.

¹³You must continue to challenge and urgently plead with one another every day while the word today still applies to us, so that not even one of you becomes hardened^a by the treacherous siren calls of sin.

¹⁴Because we can claim we have become partakers of the great inheritance Christ has purchased for us only if we have indeed held on firmly to the original assurance^a we had, until the end of our

Corinthians 3:16.

3:6b 1 John 3:1-2.

3:6c The Greek word here, translated *confidence* in many translations, actually means *outspokenness, frankness, plainness of speech, outspokenness to the public, courage, confidence, boldness, fearlessness*—all toward man; and *joyfulness and confidence* toward God. See Romans 10:9-10 and notes. Notice that this verse and Romans 10:9-10 hold very serious implications regarding our salvation.

3:9a ... *by not believing I was serious or capable when I commanded them to move forward and take the land* ... Numbers 13:1 to 14:23.

3:9b ... *in Egypt, in the Red Sea, and in the desert.*

3:7-11a Psalm 95:7-11.

3:12a ... *believing you don't need to continue to obey the Lord in order to be saved* ... Romans 2:3-8; 6:16; Hebrews 5:9. This includes the command to speak out for the Lord (Matthew 28:18-20; Romans

life here.^b

¹⁵Seriously consider that the Scripture says,
When you realize that God is speaking to you today, you must not harden your hearts as your ancestors did when they rebelled against Me.^a

¹⁶And who were the people who even heard God's voice, and still rebelled? Didn't that include all^a the people who came out of Egypt with Moses?

¹⁷And with whom was God angry for 40 years? Wasn't it with those who sinned, who finally died in the desert?

¹⁸To whom did He solemnly vow that they would not enter His place of rest? Was it not to those who had refused to obey Him?

¹⁹So we see that the reason they couldn't enter was because of their unbelief.^a

4 Although we have God's promise of rest in His Heaven, the thing that happened to those people should cause us to tremble with fear,^a when we realize that any one of you may have come short of what God requires of you to get there.^b

²The Great News about a place of rest has indeed been preached to us, just as it was to them. But the message they heard didn't do them any good, because they didn't believe.^a

³We who have truly believed^a will indeed enter into His rest. But always remember that God said this concerning Israel,

In my anger I solemnly vowed, They will never enter into My rest in the land I promised them!^b

He said this even though He had finished His work of preparing for them ever since the world was created.

⁴Moses reported somewhere about the seventh day in this way,

And God rested on the seventh day after He had

finished all of His work of creation.^a

⁵But as already quoted, God said,
Those people will never enter into My rest in the land I promised them!^a

⁶So the Scriptures plainly speak about a place of rest that is available to some, even though those to whom it was first offered weren't able to enter because of their refusal to obey God.^a

⁷But now God has given us another day when it's possible to gain entrance into His rest. King David wrote about it long after Israel rebelled in the wilderness. That day is called **today**. As already quoted, David wrote,

When you realize that God is speaking to you today, you must not harden your hearts!^a

⁸If Joshua had given the people true rest when he brought them into Israel, God would not have spoken later about another day when we could enter.

⁹So for the people of God there is a wonderful, complete rest, that is still in the future.

¹⁰And anyone who has been welcomed into God's rest in Heaven has rested from his work, just as God did from His.^a

¹¹So let us be diligent in making sure that we enter that rest.^a Let's make sure that none of us miss going there by following the example of those who disobeyed God.^b

¹²Because every word that God speaks is alive and powerful. It's cutting edges are sharper than any two-edged sword. It cuts open and lays bare your very soul and spirit, even piercing into the joints and marrow. As it does so, it reveals and examines the very thoughts and intentions of the heart.

¹³There is no created thing in all of creation that is hidden from the eyes of God. Everything lies

10:9-10) as well as obeying His commands to refrain from sin. His commands to act are just as important and binding as His commands to refrain from acting.

3:13a ... hardened to the high standards Christ has given you to live by, and thereby becoming open to the treacherous siren calls of sin.

3:14a We certainly can't have assurance that we belong to Christ if we ignore His teachings and ignore or refuse to obey Him. See 5:9.

3:14b Philippians 3:11-17.

3:15a Psalm 95:7-11.

3:16a All but two (Caleb and Joshua) rebelled. Numbers 13:1 to 14:9.

3:19a But they were believers, weren't they? What was wrong? See Appendix 228, page 490, for the answer.

4:1a Philippians 2:12.

4:1b We must realize that what God requires is genuine faith—faith that comes from the very center of your heart and soul, causing you to not only believe His promises, but also to believe and act in regard to His warnings, and to faithfully follow His instructions about how we are both to live for Him and serve Him until He takes us home. God clearly shows us here that anything less is unbelief.

4:2a ... that God could bring them to the place of rest He had promised. So they became fearful and refused to obey. Numbers 13 and 14. When a person refuses to believe God to the extent of disobeying His instructions, God's promises no longer apply to him.

4:3a Remember, to believe in Christ means to believe and obey His teachings and commands, as

bare and exposed to the eyes of the One to whom we must all give an accounting.^a

Jesus is Our Great High Priest

¹⁴And since we have a great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, who has passed thru the skies and beyond, let us take a strong and firm stand^a for what we say we believe.

¹⁵Because we don't have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who was tempted in every way that we are. But not once did He yield to those temptations and sin.

¹⁶For that reason we should always come with confidence to the throne of our merciful God. Because there we will find mercy and forgiveness, and we will receive His undeserved kindness and help in our time of need.

5 Now every High Priest of Israel is selected from among men, and is appointed to represent them in their dealings with God. He offers their gifts to God, as well as their sacrifices for their sins.

²Since he himself is weak in many ways, he is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are being seduced and led astray.

³And because of his own weaknesses, he must offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

⁴But no man can take this honorable position for himself. He must be appointed by God, just as Aaron was.^a

⁵Even Christ didn't glorify Himself to the position of High Priest. But the One who appointed Him was the One who had told Him,

You are My Son. Today I have begotten You and have become Your Father.^a

well as to believe His promises.

4:3b Numbers 14:22-23; Psalm 95:11.

4:4a Genesis 2:2.

4:5a Psalm 95:11.

4:6a Some have translated this word *unbelief*, but it's *disobeyed* in the Greek. How can some people dare to take such liberties with the word of God! Even the King James translation is wrong here and in v 11.

4:7a Psalm 95:7-8.

4:10a ... *after He had finished the work of creation.* Genesis 2:1-3.

4:11a 2 Peter 1:10.

4:11b What kind of disobedience brought chaos to those people? And how does their disobedience apply to us? See Appendix 229, page 491.

⁶In another Scripture God says,

You are a Priest forever, in the same distinctive class as Melchizedek.^a

⁷When Jesus was here on earth in human form, He prayed and pleaded with loud, impassioned prayer, with tears, to the One who was able to save Him from death.^a And God granted His request because of His utter devotion to the Father.

⁸Even though He was God's Son, He still learned to be obedient by the things He suffered.

⁹And when that suffering had made Him God's perfect sacrifice, He became the source of salvation and eternal life for those who make it their sincere aim to obey Him in all things at all times.^a

¹⁰Remember that God has declared Him to be High Priest in the same distinctive class as Melchizedek.

Warning Against Falling Away

¹¹There is so much more we could say about this, but you've become sluggish and lazy in your listening, so it's hard to explain it in a way that you can understand.

¹²Because by this time, when you should be teaching others, you still need someone to explain to you all over again the simplest things about what God has said. You're still in constant need of milk instead of solid food!

¹³Anyone who can take in only milk is still a small baby, who knows nothing about the true demands and expectations of God for us.

¹⁴But solid spiritual food is for those who are spiritually mature, who have come to the place where they more fully understand the teachings of Christianity, and can accept what is true and reject what is false.

4:13a Proverbs 5:21; 15:3.

4:14a ... *by both word and action* ...

5:4a Aaron was the first High Priest of Israel.

5:5a Psalm 2:7.

5:6a Psalm 110:4.

5:7a Some believe Christ was near death in Gethsemane when He endured such intense sorrow, and that God restored Him so He would be able to complete the work of redemption on Calvary's cross.

5:9a *Obey*, present participle. In the Greek this verb now becomes an adjective, describing those who will be saved. Present tense, present continuous action. Only those who *make it their sincere aim to always obey Him* can have any assurance that they will be saved. Only obedient faith is saving faith. Selective obedience is rebellion!

6 So let's be done with constantly going over and over again the first lessons we learned about the Christian faith. Let's move on to maturity, not continually laying the foundation, only talking about the necessity of turning away from acts that lead to death, and the need for genuine faith toward God.

²And you don't need continual instructions about the various ceremonial washings practiced by the Jews,^a the laying on of hands to bless and heal, the resurrection of the dead, and judgments that are eternal.

³With God's permission, we will now move on to other things.

⁴In regard to those who once clearly understood the Great News, who accepted the heavenly gift of life and were partakers of the Holy Spirit,

⁵who have experienced comfort and peace from the word of God, and have even experienced the great powers of the age to come,

⁶and then have fallen away,^a it is impossible to bring them again to the place where they will repent. They are themselves now crucifying the Son of God all over again, and shaming Him publicly!

⁷Soil that drinks in the rain that falls on it often, and continues to produce good crops for those who have cultivated it, is blessed by God.

⁸But land that continues to produce only thorns and thistles is in danger of being rejected and cursed. It will end up being burned.

⁹But even though we are compelled to keep warning^a you in this way, we are confident that we can expect better things from you,^b dear friends—yes, things that prove you are fixed in your direction, with firm and unwavering resolve in your dedication to God.

¹⁰God isn't unfair. He won't forget how you have faithfully worked and labored for Him because of your love for Him. He knows how you have helped others who are dedicated to Him, and how you continue to do so.

¹¹But we continue to earnestly desire that every one of you continue in your diligence in living for

the Lord, so that to the very end of your life here on earth you will have every reason to be firmly persuaded that the hope you have will be fulfilled.

¹²You must not be lazy and sluggish;^a but you must follow the example of those who are indeed in the process of inheriting the promises of God thru both faith and long-suffering endurance.

The Certainty of God's Promise

¹³When God made His promise to Abraham, He made a vow to do what He had promised. And because there was no one greater to call on as a witness, He made a vow in His own name.^a

¹⁴**You can be absolutely sure,** He told Abraham, **that in the way I am continually blessing you now, I will also bless you in the future. When I promise that you will be multiplied, you will indeed be multiplied, with great numbers of descendants.**^a

¹⁵And that happened. After Abraham had patiently endured all kinds of disappointments, he finally obtained what God had promised.

¹⁶When a person makes a solemn vow, he uses the name of someone greater than himself to guarantee his promise. And the vow settles the matter.

¹⁷So when God wanted to give absolute proof to those to whom He had given the promise, that He would surely do what He had said, He solemnly vowed to keep His promise.

¹⁸So now, those of us who have run to God for safety to take hold of the hope of eternal life which He has promised us, can continue to be greatly encouraged by the fact that both God's promise and His vow are two things that cannot change, because God cannot lie.

¹⁹This sure hope we have of being saved and being with God is like an anchor for the soul. It has fastened itself both firmly and securely right into the very heart of God in Heaven.

²⁰And Jesus has gone there ahead of us^a as our High Priest forever, just like Melchizedek.

Melchizedek, a Picture of Christ

7 This Melchizedek, you see, was both king of Salem and a priest of the Most High God. As

6:2a Hebrews 9:10.

6:6a Translations which include an "if" in this phrase are incorrect. There is no conditional participle in the Greek text. Sadly, this refers to persons who have actually fallen away.

6:9a The word of warning pointing to safety and completeness must be spoken in time. *A friend who wounds you because of his love for you, is a faith-*

ful friend indeed. Proverbs 27:6. Even as a doctor or dentist must at times wound you and cause much pain in order to bring healing, a true friend must at times point out error in belief or action in order to bring you healing and forgiveness from God for the sake of your eternal soul.

6:9b The writer is *confident of better things from you*, but not from *them*.

Abraham was returning from the battle in which he had defeated many kings, Melchizedek met him and blessed him.

²Abraham then gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything he had taken in battle. First of all, Melchizedek means **king of righteousness**. He is also called **king of peace**, which is the meaning of **king of Salem**, the city of which he was king.

³There is no record of his father or mother, nor of any other ancestor. Nor is there a record of his birth or death. But just like the Son of God, he has been appointed to be a priest forever.^a

⁴Just think how great this man is, when even Abraham, our great ancestor, gave him one tenth of everything he'd taken in battle.^a

⁵Now the Law of Moses requires that the descendants of Levi, who became the priests, are to be given a tenth of all that the rest of the people earn. They are to receive this from their brothers, even though they have all descended from Abraham.

⁶But Melchizedek, who was not a descendant of Levi, still received a tenth from Abraham and then blessed Abraham, who had received such amazing promises directly from God.

⁷And it's always true that the more important person blesses the one who is less important.

⁸In the one case, the tenth is given to men who die, but in regard to Melchizedek we are told that he continues to live.

⁹In a sense, even the Jewish priests who collect the tenth today, paid the tenth thru Abraham,

¹⁰because even though they weren't yet born, they were in the genes of Abraham when Melchizedek met him.

¹¹So if we could have been made perfect by means of the Jewish priesthood, under which the people received the benefits of the Law, what further need would there have been for another priest to come in the same distinctive class as Melchizedek, instead of thru Aaron?^a

¹²Also, if the priesthood has been changed, that means we must now be under a different law.

¹³Because our Lord, of whom these things are spoken, belongs to another tribe. And no one has ever officiated at the altar from that tribe.

¹⁴It's clear that our Lord came from the tribe of Judah, and Moses said nothing about men from that tribe serving as priests.

¹⁵And even greater proof that we're now under a new system is the fact that a different Person is now serving as High Priest, One who resembles Melchizedek.

¹⁶The power of His authority did not come to Him by being born into the family of a priest, as required by the Law, but because His life can never be brought to an end.

¹⁷Because thru David God declares,

You are a Priest forever, in the same distinctive class as Melchizedek.^a

¹⁸So the former arrangement given by God to Moses has now been cancelled, because it was weak, and actually useless.^a

¹⁹In fact, the Law of Moses never made anyone right with God. But now it has been replaced by a much better plan, a plan which gives us a deep assurance of an absolute and confident hope, by which we are able to come joyfully and humbly into the very presence of God.

²⁰And just think how meaningful it is that God made a vow when He declared that Jesus would be His High Priest.

²¹He never made a vow concerning any other priest. But He did make a vow when He said to His Son,

I, the Lord, have vowed, and I will not change My mind, You are a Priest forever in the same distinctive class as Melchizedek.^a

²²Because of this vow, Jesus has become the guarantee of a far better covenant agreement.

²³Under the old agreement, there were many High Priests, because death stopped them from continuing to serve.

²⁴But Jesus lives on forever, so He will never surrender His priesthood to someone else.

²⁵So for all time to come, He is able to continue saving those who are coming to God thru Him, because He will always be alive to plead for them before God.

²⁶And that's the kind of High Priest we need—One who is holy, without the slightest taint of guilt,

6:12a ... *in your desire to make real progress in your living to please the Lord and in effectively serving Him.* And this you will do if you *always keep the end results in view.*

6:13a Genesis 22:16-17.

6:14a Genesis 22:17.

6:20a ... *and is pleading our case before God* ...

7:3a Melchizedek is really a mystery. He is con-

sidered a type of Christ, and some believe He actually was the preincarnate Christ.

7:4a Genesis 14:1-20.

7:11a Aaron (of the tribe of Levi) was chosen by God to be the first High Priest of Israel.

7:18a See 10:1-4, 11.

7:17, 21a Psalm 110:4.

7:26a ... *at the very throne of God.*

unstained by sin, never joining sinners in their selfish plans, goals, or forbidden or questionable pleasures, and One who is exalted higher than the highest heavens.^a

²⁷Unlike other High Priests, He doesn't need to offer up sacrifices day after day, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people. When He offered up Himself on the cross, He offered up a sacrifice to God just once, which is of sufficient excellence and worth to rid the human race of all guilt for all time to come.

²⁸On the other hand, the Law appoints men as High Priests who are weak and sinful. But God's vow, which was made after the Law was given, appoints the Son, which gives us a perfect arrangement with a perfect High Priest forever.

Jesus Our High Priest

8 The key point of what we are saying is this: We do indeed have the High Priest about whom I've been speaking, and right now He is seated in Heaven, in the place of highest honor, at the right hand of the throne of God, the Supreme Power.

²He is serving as High Priest in the Most Holy Place in the true tabernacle in Heaven, which was erected by the Lord, not by man.

³Every High Priest is given the assignment of offering both gifts and sacrifices. So it was necessary that this One should also have something to offer.

⁴If He were on earth, there would be no way that He could be a priest, since certain men have already been appointed to offer gifts required by the Jewish Law.

⁵But they serve in a Temple that's only a model or shadow of the real Temple in Heaven. That's why Moses was given strict orders by God when he was about to build the tabernacle. God told him,

Be sure you make everything exactly like the pattern you were shown on the mountain.^a

⁶But the priestly work that Jesus has now been given to do is far superior to the work given the other priests. The covenant agreement of which He is the Mediator is also far greater than the old one, because it's based on far better promises.

⁷Now if there had been nothing wrong with the first agreement with God, there would have been

no need for a second one.

⁸But God Himself found fault with the old one, and thru Jeremiah He said,

Listen to Me, the Lord says, because the time is coming when I will make a new agreement with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.

⁹**It will not be like the agreement I made with their ancestors, when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. They didn't keep their part of My agreement, so I stopped taking care of them.**

¹⁰**But this is the kind of agreement I will make with the people of Israel in time to come: I will put My laws into their minds and write them upon their hearts. Then I will indeed be their God, and they will be My people.**

¹¹**None of them will then need to teach his neighbor or his brother or sister, saying, Let me tell you about the Lord, because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest.**

¹²**Because I will be merciful to them in spite of all the wrong they have done, and I will no longer remember their sins nor their lawless deeds.^a**

¹³By calling this a new agreement, God made the first one obsolete. And whatever is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear.

The Old Agreement

9 Now even the first agreement had regulations as to how to worship, and an earthly building for worship.

²Because an elaborate tent^a was constructed, with two rooms. In the first room were the lampstand and a table with loaves of bread on it that were dedicated to God. This room was called the Holy Place.

³Behind a large, heavy curtain was a second room, called the Most Holy Place.

⁴In this room were the golden altar on which incense was burned, and the ark^a of the agreement, which was a wooden chest totally covered^b with gold. Inside the ark were the gold jar containing manna, Aaron's rod that had sprouted leaves,^c and the two tablets of stone on which God had written His Ten Commandments.

⁵Above the ark were the two cherubim^a facing each other, (representing the glory of God's presence there), with their wings meeting and over-

8:5a Exodus 25:40.

8:12a Jeremiah 31:31-34. If God will forgive Israel, won't He likewise forgive your sins if you call upon Him and surrender your will to Him so you might be born again? John 3:1-21.

9:2a Or *tabernacle*.

9:4a Exodus 25:10-22.

9:4b ... *both inside and out* ...

9:4c Numbers 16 and 17.

9:5a Figures of two angels made out of hammered gold. Exodus 25:18-20; 37:7-9.

9:8a ... *into God's presence* ...

shadowing the place of mercy. But this is not the time to go into detail about these matters.

⁶When all of these things had been arranged in this way, the priests then entered the first room every day, to minister there.

⁷But only the High Priest entered the second room. And he went there only once a year, but never without blood, which he offered to God for himself and for the people for sins they had committed in ignorance.

⁸By this arrangement, the Holy Spirit was showing that the way into the Most Holy Place^a had not yet been opened to the people as long as the original tent^b was God's arrangement for man to reach out to Him.

⁹But this symbolic arrangement was only for that time, because neither the gifts nor the sacrifices, which were offered repeatedly, could ever clear the conscience of the one who offered them.

¹⁰Other provisions of the agreement dealt mainly with what was lawful to eat and drink, and with various purification ceremonies. There were also regulations concerning the body, all of which were imposed on them until the time when God would open up the new way into His presence.^a

The New Agreement

¹¹But when Christ came on the scene as High Priest of the excellent plan we now have,^a He entered into a far greater and more perfect Temple^b which is not man-made—and which is not even a part of God's creation that we can presently see.

¹²And He did not bring in with Him the blood of goats and calves.^a He entered the Most Holy Place of All with His own blood. And He did this only once, which is enough for all time to come. By doing this He ransomed us, obtaining an eternal pardon from God for us.^b

¹³Under the Jewish Law, people who become unclean for various reasons are not fit to worship God. But they will be considered clean, if they are sprinkled with the blood of sacrificed bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer.^a

¹⁴But think of how much more is accomplished

by the blood that Christ shed for you! Thru the eternal Spirit He offered Himself to God as a blameless sacrifice without blemish. So now He is able to thoroughly cleanse your conscience from the things you have done that lead to death, so that you may now serve the everliving God!

¹⁵That's why He is the One who is now able to successfully plead for us before God under the new agreement. It's also by means of His death that those who accepted God's invitation to life under the first agreement are now ransomed from the penalty of their sins, and obtain the fulfillment of the promise of an eternal inheritance with God.^a

¹⁶In fact, when God made this agreement it was like making a will. And when someone writes a will, the one who makes it must die before it goes into effect.

¹⁷It becomes effective only after it can be proved that the one who made it has died. What it promises can never be claimed while the one who made it is still alive.

¹⁸That's why even the first agreement was put into effect with blood, *indicating that there had been a death.*^a

¹⁹First, Moses read out loud every commandment of the Law to all the people. Then he took the blood of bulls and goats, mixed with water, and using a sprig of hyssop plant and some bright red wool, he sprinkled it on both the book from which he had read, and on all the people.

²⁰Then he said,

This is the blood which seals the agreement that God has commanded you to obey.^a

²¹He also sprinkled blood on the tent and on everything there that was used in the worship ceremonies.

²²According to the Law, almost everything must be purified by blood. In fact, there is no forgiveness of sins unless blood has been shed.

Our Sins Can Now Be Purged by the Shed Blood of Christ's Suffering and Death For Us

²³It was necessary then that even the models of the heavenly originals should be purified by such sacrifices. But the heavenly things themselves

9:8b ... and later the Temple ...

9:10a ... by means of Jesus Christ.

9:11a Or of the good things to come. Both are true.

9:11b ... in Heaven ...

9:12a ... as a sacrifice, and to sprinkle on the mercy seat.

9:12b Psalm 103:10-12; Micah 7:18-19.

9:13a ... that's been sacrificed as a burnt offer-

ing.

9:15a So even those who believed God and sacrificed animals to Him under the old agreement are saved now by the shed blood of Jesus. These people believed and obeyed God, and God has honored their faith.

9:18a Implied.

9:20a Exodus 24:8.

must be purified by much better sacrifices than these.

²⁴That's why Christ did not go into a holy place made by human hands, one that was a mere model of the true one, but into the Most Holy Place of All, in Heaven itself. And He's there now, appearing in the very presence of God on our behalf.

²⁵That doesn't mean that Christ must offer Himself as a sacrifice over and over again, like the High Priest, who enters the Most Holy Place every year with the blood of an animal.

²⁶If that were the case, Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But instead, He has clearly revealed Himself to us only once, in the final age of the ages, to make it possible for God to forgive us our sins^a by sacrificing Himself.

²⁷And God has determined that we mortals are to die just once. After that we must all stand before Him for judgment.^a

²⁸In the same way, God offered Christ as a sacrifice only once, to suffer and die for the sins of many. When He comes again, He will not come to deal with sin, but to finalize the salvation of all who are eagerly and patiently waiting for Him.^a

10 Actually, the Jewish Law is only a sketchy outline of the good things that were to come to us later thru Christ—not the very things themselves. Because the sacrifices under the Law, which they offer again and again, year after year, can never make those people perfect who draw near to worship God.

²If those sacrifices were effective, wouldn't they have stopped offering them? Because the wor-

shippers, having once been purified, would have felt no further guilt for their sins.

³But year after year, those sacrifices are an annual reminder to the people of their sins,

⁴because it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to remove the guilt of sins.

⁵For that reason, when Christ was about to come into the world, He said to God,

It was not Your plan or intention to be satisfied with animal sacrifices and other offerings. But You have prepared a body for Me to offer to You in sacrifice.

⁶Even whole animals burned on the altar, and other offerings offered as sacrifices for sins, gave You no satisfaction.

⁷Then I said, Look! I have come to do exactly what You want Me to do, O God, just as it is written about Me in Your Holy Book.^a

⁸Notice that He first said, "Animal sacrifices and other offerings, and even entire animals offered as burnt offerings, and other sacrifices for sin, gave You no satisfaction." (He said this even though the Law required that these sacrifices be made repeatedly.)

⁹Then He said, "Look! I have come to do exactly what You want Me to do, O God." By Christ doing what He did, God did away with the first agreement in order to firmly set up in its place the second one.

¹⁰So by God's will, we are freed from the guilt of our sins by the once-for-all-time sacrifice that Jesus made for us.

¹¹Under the old agreement, every priest stands day after day performing his religious duties and offering the same sacrifices time after time— sac-

9:26a By His sacrifice, He made it possible for God to offer us mercy. It is now both legal and right for God to forgive us, because our Creator has become one of us, and has suffered and died as a sacrifice to God because of our sins. He suffered and died in our place.

9:27a This Scripture definitely refutes the teaching of reincarnation. It very definitely states that we mortals *die just once*, and next comes *the judgment*. It's just as plain as that.

9:28a Who will be included among the saved when Christ returns? The key words here are *all who are eagerly and patiently waiting for Him*. This is another instance where the Bible teaches that the faith of one who would gain Heaven must be a faith that is vibrantly alive and active. No other faith will do.

10:7a Psalm 40:6-8. (Septuagint translation).

10:15a Jeremiah 31:31-34, just quoted in 8:8-12.

10:16a Jeremiah 31:33.

10:17a Jeremiah 31:34.

10:19a ... *and fellowship with God in praise, meditation, and petition.*

10:20a This refers to the heavy curtain hung in the Temple, separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place where God resides.

10:21a Each true follower of the Lord is a house of God, where God lives. See 3:6; John 14:21-23; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Revelation 3:20. But in this case it seems that Paul is speaking of the followers of Christ in their corporate identity as a household and family of God. See also Ephesians 2:19-22.

10:22a This refers to baptism, and what it means. See Romans 6:1-8.

10:24-25a As Christians we are to be *truly concerned about one another*. It is taken for granted that if a person is a Christian he is trusting in the Lord for the forgiveness of his sins. Our main

rifices which can never free the people from the guilt of their sins.

¹² Jesus, however, offered one sacrifice for sins, an offering that is effective forever! Then He sat down at the right hand of God.

¹³ Ever since then, He continues to wait until God will put His enemies under His power, even as a footstool under His feet.

¹⁴ By that one sacrifice, then, He has made perfect forever those who are being purified from sin.

¹⁵ The Holy Spirit also says this in the Scripture we just quoted,^a when He said,

¹⁶ **This is the kind of agreement I will make with My people in the future, the Lord says. I will put My laws upon their hearts, and I will write them upon their minds.^a**

¹⁷ Then He added,

I will no longer remember their sins nor their lawless deeds.^a

¹⁸ The point is, because ample provision has now been made for the forgiveness of sins, there is no longer any need for more sacrifices.

A Most Serious Call to Persevere

¹⁹ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, with utmost confidence we are each of us now able to personally enter the Most Holy Place of All, in Heaven, because of the blood that Jesus shed for us.^a

²⁰ He dedicated a new and living way thru the curtain,^a giving His own torn body as our means of entry into the very presence of God.

²¹ We have such a great High Priest ruling over the house of God!^a

²² So let us continually draw near to God with a sincere heart, and with faith that is full of assur-

ance that our hearts have indeed been sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, to cleanse us from all the evil of which our conscience convicted us, and that our bodies have been washed with pure water.^a

²³ Let us, then, without ever wavering, keep holding firmly to the hope we have, because God can be fully trusted to keep His promise.

²⁴ And we should continue to be truly concerned about one another, to help stimulate each other to show love, and to be active in doing good deeds.

²⁵ Also, don't give up meeting together with other followers of the Lord, as some are in the habit of doing. But let's continue to meet and encourage one another, and even to increase doing so as we see the awesome Day approaching.^a

²⁶ Because if we willfully make a practice of ignoring God and living in sin after taking hold of the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins!

²⁷ All that one can then look forward to is an inescapable, fearful judgment, which will be a terrifying judgment of raging fire that will continually feed upon^a the enemies of God.

²⁸ On the evidence given by two or three witnesses, anyone who refuses to obey the Law of Moses is to be put to death without mercy.^a

²⁹ What, then, about the person who has trampled under foot the Son of God, who now considers the blood of the new agreement by which he had been cleansed and purified as being worthless, thereby insulting the mercy shown him by the Holy Spirit? How much greater and more severe punishment do you suppose such a person will deserve?

³⁰ Because we know who it was who said,

It is My responsibility to inflict punishment. I will

emphasis among fellow Christians must be to encourage each other to continue in *love* and *to be active in doing good deeds*. This is the emphasis that is needed.

We need to encourage each other to truly love our God, by emphasizing the need to spend time with Him in prayer and in reading His word. Only in this way can a follower of the Lord receive the necessary spiritual strength and challenge. Then, and only then, can any of us be effective in telling others about Him. Our *doing good deeds* should include all of our service to God and man, both in the area of the material as well as the spiritual.

But it is impossible to encourage one another in these matters unless we *get together*. Paul stresses the need for *getting together*, especially *as you see the awesome Day approaching*. He is speaking here of the Day of the Lord, the time when the earth will be judged by the Lord, which will immediately

precede our Lord's coming to reign on the earth. Certainly the signs today are many in this regard.

* * *

No doubt the day is soon coming when true Christians will not be allowed to meet together in churches. This is already true in some countries. The church began in the homes of the believers. It will no doubt return to the homes. But these home meetings can be just as precious and alive as any large church service has ever been. Maybe more so.

The Christian who stays away from the worship services of his church obviously has little interest in the Kingdom of Christ, and feels no need for spiritual encouragement. He is in the process of surrendering *the good fight that needs to be fought in living the Christian faith*. Final surrender occurs without his realizing it. The person still imagines himself to be a Christian; but he only fools himself—a subtle danger which the Bible warns

indeed repay those who are guilty.^a

And again,

The Lord will judge even His own people.^b

³¹ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the everliving God!^a

³² But continue to remember how it was when you were first illuminated by the Great News. You stood your ground, and endured fierce opposition and suffering.

³³ There were times when you were made a public spectacle, being ridiculed and scornfully attacked with verbal abuse. You were also beaten, and persecuted in other ways. At other times you experienced further ill-treatment when you defended others who were being treated this way.

³⁴ You even stood up for me and helped me when I was in jail.^a And when your possessions were plundered and taken from you, you joyfully allowed that to happen,^b because you know that God has promised you far superior possessions in Heaven that no one can ever take from you.

³⁵ So don't ever cast aside this boldness and confidence you have in the Lord and in all that lies ahead for you. Such great rewards await you!

³⁶ But it's just as important, and in fact, it's absolutely necessary that you patiently persevere,^a so that after you have done all that God wants you to do, you may receive what He has promised.

³⁷ Because as the Scripture says,

In just a little while, the One who is coming will indeed come. He won't waste any time when it's time for Him to come.^a

³⁸ **Now the one who gains right standing with God will be made alive spiritually by the fact that he believes both what God has promised and commanded.^a But if he shrinks back, he will no longer continue in God's favor.^b**

against frequently and urgently.

Millions of "Christians", satisfied with their "Christian experience" (all in the past) and lazy and indifferent toward Christ and His Church, are in desperate need of examining themselves to see whether or not they really are in the faith. 2 Corinthians 13:5. Love for the world is the path of compromise, and it ends in disaster!

10:27a Revelation 14:10-11; 20:10b.

10:28a Deuteronomy 17:1-7.

10:30a Deuteronomy 32:35.

10:30b Deuteronomy 32:36. The mere fact that they *are* His people will not save them from punishment if they deserve it. See Ezekiel 20:37-38.

10:31a ... *to be judged by Him.*

10:34a ... *because of my witness for Christ.*

10:34b Matthew 5:11-12; Luke 6:23-24; Acts 5:41.

³⁹ But we're not among those who turn back and are destroyed,^a but of those who steadfastly believe^b and are saved.

The Honor Roll of the Faithful

11 True faith is having complete confidence in the fact that what you are hoping for will positively happen. It's being absolutely certain about things you haven't yet seen.

² That's the kind of faith by which our ancestors were able to please God.

³ It's by faith that we accept the fact that God spoke the universe into existence. So God did not make the things we now see from things that can be seen by the human eye.

⁴ With confident faith, Abel offered a sacrifice that was more pleasing to God than the sacrifice offered by Cain. By doing so, he obtained assurance that He was right with God, because God gave him proof of that by accepting his sacrifice. And what Abel did by faith continues to speak volumes, even though he's been dead now for a long time.^a

⁵ Because of the kind of faith Enoch had, God took him to Heaven without dying. The record states that he couldn't be found anywhere, because God had taken him.^a Before God took him, it was common knowledge that here was a man whose main goal in life was to please God in everything.

⁶ In fact, it's impossible to please God at all without faith.^a Anyone who comes to God must believe with absolute certainty that there is such a Being as God, and that those He rewards are those who sincerely and most diligently seek Him.^b

⁷ Noah was warned by God about things that had never happened before.^a And by faith, in deep respect for what God had told him, he built a large ship in order to save his family.^b The demonstrat-

10:36a It is certainly implied here that God's promises to the believer will not be fulfilled unless we are patient in continuing to do what God's will is for us, and unless we are patient in enduring the trials and tribulations that will come to everyone who takes a firm stand for Christ. Surely, the prospect of such great rewards should encourage each of us to steadfast endurance.

Remember the warning of our Lord when He said, *Not everyone who repeatedly calls me 'Lord' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who practice obedience to my Father in Heaven will.* Matthew 7:21. See Colossians 1:23, and note.

10:37a Even though Christ's coming may seem long delayed, it is only a little while when compared with an endless eternity. He will soon be here. So let us hourly keep the goal in mind. We are to use

ed faith that Noah lived and preached^c served as a condemnation to the rest of the world. And by means of that obedient faith, he gained right standing with God.

⁸By faith Abraham obeyed God when God told him to go out to the place which He would later on give Abraham as his own. He obeyed God and went, even though he didn't know where he was going.

⁹By faith he lived as a foreigner in the Promised Land, living in tents, as Isaac and Jacob did also, who were heirs with him. Later on, they too, received the same promise from God.

¹⁰Abraham was satisfied to live humbly in this way because he was looking forward to the great and beautiful city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.^a

¹¹It was also by faith that Sarah received strength to become pregnant and give birth to a child, even when she was far too old to have children, because she believed that God could and would do what He had promised.^a

¹²So from one man—a man who was dead as far as his being able to father children was concerned—have come as many descendants as there are stars in the sky, and as countless as the grains of sand on the seashore.

¹³All these people were still believing God's promises when they died. They hadn't yet received the fulfillment of them, but by faith they could see them happening far off in the future. They were absolutely sure of them and clung to them, and told everyone that they were foreigners and only temporary residents on planet earth.

¹⁴Now those who say such things make it very plain that they are continually seeking, by careful endeavor, to reach their real home in Heaven.^a

¹⁵It is certainly true that if they had been longing for the country they came out of, they no doubt could have found a way to get back there.

¹⁶But that wasn't what they wanted. They were longing for a much better country—one that's in the heavens. That's why God isn't ashamed to be called their God. So He has prepared a great and beautiful city for them.^a

¹⁷And when God tested Abraham, by faith he obeyed and offered up Isaac. Even after he had finally received the special son that God had promised him, he willingly began to offer him as a sacrifice^a

¹⁸—the very one of whom God had said,

It is thru Isaac that you will have the descendants I promised.^a

¹⁹He believed that God was able to raise Isaac up again even after he was dead, and in a sense, that's what happened.

²⁰By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau about their future.

²¹By faith Jacob blessed each of Joseph's two sons when he was about to die, as he leaned upon the top of his staff and worshiped God.

²²When Joseph was about to die, by faith he spoke about the time when the people of Israel would leave Egypt, and he gave instructions about what was to be done with his body at that time.

²³When Moses was born, his parents hid him for three months when they saw what an extremely beautiful child he was. They had faith in God, and weren't afraid to disobey the king's order.

²⁴When Moses had grown up, because of his faith in God's promises, he refused to be called the son of the king's daughter.^a

²⁵He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the very temporary

the brief years of our lives here for His glory, for our own preparation to meet Him, and for the task of preparing others to meet Him. *From that moment on we will be with the Lord forever!* 1 Thessalonians 4:17. But until that glorious Day, there is work to be done and a life to be lived for Christ.

10:38a See Galatians 3:11 note.

10:38b Habakkuk 2:3-4.

10:39a Revelation 14:11; 20:10,14-15.

10:39b John 8:31; Acts 14:22; Colossians 1:23.

11:4a Abel could have this kind of faith because He was evidently sacrificing what God told him to. We must likewise obey God and give Him what He requires of us.

11:5a Genesis 5:24.

11:6a ... faith in His trustworthiness, His truth, His wisdom, and His promises.

11:6b ... and let Him know in no uncertain terms how truly in earnest you really are. God is not moved by mildly interested people. Matthew 7:7-8; Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8; James 5:16b.

11:7a And there was absolutely no evidence that they ever would happen.

11:7b Genesis 6:1 to 8:22.

11:7c 2 Peter 2:5.

11:10a Revelation 21:9 to 22:5.

11:11a Genesis 18:1-14; 21:1-2.

11:14a 2 Peter 1:10-11.

11:16a Revelation 21:2-22:5.

11:17a ... when God stopped him. Genesis 22:1-19. The word *offer* here is in the imperfect tense, which shows action in process, but not completed.

11:18a Genesis 21:12.

11:24a This happened when he was 40 years of

pleasures of sin.

²⁶Because of his staunch belief in the promised Messiah, he looked upon being publicly cursed and criticized as being of far greater value than all the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking forward to the indescribable rewards.^a God has promised those who are faithful to Him.

²⁷When Moses finally led the people of God out of Egypt, he did so by faith. He had no fear of what the angry king could do to him.^a By faith he conquered every obstacle, because he knew that the God he could not see was right there with him.

²⁸By faith he followed God's instructions about the Passover and the sprinkling of blood on the doorframes, so that the angel who was to destroy the firstborn children of Egypt would not destroy the firstborn children in the families of Israel.^a

²⁹By faith the people of Israel trusted God and walked thru the Red Sea as easily as if they were on dry ground. But when the Egyptians tried it, they were all drowned.

³⁰Because of their faith in what God would do, the walls of Jericho came down after the people had marched around them for seven days.

³¹By faith the harlot Rahab didn't die with those in her city who refused to obey God, because she welcomed and helped the Israeli spies.^a

³²What more needs to be said! I don't have time to write about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets.

³³Thru faith they conquered kingdoms. By doing what was right and pleasing to God, they reached out and gained possession of what God had promised them.

³⁴They shut the mouths of hungry lions,^a quenched the power of raging flames,^b and escaped being killed by the swords of their enemies. Although they were weak, God enabled them to perform exploits that called for power way beyond their own strength. They became brave and powerful in battle, turning the foreign invad-

ing armies to flight.

³⁵Thru the faith of their prophets, women received their dead loved ones raised back to life.

Other men of God were severely tortured, choosing to suffer and die rather than disobey God in order to be free. They believed that by remaining faithful to God, they would be raised to a much better life later on.

³⁶Some were scornfully treated with contempt and severely whipped. Others were chained in jail.

³⁷Still others were killed by a barrage of stones being hurled at them. Others were sawed in two, and some were tempted by their captors to renounce their faith, and when they refused, they were put to death by the sword. Some went about their ministry in skins of sheep and goats, being destitute, persecuted, and mistreated.

³⁸The world wasn't worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and sought shelter in caves and holes in the ground.

³⁹But even though all of these gained God's approval because of their genuine faith, they did not in their lifetime receive what God had promised.

⁴⁰Because God was looking ahead and seeing something far better happening for all of us. For that reason, those people of faith couldn't be made perfect before the event which also now makes us perfect.^a

Follow Jesus' Example

12 So because we are surrounded by such a great cloud of faithful witnesses,^a let us also throw aside all the dead weight that keeps holding us back. We must especially do so with whatever sin it is that would so easily get us all entangled and trip us up. Let us give our full and undivided attention to the race marked out for us, running hard, with strong determination and unyielding endurance, until we finally reach the finish line.

age.

11:26a Psalm 16:11.

11:27a He did fear the anger of the king the first time he left Egypt. Exodus 2:11-15.

11:28a Exodus 12:1-32.

11:31a The others in Jericho knew as much about the great deliverance of Israel from Egypt as Rahab did, but they loved their sin and didn't want to acknowledge or obey God. Rahab believed and *obeyed* by helping the two spies. Joshua 2:1-24; 6:22-23.

11:34a Daniel 6:1-28.

11:34b Daniel 3:1-30.

11:40a We can all now be brought into perfect relationship with God, because of the suffering and death that Jesus the Son of God endured for us.

12:1a ... *those mentioned above, and multitudes of others who are watching us from Heaven,*...

12:2a Primary meaning of the word is *leader, ruler, prince*. Secondary meaning, *one who begins something*, as first in a series, and thus supplies the power. Third meaning is *originator, founder*. So the evident meaning here is, Jesus is the *first* and the *last* as an example of faith, or of One who had total confidence in God.

²And we must constantly keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, because He's our Leader,^a and the Perfecter of our faith—the Supreme Example of a Man of faith, who finished His race in a blaze of glory! As He looked ahead and saw the joy that was waiting for Him at the end of His race, He willingly endured being nailed to a cross, and utterly despised all the shame connected with it. Now He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God!

³You also need to constantly remember how He put up with so much hatred from sinners, so that you won't get discouraged and give up.

⁴None of you have yet struggled in your fight against sin to the extent of being killed!

⁵Or have you forgotten the encouraging words that God speaks to you as His children?

My child, don't think of the punishments that come from the Lord as being of little value. And don't get discouraged when He scolds you.

⁶Because the Lord corrects those He loves. He severely whips^a everyone He receives as His child.^b

⁷You are to patiently endure hardship as being good discipline. God is dealing with you as any father should deal with his own child. Because what child is there who isn't disciplined and corrected by a loving father?

⁸In fact, if you are not punished when you do wrong (because God does discipline all His children when they disobey Him), then you are illegitimate, and not a child of God at all.^a

⁹Then too, we respected our human fathers when they corrected us. Should we not then in a much greater way be in submission to the One who in the full and supreme sense is our Father, and as a result live eternally?

¹⁰Our human fathers punished us in the way they thought best for us, for our good in this brief life. But God punishes us for our eternal good, so that we may finally become just like Him in nature and character.

¹¹No punishment is a pleasant experience while it's taking place. On the contrary, it's a miserable experience. But afterwards, the one who has been trained by it reaps the profitable reward of knowing how to live in a way that is both right and pleasing to God.

Get Going for God!

¹²So lift up those hands that have been hanging down, unused, and stretch those feeble, shaking knees!

¹³Clear all that rubbish out of the pathway on which you're walking, so you won't stumble and also cause those who are weak to stumble because of you! Then they may experience healing instead.

¹⁴Be diligent in trying to live at peace with everyone. But especially continue to work at living a holy life, because unless you are sincerely aiming to please God in all things, you will not be with Him in Heaven.^a

¹⁵Always be continually diligent as guardians of each other, so that none of you fall short of receiving God's wonderful, undeserved mercy. And be most careful to make sure that no one be allowed to bring in poisonous teachings that would allow one to lead an unholy life. This could cause the corruption and downfall of many.^a

¹⁶Watch out that no one becomes involved in sexual sin^a or becomes a sensuous person like Esau, who sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son for a single meal.

¹⁷Afterwards, as you know, when he wanted to receive his father's blessing, he was rejected. He couldn't get his father to change his mind even though he tried desperately to do so, with tears.

¹⁸But you don't have to approach God as the Israelites did, coming to the mountain that could be seen and touched, a mountain of blazing fire, darkness, gloom, and storm.

¹⁹All of this, together with the loud, and ever louder sound of the trumpet and the voice of com-

He occupied in this, as in all other things, the pre-eminence, and He is the most complete model that can be placed before us. The apostle had not counted Him among those who had been distinguished for their faith (ch 11), but he now refers to Him as above them all—as a case that deserved to stand by itself.—From *Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich*; and *Barnes Notes*.

Christ has not *given us our faith*, as some translations imply here. All thru the Gospels Christ teaches that we are the ones who must exercise faith and believe. See Ephesians 2:8 note.

12:6a ... *for the purpose of correction* ...

12:6b Proverbs 3:11-12.

12:8a See Colossians 3:6 and note.

12:14a This verse likewise has to do with prophecy because it deals with a very necessary essential for one who wants to receive eternal life and be with God. You will have no part in all the wonderful future that God has planned for His own *unless you are living a holy life*. Here again we have those who claim that we can have no holiness apart from Christ. They say that all the holiness we have is the holiness of Christ. So they claim it is all of faith—all of grace. But in this regard we would encourage you to read the notes on Philippians 3:9.

mand, caused those who heard it to beg Moses to ask God not to speak to them again.

²⁰They were completely intimidated by God's command that,

If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned or killed with an arrow.^a

²¹The sight was so terrifying that even Moses said,

I was extremely afraid, and trembling.^a

²²Instead, you have now come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, where myriads of angels are joyfully gathered.

²³You've come to the joyful general assembly of all who have a very special place in God's heart,^a whose names are written in Heaven. You've come to God, the Judge of all people, and to the dwelling place of the spirits of good people who have now been made perfect.

²⁴You've come to Jesus, the One who is able to negotiate a renewed friendship between us and God by means of the brand new agreement, whose sprinkled blood has a better message than the blood of Abel.^a

²⁵So make sure that you don't refuse to listen to the One^a who is now speaking to you. Because if those who ignored the words of Moses, God's representative on earth, didn't escape judgment, how much greater is the certainty that we will not escape if we turn away from the One^a who came from Heaven to speak to us.

²⁶God's voice shook the earth when He spoke at Mount Sinai, but now He has promised,

One more time I will shake the earth in a most

powerful way, and not only the earth but the heavens too.^a

²⁷Now the words **one more time** refer to the time when the things that can be shaken apart—things created—will be done away with, so that only the things that cannot be shaken apart will remain.

²⁸Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, let us show our gratitude by diligently serving God in a way that's altogether pleasing to Him. And let us do so with fearful reverence.^a

²⁹Because^a our God is indeed an all consuming fire!^b

13 Keep loving one another as brothers and sisters.

²And don't neglect to show hospitality to strangers. Some thru their hospitality have welcomed angels without even knowing it.

³Remember those in jail as if you were confined in jail with them. And remember those being mistreated as if you were suffering with them.

⁴Marriage is to be highly regarded in every respect, and husbands and wives must remain loyally faithful to each other. God will definitely judge adulterers and those who are in any way sexually immoral.^a

⁵Don't allow the love of money to get a grip on you. Be content with what you have. Always remember that God has promised,

There is no possibility whatever that I will ever leave you, nor that I will ever abandon you.^a

⁶So with courage and confidence we are always

In regard to *justification*, we are justified (considered without fault by God) when we turn from our sinning and accept His forgiveness for our sins because of the sin-offering He made for us, when Christ, His incomparable Son, died on the cross to atone for our sins.

Two kinds of holiness are needed to gain eternal life—credited, or imputed holiness, thru the death of Jesus on the cross (enabling God to forgive the sins of all who come to Him in faith and true repentance), and personal holiness. See Philipians 2:12 and 13, and the notes.

* * *

"Everyone will see God in the day of Judgment (Revelation 1:7.), but to 'see' one is often used in the sense of being with one, living with one, enjoying one. The principle stated here is one which is never departed from in Scripture. Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8,27.

"No one has ever been admitted to Heaven in his sins, nor is it desirable that anyone ever should be.

Just as you exclude certain undesirable people from your home, and as your city and state confine thieves, murderers, etc. in prison, God will exclude from Heaven all who have refused to obey His laws and live a righteous life.

*"How deeply concerned we should then be to have this holiness which is indispensable to salvation! Let's not fool ourselves. We may have many things—which are in themselves desirable—but without this *one* thing we shall never see the Lord in peace."—Barnes' Notes. See also Acts 20:20-21 note, and Revelation 20:6.*

12:15a The writer here refers to Deuteronomy 29:18-29. He who accepts false teaching without vigorously protesting is really cooperating in the preaching and teaching of it!

12:16a See Ephesians 5:3 note.

12:20a Exodus 19:10-25.

12:21a Deuteronomy 9:19.

12:23a Literally *the assembly of God's firstborn* — those who will share His glory.

able to say,

The Lord is my helper!

So why should I be afraid of what mere mortals can do to me?^a

⁷Keep thinking about those who lead you and have faithfully taught you the word of God. Carefully consider what the end result will be for those who live the way they live. Imitate their kind of faith.

⁸Jesus Christ is the same today as He was in ages past, and He will forever be the same.

⁹Don't be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings, because it's a beautiful and morally excellent truth that your heart receives forgiveness and strength by trusting in God's undeserved mercy, not by avoiding certain foods. Obeying such rules never gave anyone power over sin.

¹⁰We too have an altar,^a but those who still rely on the sacrifices of the Jewish Law cannot be partakers of its benefits.

¹¹The Jewish High Priest carries the blood of the sacrificed animals into the Most Holy Place to offer it as a sacrifice for sins. But the bodies of the animals are burned outside the camp.

¹²For this reason, Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to purify the people with His own blood.

¹³So let us always be out there with Him, outside the camp, sharing the abuse and shame He suffered!

¹⁴Because we don't have any city here that will last very long, but we earnestly and continually

pursue a home in the one that's coming.^a

¹⁵So for that reason, let us continually offer up to God, thru Jesus, a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of our lips being a thank offering to the name of our God.

¹⁶But on the other hand, don't forget to do good to others, and share what you have with those in need. God is truly pleased with such sacrifices.

¹⁷Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they ask you to do,^a because they are always watching out for your souls, as those who must give an accounting before God.^b Make it possible for them to talk to God about you with joy, not with sadness. A negative report from them would certainly not do you any good!

¹⁸Keep on praying for us. We are sure that our conscience is clear, because we try to do what's right at all times.

¹⁹I ask that you pray especially that I may be restored to you sooner than I would be under normal circumstances.

²⁰Now may God, the source of all peace, equip you with every good thing you need in order to do His will.

²¹It is He who brought our Lord Jesus back from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, who by His blood established the everlasting agreement. May He continue to accomplish in and thru you, thru the power of Jesus Christ, all that is pleasing to Him—to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen!

²²My brothers and sisters, I trust you will consid-

12:24a The blood of Jesus offers forgiveness, while the blood of Abel (Genesis 4:10) cried out for revenge.

12:25a God is now speaking to us thru His Son, Jesus. Those who turn away from Him, or lightly regard what He says, or obey only what they wish to obey, will have to deal with an angry God at the judgment. There will be no escape, no changing of God's mind then. *Be most diligent to make your calling and election to salvation and eternal life with God a sure thing!* 2 Peter 1:10.

12:26a Isaiah 13:13-14; Haggai 2:6; Matthew 24:7-8,29; Revelation 6:12-17; 11:13; 16:18.

12:28a ... *with deep concern as to what God's judgment will be as He considers how we have served Him.*

12:29a ... *besides being a God of mercy and grace ...*

12:29b The last warning here indicates that God will judge and *consume* everything and everyone who offends. If we know the truth, and only half-heartedly obey God's commands for this day, how

can we expect to escape? So we repeat the warning and challenge of v 28, that you give serious attention *to serve God in a way that's pleasing to Him*, and that you *do so with fearful reverence*.

13:4a If you are unfaithful in your marriage, you can be sure that God will judge you, even if no one else does. You will pay a terrible price for unfaithfulness. Galatians 6:7.

13:5a Deuteronomy 31:6,8; Joshua 1:5; Psalm 118:6; Matthew 28:20; John 14:23.

13:6a Psalm 118:6-7.

13:10a The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

13:14a Revelation 21:9 to 22:5.

13:17a ... *as long as what they ask you to do is God-honoring and in obedience to the Lord and His word.*

13:17b ... *for the truthfulness of what they taught you, and the zeal with which they taught.*

If any of the sheep are lost, he must give an accounting to the Chief Shepherd, and prove that the blame did not lie with him.

er carefully the words of instruction I've written you. I have tried to be as brief as possible in what I've said.

²³Did you know that our brother Timothy has been set free? If he comes here soon, I'll visit you together with him.

²⁴We send our greetings to all who are leaders, and to all of you there who love the Lord. The Lord's followers here in Italy send you their greetings.

²⁵May God's rich blessings be showered upon all of you. So be it.

So because we are surrounded by such a great cloud of faithful witnesses, let us also throw aside all the dead weight that keeps holding us back. We must especially do so with whatever sin it is that would so easily get us all entangled and trip us up. Let us give our full and undivided attention to the race marked out for us, running hard, with strong determination and unyielding endurance, until we finally reach the finish line.

²And we must constantly keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, because He's our Leader, and the Perfecter of our faith—the Supreme Example of a Man of faith, who finished His race in a blaze of glory! As He looked ahead and saw the joy that was waiting for Him at the end of His race, He willingly endured being nailed to a cross, and utterly despised all the shame connected with it. Now He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God!

³You also need to constantly remember how He put up with so much hatred from sinners, so that you won't get discouraged and give up.

¹²So lift up those hands that have been hanging down, unused, and stretch those feeble, shaking knees!

¹³Clear out all that rubbish from the pathway on which you are walking, so you won't stumble and also cause those who are weak to stumble because of you! Then they may experience healing instead.

¹⁴Be diligent in trying to live at peace with everyone. But especially continue to work at living a holy life, because unless you are sincerely aiming to please God in all things, you will not be with Him in Heaven.

—Hebrews 12:1-3, 12-14

The Letter From JAMES

Greetings! to all of you who are members of the twelve tribes of Israel, scattered thruout the world!

This is from James, a servant of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith and Wisdom

²My dear brothers and sisters:

Even when you go thru various harsh experiences, face them with pure joy.^a

³Because you know that as your faith in God is being tested by these trials, the end result will be that your power to continue to hang in there^a will be greatly strengthened.^b

⁴So continue to build up your endurance to the greatest extent possible, so that you may be fully developed and perfectly equipped, lacking nothing.

⁵But if any of you lack wisdom, you must persevere with God! You must keep looking for help from the God who is generous with everyone, and who won't scold you for bothering Him—and wisdom will be given you.

⁶But you must ask in faith, without a single doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave on the ocean that's blown and tossed about by every wind that comes along.

⁷Don't ever think you will receive anything from God if you come to Him in that frame of mind!

⁸A person who is not sure of what he really believes or wants is unstable^a in everything he tries.

⁹But even the poor follower of Christ should

rejoice, because he has been lifted to such a high position, into God's family, thru Christ.

¹⁰And the rich follower should rejoice even when he loses his wealth, because like the flower of the grass in the field, he will soon pass from this life anyway.^a

¹¹Because in the same way that the scorching heat of the risen sun soon withers the grass, and the flower falls off, and its beauty is destroyed—the rich man will also fade away right in the middle of all his busy endeavors.

Trials and Temptations

¹²Happy is the person who remains faithful to the Lord when he is being tempted. Because when he has been tested and has proved himself to be a true follower of Christ, he will receive the crown of Eternal Life, which the Lord has promised to all who truly love Him.^a

¹³When you are being tempted, never say, "God is tempting me," because God can never be tempted to do evil, and He never tempts anyone else.

¹⁴But each of us is tempted when we are lured with a strong pull to do wrong by our own cravings of the flesh and mind.

¹⁵And if a person's will yields to the impure desire, conception takes place, with the result that the monstrosity called sin is born. And when sin has finished its evil work, the result is death.^a

¹⁶The following is a matter, my dear brothers and sisters, about which you must not allow yourselves to be deceived.

¹⁷What comes to us from above, coming down from the Father who created all the lights in the

1:2a ... as you look forward to see what God will do in the situation, as you pray and trust Him completely with the problem.

1:3a Or your endurance, power to endure.

1:3b ... as you see God undertake for you as you sincerely pray, and trust Him to step in and help you.

1:8a Or is double-minded or has a divided desire.

1:10a He won't have any need or desire for his worldly wealth then.

1:12a Read what Jesus says about this in Revelation 2:10-11.

1:15a Notice that, contrary to many evangelistic sermons, James' warning here is not directed to unbelievers. It is not possible for sin to *result in death* in them, because they are already *dead because of their lawlessness and other sins*. Ephesians 2:1. James is not directing his solemn warning here to outsiders who make no profession of faith in Christ, but to *my dear brothers and sisters*. v 16. They are the ones who face the peril of spiritual death by surrendering to habitual, deliberate sin.

This is a horrendous fact, but true nevertheless, and is clearly stated thruout Scripture. The result of

heavens, are all the gifts that are so good and perfect. He is always the same, in all seasons of the year and in all ages. There is never any change in His intellect, character, or in His purposes and plans.^a

¹⁸And according to His own will and purpose He gave spiritual birth^a to us by means of the words of His Truth.^b He did this so that we might become, as you might say, the first of the harvest of those who would become truly His.

Listening and Obeying

¹⁹For that reason, my dear friends, we must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

²⁰Because when you're angry, you don't produce the right actions and attitudes that God requires of us.

²¹So strip yourselves of every filthy habit, and all the evil thoughts and actions that are overwhelming so many lives. Instead, humbly submit yourselves to obey God's message that's been implanted in you, which is able to save your souls.

²²You must make it your practice to obey what God is telling you, and not just listen to Him. If all you do is listen, you're just fooling yourselves.^a

²³Because the person who only listens to God's message but doesn't obey it, is like the man who only looks at his face in the mirror.

²⁴He sees what's wrong, but does nothing about it. As soon as such a person leaves the place where he heard God's word, he forgets all about what kind of person he really is.^a

²⁵But the one who carefully looks into God's per-

fect way of setting us free from the guilt and power of our sins, and continues to do so, not forgetting what he has learned, but obeying it—he will be blessed by God in what he does.^a

²⁶If anyone among you thinks he is right with God, but doesn't strictly control his sharp tongue, he's only fooling himself, and his religion is worthless.

²⁷The kind of religion that our God and Father accepts as pure and genuine is this: to visit and help widows and orphans in any of their troubles, and to keep one's self from being polluted by^a the world.

Warning against Having Favorites

2 My dear friends, as followers of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, make sure that you don't practice favoritism.

²Suppose a person comes to your meeting wearing fine clothes and gold rings, and a poor person in shabby clothes also comes.

³If you fawn over the person wearing the fine clothes, and say, "Here, take this good seat over here," but say to the poor person, "You can stand over there, or sit here on the floor by my feet,"

⁴have you not shown favoritism among yourselves? And you've become a crooked judge with an evil motive!

⁵Listen, my dear friends: Hasn't God chosen the poor people of this world who are rich in faith to inherit the Kingdom He has promised those who love Him?

⁶But you have despised the poor! Isn't it the rich who push you around and drag you into court?

sin is death, both temporal and eternal death—the second death—the lake of fire! Revelation 20:11-15.

But sin does not need to take its toll in your life. You can be forgiven by God because of what Jesus Christ has done for you in suffering and dying because of your sins. But unless you turn to God for forgiveness (1 John 1:9), and ask Him to make of you a truly new person who lives to please Him, you will die in your sins and reap the awful reward.

But why settle for such a frightening future? Why not surrender to God now? His great love provided for your salvation, and He waits even now to forgive and bless you. If you haven't done so before, read *The Amazing Story of God* in Appendix 247, p 520.

1:17a The last two sentences literally ... *with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning*. What He was, millions of ages before the worlds were made, He is now. What He is now, He will still be countless millions of ages in the future.

1:18a Regeneration, reconstruction, restoration, new birth. See John 1:13; 3:1-8; Galatians 4:29; 1 Peter 1:23, and notes.

1:18b This refers to the message of the Great News that there is forgiveness, salvation, and everlasting life by obeying and trusting in Jesus Christ—by sincerely receiving Him as both Lord and Savior. See 1 Peter 1:23 and the note.

1:22a Obeying God is not optional for those who desire eternal life. It is an essential aspect of saving faith. There is no saving faith apart from obedience. See Hebrews 5:9. Obedience is the necessary, radiant response of saving faith.

The first response to God of any person must be the willingness and strong desire to be done with sinning, and by faith accept His forgiveness for all past sins. Then, as a follower of the Lord you are responsible to find out from His word just how He wants you to live and serve Him.

1:24a ... *and the awful hell toward which he is*

⁷Aren't they the ones who blaspheme the noble name of the One to whom you belong?

⁸If, on the other hand, you are indeed fulfilling the Royal Law of the Scripture that says, **You shall love and care for others in the same way that you love yourself,**^a you are doing well.

⁹But if as a result of wrong motives, you treat some people better than others, you are doing wrong, and you are charged by the Scriptures of being a sinner!

¹⁰Because whoever obeys all that God has commanded, except for one command that he neglects or refuses to obey, is just as guilty as if he had broken every command.^a

¹¹Because the One who said, **You shall not commit adultery,**^a also said, **You shall not murder.**^b So if you commit murder you are a breaker of the law, even if you don't commit adultery as well.

¹²So whenever you speak or act, you must realize that you will be judged by whether or not you have taken advantage of the power that is yours to be free from the domination of sin.^a

¹³Because on Judgment Day, God will show no mercy to the person who has shown no mercy to others.^a On the other hand, any judgment against you will be conquered and thrown aside by evidence of a life that has been dedicated to being merciful and helpful to others.^b

Faith and Obedience

¹⁴What good does it do, dear friends, if someone says he believes in God and His promises, but he doesn't do what God has told him to do? Can that kind of faith save him?

plunging.

1:25a He will have a clear conscience and a deep assurance that all is well between himself and God—besides God's blessing on what he does. See 2:12 and the note.

1:27a ... *the corruptions and worthless ambitions that dominate the lives of those who live only for the brief and uncertain time given them in ...*

2:8a Leviticus 19:18.

2:10a "God requires perfect, not partial, obedience. We are not to choose to obey parts of His commands, which suit our whim, while we neglect others."—*Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown*. The same is true of Christ's commands.

2:11a Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18.

2:11b Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17.

2:12a ... *thru God's help*. See Philippians 2:13 and note.

2:13a Matthew 18:23-35.

2:13b This does not mean that we gain Heaven by

¹⁵Suppose you know a man or a woman who is in dire need of clothes and daily food.

¹⁶If you should say to them, "Have a good day now. Be warm and well fed," but you don't do anything about their needs, what good would that do?

¹⁷It's the same with faith. If you claim to have faith, but your faith doesn't lead to obedience to God—separate, by itself—your faith is dead!^a

¹⁸Furthermore, a person would be right in saying, "You say, the way to God is by faith in Jesus alone, plus nothing, but that I'm depending on what I myself do. Well, show me your faith that doesn't lead to obedience to God, and I'll show you the proof of my faith by the kind of life I now live."

¹⁹You believe there is only one God. Very good! But even the demons believe that—and it makes them tremble with fear.

²⁰You foolish man! Is it proof you want, that the faith that doesn't result in obedience to God is dead^a?

²¹Didn't Abraham our forefather gain right standing with God because he obeyed God, when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

²²So you see, his faith and his obedience were working together, and his faith was revealed as genuine faith by what he did.

²³That's when the Scripture was fulfilled that says, **Abraham believed God, and it was that genuine faith that gave him right standing with God.**^a And because that strong faith was proved by his obedience, he was called the friend of God.

²⁴So you see, we gain right standing with God not only by what we believe, but by what we do.^a

²⁵This was true of Rahab the harlot as well. She

good works. But it does mean that we will make a practice of doing what is right and good if we are truly born again. 2 Samuel 22:26-27; Proverbs 21:13; Matthew 5:7; 6:15; 7:1-5. And it does mean that we will be held accountable by God for being merciful to others by sharing the Great News with them, no matter what the cost. Ezekiel 33:1-9; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:9-10; Revelation 21:8.

2:17a Without a faith that's alive, you don't have saving faith. So come alive!

2:20a ... *and is therefore not saving faith at all?*

2:23a Genesis 15:6.

2:24a Both are necessary. How you live in obedience to God after accepting His forgiveness will prove just how genuine your conversion really was.

It is easy enough to sit there in the pew in church and drink in the truth. What is difficult is rousing yourself to action, to obey and live the truth that's been called to your attention. You don't get points

gained right standing with God by what she did when she welcomed the Israelite spies, and then helped them escape by a different route.^a

²⁶So just as the body is dead if it doesn't breathe, faith is also dead if it doesn't produce obedience to God.^a

Controlling the Things We Say

3 My dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers of God's word, because you know that we who teach will be judged by God more severely than others.

²For we all make many mistakes. But if you are able to control your tongue, you are a mature person, and one who is able to keep his whole body under control.

³By putting a bit in the mouth of a horse, we can make its whole body go in any direction we want.

⁴It's the same with sailing ships. Even though they're so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder in whatever direction the pilot wants to go.

⁵The tongue is also a small part of our body, but it can rightly boast about the great things it can do. Just think of the great forest that can be set aflame by one tiny spark.

⁶That's what the tongue is—it's fire! It's capable of being a whole world of evil in itself. The tongue is that part of our body which can pollute the whole person. It can set the direction of one's whole life on fire—after being ignited by the forces of Hell.

⁷Every kind of animal and bird, and even reptiles and sea creatures, can be tamed, and have been tamed by man.

⁸But no human being has ever been able to fully tame the tongue. It's an uncontrollable evil that's full of deadly poison.

for merely sitting in church. It's the action you take during the week after the sermon that counts with God.

2:25a Joshua 2:1-24. See Hebrews 11:31 and note.

2:26a As Melancthon, the associate of Martin Luther, said, "It is faith, alone, that saves; but the faith that saves is not alone."

A so-called "faith" in Christ which leaves the "believer" free of any obligation to be submissive and devoted to Him is sheer presumption. A so-called "plus-nothing" faith is a dead faith. Only an obedient, living, conquering faith that "overcomes the world" is saving faith. Rev. 2:7, 11, etc.

3:14a ... *when you testify that you believe in Jesus, and that you love, serve, and obey Him* ...

3:15a This behavioral description is extremely to

⁹We praise our God and Father with it, and then turn right around and curse people with it who have been created in the likeness of God.

¹⁰Both praise and cursing flow out of the same mouth. My dear friends, that should never happen!

¹¹Does both fresh and bitter water flow from the same spring?

¹²Can a fig tree, dear friends, produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a spring yield both salt water and fresh.

True Wisdom

¹³Is there anyone among you who is truly wise and understanding? If so, he will reveal his wisdom by living right. And he will do his good deeds in humility, without boasting.

¹⁴But if you are bitterly jealous, and always looking out for yourself, don't brag about what you know is not true,^a and thereby lie about what is really true about you.

¹⁵This kind of "wisdom" doesn't come down from Heaven, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.^a

¹⁶Because when people are envious and have selfish ambition, they cause turbulence and indulge in every kind of evil practice.

¹⁷But the true wisdom that comes from God is first of all pure, then peaceful, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good deeds, impartial, and without hypocrisy.

¹⁸Those who work for peace in a peaceful way will reap a harvest that will be a blessing to all concerned.

Friendship with the World

4 What is it that causes quarrels and bitter arguments among you? Aren't they caused by the strong desires for pleasure^a that are constantly

the point in understanding what is going on in most of our public educational systems in America today. The behavioral outcome of Godless education is always selfishness, violence, perversion, and filth, under demonic influence. There is no such thing as a moral vacuum. Where God is ignored or forced out, Satan will move right in — and he has.

4:1a The pleasures here include all that will bring you satisfaction. Many are legitimate wants that can be satisfied in a legitimate way, but are satisfied all too often at great cost to others.

4:2a Hebrews 11:6.

4:4a Spiritual adulterers and adulteresses, who have turned from loving God to other loves.

4:4b ... *which is revealed by your intense interest in the temporary pleasures and material*

fighting within you to be satisfied?

²Your strong desires persist, but you still don't have what you so earnestly hunger after. You are so jealous of others that you would actually kill, but even then you wouldn't find happiness. You keep arguing and fighting without getting what you want because you don't persist in asking God to undertake for you in the matter.^a

³Yes, do persist in your request before God! But even then you won't get what you're asking for, because your motives are wrong! What you really want is to waste what you receive on satisfying your own sensual desires!

⁴You adulterers and adulteresses^a! Don't you know that your love affair with the world^b is revealing how much you really despise God? Whoever chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God!

⁵Or do you think the Scriptures have no good reason for teaching that the Spirit of God, who has come to live within us, longs for us with envy, and fiercely desires us for Himself alone?

⁶And God has great desire to help the one whose sincere intent is to live to please Him. That's why the Scripture says:

God continues to work against those who are proud, but He continually helps those who are humble.^a

⁷So surrender your will completely to God. Then take a strong and determined stance like a soldier against the devil, and he will run from you.^a

⁸But you must draw close to God. Then God will draw close to you. But you are sinners, so you must wash those soiled hands! And you must purify your hearts, because you have conflicting desires.^a

⁹Intensely grieve, therefore, over your sins. Mourn and weep before God! Let your laughter be

turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.^a

¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord,^a and He will lift you up.^b

¹¹Brothers and sisters, don't say evil things about one another. Anyone who speaks evil about a Christian brother and judges him is actually undercutting the command Christ has given for handling such cases^a and is judging that command. When you disregard Christ's command, you are not only disobeying it, but you are setting yourself up as one who has a better way than Christ for handling the situation.

¹²There is only one Lawgiver, and He alone is able to save, or destroy. So what right do you have to judge or condemn your brother?

Don't Boast about Tomorrow

¹³Now listen to me, you who say, "Either today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city and spend a year there, buying and selling and making a lot of money."

¹⁴But the truth is, you have no way of knowing what will happen tomorrow. Just what is your life? It's like a vapor that appears for a moment and then disappears.

¹⁵Instead, you should say, "If the Lord is willing, and we continue to live, we may do this or that."

¹⁶But instead, you are proud, and bragging in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

¹⁷So anyone who knows the good action he should take, but refuses to do it, is sinning by that failure and refusal to act!^a

A Warning to the Rich

5 Attention, you who are rich! Weep and wail because of the misery that's coming your way!

²Your wealth will soon be worthless trash and your beautiful clothes, merely food for moths.

³The gold and silver and other investments

things of the world ...

4:6a Proverbs 3:34.

4:7a But how does one go about taking an effective stand against Satan? Realize that the devil is a real person indeed. Those who don't believe in a personal devil are already duped by him. When tempted to sin in thought or action, command Satan in no uncertain terms, "Satan, I command you in Jesus' name: Get out of here! I want nothing to do with you and your evil suggestions!" It works. If you really mean what you say, Satan must go.

Another means is, start praising God when temptations come. Satan and his demons cannot stand being around where God is sincerely being praised.

4:8a ... *wanting all that God can do for you and*

at the same time wanting all you can get from the world.

4:9a ... *because of how sinful you have been.*

4:10a As the Being against whom we have sinned, He is the only One who can pardon. It is proper that we should humble ourselves before Him with repentant confession.

4:10b He will forgive you and wipe away your tears, and give you joy — immense joy.

4:11a Matthew 18:15-17.

4:17a This certainly includes obeying the command of our Lord to share the Great News with others, at every opportunity, both near and far. But it also includes much more.

5:3a ... *in your judgment in the lake of fire,*

you're selfishly hoarding for your own enjoyment and retirement will soon be of no value to you at all! In fact, the rust of their corrosion will be used in testimony against you and will eat away at your flesh like fire.^a

⁴Listen! The indecent wages you paid the workers who harvested your crops are crying out against you. And the cries of those reapers have reached into the ears of the Lord God Almighty!

⁵You have lived it up on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves like animals being fattened up in preparation for being butchered.

⁶You have condemned and put to death innocent people who weren't able to fight back.

Patiently Persevere

⁷So, my brothers and sisters, be patient *by continuing to do what's good and right*^a until the Lord comes for you. Notice how the farmer keeps patiently waiting for both the early and late rains^b to water the earth and make his valuable crops grow.

⁸You too must be patient. Stand firm for the Lord and for what pleases Him, because He is coming very soon.^a

⁹Don't grumble and make charges against one another, dear friends, or God may condemn you for it. Look! The Judge is standing at the door *right now, watching and listening to everything you say and do.*^a

¹⁰And dear friends, follow the example of the prophets who spoke out for the Lord. They continued patient and faithful in spite of all the troubles and abuse they had to endure.

¹¹We can be sure that those who remained faithful to the Lord then are happy now. You've heard about how Job endured all that happened to him, and how blessed he was by the Lord after those trials. This shows how very compassionate and merciful the Lord is!

¹²Another matter of highest importance, dear friends, is that you never seal a promise with an oath. Don't swear by Heaven or by earth or by anything else. Simply say "Yes" when you mean yes, and "No" when you mean no, so that you don't come under God's judgment.^a

The Prayer of Faith

¹³Is anyone among you suffering trials and afflictions? He should keep on praying for deliverance.^a Does anyone have much to be cheerful about? He should sing praises to God.

¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

¹⁵The prayer offered in faith will bring healing to the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. And if his sickness was caused by some sin, the Lord will forgive him.

¹⁶So confess your sins to one another,^a and pray for one another that you may be healed. The fervent, persevering prayer of a person who is living to please God is powerfully effective, and accomplishes great things.

¹⁷Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it wouldn't rain, and it didn't rain in Israel for 3 1/2 years.

¹⁸When he prayed again that it would rain, the rain came down from the skies, and the crops again sprang up from the earth.

¹⁹My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you strays from believing and living as the truth teaches and requires, and one of you brings him back to faith and obedience to the truth,

²⁰let him be encouraged to know: Whoever turns a sinner away from the sinful life he is living will save that person's soul from death,^a and will bring about the forgiveness of many sins.

Most sincerely in Christ,
James

because you had little concern about others. Revelation 20:11-15.

5:7a Implied.

5:7b Joel 2:28-32; Zechariah 10:1; Acts 2:16-21.

5:8a ... *to take you by death, or in the Rapture.*

5:9a Implied. Proverbs 15:3; Hebrews 4:13.

5:12a You do not need to swear to tell the truth in court. When asked to do so, simply say, "I affirm, your Honor, that I will tell the truth." That will be

accepted in any court. If they should object, refer them to the above Scripture.

5:13a Matthew 7:7-11.

5:16a Your confession should be to the one you sinned against (not to everyone, unless you sinned against everyone), and ask his or her forgiveness.

5:20a ... *in Hell, and later in the lake of fire* ... Revelation 19:20; 20:10-15.

The First Letter from PETER

This is from Peter, a messenger of Jesus Christ. I am writing to you who are living as pilgrims and aliens in this world, and are scattered throuthout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia in Asia Minor.^a

²In the far distant past, God the Father chose you to belong to Himself, because even then He knew^a you would choose to be made holy by the Holy Spirit as you surrendered in obedience to Him, and accepted the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.^b

May God's undeserved blessings and His peace be very real in your lives in multiplied ways.

An Absolutely Sure Hope

³And may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be most highly praised!^a It is because of His great desire to be merciful to us that He led us into a new birth—into a hope that is vibrantly alive.

1:1a Presently Turkey.

1:2a Romans 8:28-30.

1:2b This again refers to the two things necessary for our salvation. In order to enter Heaven and gain eternal life, we must now be willing and determined (with God's help) to *obey God* and live to please Him above all others, and *accept His offer of forgiveness* for our sins by recognizing Jesus as God's Son and our Savior, who suffered, shed His blood and died for us, and rose again. See Acts 20:20-21; Romans 8:29; Matthew 22:14, and notes.

1:3a It is possible for us to bless God and bring joy to Him by our thanksgiving, praise, and our thoughts of Him. And of course, we always bring joy to Him when we are obedient.

1:3b Our hope in Christ is alive because He not only died for our sins but He was also *raised from the dead*. Because He is alive, He can fulfill every promise He made to us, that we too will live. We have every reason to live in joyful expectation of spending eternity with Him.

If Christ had not been raised from the dead, there would be no assurance whatever that we would be raised from the grave. But Christ's resurrection assures the resurrection of the born-again believer to eternal life with God. See Appendix 230, page 491, for extensive note on the absolute need of Christ's resurrection, and the assurance of ours.

And the reason our hope is so alive is because God has indeed raised Jesus Christ from the dead!^b

⁴And He has reserved an inheritance for us in Heaven that is absolutely indestructible. That is, it will never perish, nor will it ever spoil, or fade away.^a

⁵Because of your genuine faith, you are constantly being protected by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed at the end of this age.

⁶You have good reason to continually rejoice in a great way about this,^a even though it may have been necessary for you to suffer grief now for a brief time because of various trials.

⁷But these trials have been allowed by God in order to reveal just how genuine your faith really is. And the testing of your faith is of far more value, and much more important, than the testing and purifying of gold, which will soon be of no value to you or anyone else. So even though your

1:4a What a description of our *inheritance*! It is *immortal*! In other words, it will not rust away, be eaten by termites, blown away, destroyed by earthquake, fire, or anything else. Nor will it *ever fade away*. Our *inheritance* is more real than the earth on which we live. Instead of being an illusion, as so many have claimed, it is reality in the greatest sense of the word.

When traveling, it is good to know that we have our accommodations reserved for us. How exceedingly wonderful is the thought that our *inheritance* in Heaven is *reserved* for us. Since God is the One who reserved it, the reservation is sure, lasting, and binding.

As long as our faith is genuine and sincere, and not merely a pretense (for we cannot fool God), we are *constantly being protected by God's power*. And our *salvation* will become reality when Christ comes for us *at the end of this age*.

1:6a We who are converted to Christ, and know that our hearts are wholly given to Him, can indeed *rejoice in a great way*. We have the assurance that all is well. However, we still run into times of *temptations* and *trials*. God allows these temptations and trials in proportion to our needs—to test the genuineness and strength of our faith, and to strengthen it as we see Him undertake for us in answer to earnest, continued prayer.

faith is now being tested by fire, may the end result be praise, glory, and honor^a for you when Jesus Christ is revealed in the heavens as He returns to receive His Kingdom.

⁸Although you haven't yet seen Him, you love Him. And even though you don't see Him now, you continue to believe and rejoice in Him with an overflowing and ecstatic joy which just can't be adequately put into words.

⁹Because even now, you are in the process of receiving the end result of your faith—the final salvation of your souls.

¹⁰Even the prophets, who prophesied about the undeserved mercy that God would offer you, asked God with intense interest to tell them more about this salvation. And they diligently searched the Scriptures for the meaning of the predictions God had given them about it.

¹¹They were trying to find out who the person was, and when the happening would take place, that the Spirit of Christ within them was referring to when He predicted the sufferings of Christ^a and the glorious happenings that would come later.

¹²But they were told that what they were receiving was not for their time, but for ours. And the things they were told have now taken place, and have been reported to you by those who preached the Great News to you with the help of the Holy Spirit who has been sent from Heaven. In fact, the Great News is so glorious and amazing that even the angels have great desire to learn all about it.

A Call to Holy Living

¹³So exercise diligent control over your minds, and don't allow yourselves to become intoxicated by the cares or by the captivating attractions of this brief and uncertain life; but center your thoughts and hopes fully on the undeserved wonderful

things that will happen to you, including the great inheritance you will receive when Jesus Christ returns to earth in His glory.

¹⁴As true children of God now, be obedient to Him, and don't continue to conform yourselves to the worldly desires that formerly shaped your lives, when you were ignorant of God's great plans for you.

¹⁵But in the same way that the One who called you to Himself is holy, you must now let Him help you to live a holy life^a as well, in everything you do.

¹⁶Because God Himself has said,

I am holy, and you must be holy too.^a

¹⁷And always remember that the One you call on as your Father is One who has no favorites. He is fair and just in all His judgments, and He will judge each of us according to our true character, by how we have lived and by what we have done. So live your lives as aliens here in reverent fear.^a

¹⁸Because you know that God didn't ransom you by means of perishable things, like silver and gold, from the worthless way of life you inherited from your ancestors.^a

¹⁹But you were redeemed by the priceless^a blood of Christ. Like a lamb chosen to be sacrificed, He was without a blemish or defect of any kind.

²⁰It was decisively determined by God even before He made the world that Christ would be our Savior.^a But He has been revealed to us as our Savior only recently.

²¹And you have come to believe in God because of what He has done for you thru Christ, especially when He raised Him from the dead and gave Him such a great position of glory at His right hand. So your faith and hope are based on what God has already done.^a

²²Now that you have purified yourselves by obey-

1:7a The brilliance and joy of that *glory and honor* will vary, depending upon our faithfulness to Christ in our life and service for Him. *Not failure, but low aim, is sin!* For each of us, our aim from now on should be to be the most faithful and most productive Christian who has ever lived! See notes on Matthew 25:14-30.

God is able to take the most unlikely person and make of him or her a most brilliant hero of the faith. Begin right where you are by speaking out for Jesus and helping others in various ways. *The pilot is unable to guide the ship until it is under way!*

1:11a See references in Luke 24:26 note.

1:15a This is in the passive voice, indicating that *you are receiving* the help from God to live a holy life. You are not on your own, without help. Philip-

prians 2:12-13.

1:16a Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7. If we are one day to be like Him (1 John 3:2-3), we must begin to be like Him now.

1:17a ... *of displeasing your God and Father, as you ponder the Day when you must give an accounting of your life before Him.* 2 Corinthians 5:9-11; Matthew 25:14-30.

1:18a Are you living your life in a more worthwhile way than those who lived before you? How much more?

1:19a Costly, precious, beyond price, of inestimable value.

1:20a See Revelation 13:8. "It follows from what is said here that the atonement of Christ was not an *after-thought* on the part of God. It entered into His

ing the requirements revealed by the truth which the Holy Spirit made real to you, causing you to love your fellow followers in all sincerity, love one another fervently, from a heart in which there is no dishonesty or hypocrisy.

²³Because you have been born again. But this time, you were not given birth by means of human seed, which ends only in certain death. You were given birth by means of that which will never die, by the living word of God^a which will endure forever.

²⁴Because

All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower soon fades away,

²⁵but whatever the Lord has said will continue unchanged forever.^a

And it's that unchanging message that was preached to you.

A Stone That's Alive And a Holy Nation

2 So rid yourselves of all desire to harm others, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander, and insulting speech.

²Be like newborn babies, earnestly craving the pure milk of the word of God, so that by drinking it in, you may grow spiritually.

³You have already experienced how helpful and kind the Lord really is.

⁴So keep coming to the Lord Jesus who is the Living Stone. It's true that He has been rejected by most of mankind, but He has been chosen by God^a and is most highly valued by Him.

⁵You, too, are living stones, who are continually being built up to form a great Temple.^a You are also a holy priesthood, appointed to offer up spiritual sacrifices that will be acceptable to God as

they come to Him from you thru Jesus Christ.

⁶For that reason the Scripture also says,

Look, I have chosen a priceless Cornerstone whom I am placing in Zion. Those who are believing^a in Him will never be disappointed.^b

⁷So this Stone is of great value to you who believe. But to those who refuse to believe and obey God—

The Stone that the builders threw out as worthless, turned out to be the most important One of all.^a

⁸Another Scripture says,

He will be a Stone over which people will stumble, and the Rock that will bring about their downfall.^a

They continue to stumble over God's message because they continue to live in disobedience. And God has decreed that those who are determined that they will not obey, will indeed stumble.^b

⁹But you are a people whom God has chosen. You are now a royal priesthood.^a You are a holy nation,^b a people who are very special to God. And He has done all of this for you so that you might praise Him to others, telling them how God called you out of awful darkness into His own marvelous light.

¹⁰At one time, you had no standing at all with God, but now you are His people! You knew nothing about God's mercy then, but now you have obtained His mercy!

Live For God!

¹¹Dear friends, realize that you are indeed aliens and temporary residents here on planet earth! So I beg you always to refuse to satisfy the evil desires of your body and mind that are continually at war, in mortal combat, against your soul.

¹²Continue to live such honorable lives among the unbelievers, that even when they speak against

plan before He made the world, and was involved in His purposes from eternity.

"It was not a device to repair a *defect* in the system; that is, it was not adopted because the system did not work well, or because God had been disappointed. It was arranged *before* man was created, when none but God could know whether he would stand or fall."—*Barnes' Notes*

1:21a ... which gives you full confidence that God will yet do all He has promised to do.

1:23a We are born again by the Spirit of God using the word of God to convince, convict, and convert us from our self-centeredness and sin to full dedication to God. See John 1:13; 3:1-8; Galatians 4:29; James 1:18.

1:25a Isaiah 40:6-8.

2:4a ... to be above all others ...

2:5a Each true Christian is a house in which God lives. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16. Peter tells us here that collectively we are one great house of God.

2:6a What does it mean to *believe in Jesus*? See Galatians 3:11; Luke 14:26-33; John 3:36; Acts 16:31, and the notes there.

2:6b Isaiah 28:16.

2:7a Psalm 118:22.

2:8a Isaiah 8:14.

2:8b ... and die lost.

2:9a Revelation 1:6.

2:9b A nation scattered thruout the world, called Christendom.

you and claim you are doing evil, still, as they see the good lives you are living,^a even yet they may end up being included among those who will glorify God when Christ returns.^b

¹³ So for the Lord's sake, obey every law of the government, whether it's a national law or a state or local ordinance.

¹⁴ Always realize that those who are sent to enforce the law are there to punish those who do wrong, and to praise and help those who do what's right.

¹⁵ Because it's God's desire that by doing what's right, you may silence the ignorant charges of foolish people.

¹⁶ Yes, live as people who are free, but don't use your freedom as a cover-up for doing wrong. Use your freedom, as well as every other strength you have, to serve God!

¹⁷ Have a high regard for everyone. Show continual love toward all who are true fellow followers of the Lord. Always have a reverent and wholesome fear of God. And always honor those in governmental authority.

¹⁸ Employees, have a high regard for your employers, and always be submissive to those in charge of your work—not only if they are kind and gentle, but even if they are harsh.

¹⁹ If you patiently endure the pain of undeserved suffering because you are concerned about bringing honor to the Lord in the way you react toward unjust treatment, you can be sure that God is well-pleased.

²⁰ But don't expect any credit if you do wrong and bear up under the punishment you receive because of it. But if you suffer because of the good you do, and suffer patiently, that definitely pleases God.

²¹ After all, this is the kind of life God has called you to live. Christ too suffered unjustly for our benefit. So He has left us an example, intending that you should follow in His steps.

²² He never committed a sin. Not even one lie came out of His mouth.^a

²³ When He was abused with vile and hateful

remarks, He never answered back. When He suffered, He didn't threaten revenge. He left the matter completely with God, who always judges fairly.

²⁴ He carried our sins in His own body when He died for us on the cross. He did this so that we might die to our sins and live to please God. You were healed by the wounds He received for you.

²⁵ Because you were just like sheep, always going astray. But now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

Wives and Husbands

3 Wives, in the same way,^a you must be submissive to your own husband.^b Then, even if he is one who won't listen to God's message, he may be won to the Lord without a word being spoken, by means of your conduct,

² when he sees the beautiful life you are living, and your fear of displeasing either him or the Lord.

³ Don't let your main concern be your outward beauty, such as a beautiful hair arrangement, or expensive clothes and jewelry.^a

⁴ But let your true beauty be the inner glow from the person you really are in your heart, the beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is beauty that doesn't fade. God takes great delight in and highly values such beauty.

⁵ That's the way the holy women who trusted in God in former times made themselves beautiful.

⁶ They were always submissive to their husbands, as Sarah, for example. She obeyed Abraham, and even called him her master. You are her daughters if you continue to do what's right, and don't allow any circumstance to get you upset or fearful.^a

⁷ And you husbands, listen: Always be considerate of your wife. Treat her with honor, realizing that as a woman she is physically weaker than you, but that you are equal heirs of the marvelous future life God has promised. One good reason you should make sure you do this is so that you won't keep your prayers from being answered.

2:12a Matthew 5:16; Hebrews 12:15.

2:12b Your testimony for Christ, backed up by your good life, may yet bring them to faith and obedience to Christ. Then they too will glorify God.

2:22a Isaiah 53:9.

3:1a ... *in the same kind of submission as above* ... 1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-11

3:1b ... *and be responsive to his needs.*

3:3a Outward adornment that is overdone is distasteful. But don't neglect your outward beauty either. Your husband wants to be proud of you in

every way, but give Him good reason to be especially proud of you as a woman who truly loves and obeys God. See 1 Timothy 2:9-10.

3:6a Always bring every problem to God in fervent, persevering prayer. There is no situation too hard for God to handle. And leave your problem with Him. Don't be fretful. This can be a powerful testimony to your unbelieving husband.

3:12a ... *in order to protect and care for them* ...

3:12b Psalm 34:12-16.

Be Willing to Suffer for Doing Right

⁸To sum it all up, you should all live in harmony, having true compassion for each other. Love one another as brothers and sisters, and be tender-hearted and courteous.

⁹Don't repay evil with evil or insult with insult. Instead, do something good for those who mistreat you, and say something good to them, because this is what God has called you to do. Only then will you receive the good things God has promised you.

¹⁰Because

Whoever wants to really enjoy life and see good times must keep from speaking evil and stop telling lies.

¹¹He must turn away from what's wrong and do what's good and right. And he must strive for peace, and really pursue it.

¹²Because the eyes of the Lord are watching over those who do what's good and right,^a and His ears are open to listen to their prayers. But the face of the Lord is set with firm determination against those who practice evil.^b

¹³Who will harm you if you become eagerly involved in doing what's good?

¹⁴But even if you should suffer for doing what's right, you will be blessed by God.

And don't be afraid of their threats, nor be concerned about pending trouble.^a

¹⁵Do make certain, however, that you have truly made God the Lord and Ruler of your life. And always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you what reason you have for the hope that motivates you. But do so with gentleness and respect.

¹⁶And always keep your conscience clear, so that those who charge you with doing evil, and speak against the good life you are living for Christ, may be ashamed of the way they're treating you.

¹⁷Because it's better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing wrong.

¹⁸Because Christ also suffered once because of the sins of others. Here was One who was without sin, suffering in order to bring us to God.^a His

body was put to death because of our sins, but then He was made alive again by the Divine Spirit.^b

¹⁹And in His spirit He also went and preached to the spirits locked up in prison.

²⁰These were the spirits of the people who had been disobedient to God long ago when He waited patiently for them to repent during the days that Noah was building the large ship.^a Only a few people were saved in that ship. Only eight people were brought safely thru the water of that great flood.

²¹The picture of these eight people believing in God and committing their lives, their reputations, and all they had and could ever hope to have, or be, to the ship that God had provided, was a foreshadowing illustration of the kind of water baptism that now saves us—not a baptism that merely removes dirt from the body, but a baptism that truly involves a total surrender of ourselves to God. And baptism receives its saving power from the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.^a

²²Jesus has now gone into Heaven and is seated at God's right hand, where angels and authorities and all other powers have been made subject to Him.

Be Faithful to God!

4 Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in His human body, we must arm ourselves with the same attitude He had. When we willingly accept suffering by refusing to satisfy the evil cravings of our flesh,^a we have put a stop to our sinning.

²We *must* do so in order to no longer live the rest of our very brief lives here on earth for the short-sighted purpose of gaining the satisfactions that we humans naturally crave, but to now do only what God wants us to do.

³You have certainly spent enough time in the past living to fulfill the desires that the godless live for—shamelessly committing sexual sins and satisfying every other lustful desire, getting drunk, carousing, attending drinking parties, and the shameful worship of various idols.^a

⁴Now your old friends think it strange that you

3:14a Isaiah 8:12. Leave it all in God's hands, and trust Him to work everything out.

3:18a Now we should be willing to suffer for others, in order to bring them to God.

3:18b John 10:17-18.

3:19-20a See 4:6 note.

3:21a ... *by the power of God to a new life*. And the same must be true of us. John 3:1-7; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

4:1a There must indeed be a tearing away from

the various temptations and desires to sin, and that involves suffering. Your body of flesh and your mind suffer when you refuse to satisfy their wrong desires.

But this is what must happen if you are to reach God's Heaven. 2 Corinthians 5:17. And to do this, you surely need God's help, which He has promised. John 15:1-5; Romans 8:13,26,37; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philipians 2:12-13; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Jude 1c. See also Appendix 218, page 482.

are no longer eager to join them in the same old flood of evil, and they repeatedly revile you in contempt and scorn.

⁵But don't forget, they will all have to give an account of themselves before God, who will definitely judge both those who have died and those who are still alive when Christ returns.

⁶That's why the Great News was also preached to the dead,^a so that even though they were judged like everyone else in regard to their body, they might go on living eternally, even as God does, in regard to their spirit.

⁷The end of all things here is near for all of us. So be seriously concerned, and spend much time with God in prayer.

⁸Above everything else, be fervent in your love for one another, because love makes us blind to many of the faults and imperfections of others.

⁹Open your homes to one another, and do so

cheerfully, without grumbling.

¹⁰Each of us has received at least one of God's many wonderful gifts.^a Keep using that gift to serve and minister to others. Be good stewards of the many good things God has given you.

¹¹Whoever preaches must preach as God would preach if He were in your place. And in whatever way you serve God and your fellow men, never forget that every ability you have comes from God, so that in everything God may be glorified thru Jesus Christ. Because all glory and power belong to Him alone, forever and ever. Indeed, may it forever be so!

Be Willing to Suffer for Being Genuine

¹²Also, my dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trial that's testing you, as if something that should never happen to the Lord's followers is happening to you.^a

4:3a An idol is anything you love and treasure more than you love God. It is also anything you put your trust in more than you trust in God.

4:6a This appears to refer to 3:19-20. There are many opinions as to what this means; but if you have heard the Great News in this life, and have rejected or neglected it, you can be sure that you will not be given another chance in the next life. Hebrews 9:27. Your opportunity to accept God's forgiveness thru what Christ has done for you, and to then live for Him, is NOW.

4:10a 1 Corinthians 12:1 to 14:40.

4:12a This, and the following seven verses (13-19), are especially appropriate for us today. They were also appropriate when Peter wrote them, because the Christians were about to enter a time of fearsome persecution. They were hated and hunted. They were fed to lions, and persecuted in many other ways.

Once again Christians can expect fearsome persecution, as the end of the age approaches. Christians will be hated and persecuted as never before. Matthew 24:9-10; Daniel 7:19-22.

Actually, these words in v 12 have been for Christians thruout the ages, because God tests and tries *everyone whom He receives as His child*. He allows certain *fiery trials*. For this reason, we should not think *something strange is happening to us* when we are persecuted and when God allows us to go thru various hard experiences. There is a purpose in each test and trial that He could not justly prevent coming our way. It is all for our present good and future glory.

4:13a See Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 3:12 and the notes, also Philippians 1:29; 1 Thessalonians 3:4; 2

Thessalonians 1:5.

4:13b Peter refers here mainly to persecution of Christians by the ungodly. Jesus stated that anyone who harmed one who believed and trusted in Him was actually persecuting Him. So when we are persecuted because of our testimony and our life for Christ, we *are suffering for Christ*. We should *rejoice* that it is our privilege to take such a firm stand for our Lord that persecution may result from it.

The main reason for rejoicing, of course, is because of the promise of future *glory* and *joy*. The glory and joy will be in proportion to the blows, both physically and verbally, that we have taken for Christ's sake. In such degree as we have lived, labored, witnessed, and suffered for Christ, we shall be rewarded. Keep your eye on the goal!

In other words, don't feel sorry for yourself when you are persecuted for your faith and for your stand for Christ. And don't hold back because of possible persecution. Begin to rejoice now because of Christ's promise of the great joy that will be yours when He returns. See His promise in Matthew 5:11-12.

4:14a Are we actually to be *glad* when we are insulted and persecuted because of the stand we take for Christ? Yes, let us remind you again of the words of our Lord in Matthew 5:11-12, *There is indeed great happiness coming your way when people insult and persecute you and say all kinds of things about you which are not true, because you are truthfully and faithfully obeying Me and talking to others about Me. Always rejoice and be extremely glad when such persecution comes, because your reward in Heaven will be great!*

¹³ Instead, you must keep rejoicing when that happens. Because when you suffer for the same reasons that Christ did,^a you will experience extreme joy when Christ's glory is revealed.^b

¹⁴ If you are abused verbally because of your testimony and stand as a true follower of Christ, you should be glad!^a Because when that happens, it means that it's evident that both God's glory and His Spirit are resting upon you. Those people are abusing not only you, but Christ as well; and by your life and testimony you are glorifying Him!^b

¹⁵ But make sure that none of you ever needs to suffer as a murderer, a thief, or a meddler in other people's affairs, or for being involved in any other evil.^a

¹⁶ But never be ashamed if you suffer because

you're a follower of the Lord. Instead, always praise God when that happens,^a

¹⁷ because God has already justly begun to bring to trial those who belong to the family of God.^a And if He begins first with us, what will become of those who refuse to obey^b God's commands^c included in His Great News?

¹⁸ **If even those who are determined to live to please God find it difficult^a to be saved, what chance will the person have at God's judgment bar who continues to disobey God and lives mainly to please himself?^b**

¹⁹ So when you suffer because of your obedience to God, continue to give yourself completely to Him, and continue to do the good you know you should be doing. And trust your faithful Creator

Because that's the way the prophets who lived and witnessed faithfully for God before your time were treated.

4:14b Somehow, Christ is glorified when we suffer for Him. In turn He will glorify us when He returns. Keep in mind that there will be degrees of glory, depending upon our living and laboring for Him in this life. A person who is never persecuted for Christ's sake is one who never takes a definite stand for Him where it really counts. And to fail to take a stand for Him actually means that in a very real sense we deny Him.

Jesus warned, "*Whoever disowns Me before others—I will also disown him before My Father in Heaven.*" Matthew 10:32-33. So, stand up and be counted on the side of Christ no matter what the cost! The reward will be *glory* and life everlasting.

4:15a Almost every sin can be included in the warning here. There is no reward from Christ when we suffer because of wrong we have done. And we are warned here to make certain that we leave behind all wrong, so that we will not suffer the consequences of wrongdoing.

4:16a Consider Matthew 5:11-12 again in connection with this verse. We should indeed thank God whenever it is our privilege to *suffer* for Christ. Acts 5:41.

4:17a When God is getting ready to punish the ungodly, He usually begins by bringing His own people to trial. God cannot do much in effectively attracting the ungodly until He gets His own people fully surrendered to Himself.

So in these days of the end, we can expect that God will allow much persecution upon the Christians (Daniel 7:20-22; Matthew 24:9-13), because He is getting us ready, both for a work to do here, and to be received into His presence and glory.

We may groan and even suffer intensely under the hand of God as He prepares us for Himself, but

this suffering is momentary. Consider the horrendous suffering and punishment that awaits the ungodly! Psalm 9:17.

4:17b Some translate this *do not believe*. But the Greek text is definitely *refuse to obey*.

4:17c As noted earlier, Finis Dake, in Dake's Annotated Bible, lists over 1,000 commands that God has given for Christians to obey in New Testament times.

4:18a Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-28.

4:18b Proverbs 11:31. Is it true that it's *difficult* for even true Christians *to be saved*? We often hear preached that the gates of Heaven *will be thrown wide open for us*. Notice, however, in what connection that *wide open* gate is mentioned. It's in 2 Peter 1:11, following instructions and warnings, with the last warning in v 10 reading, *So for that reason, my brothers and sisters, be most diligent to make your calling and election to salvation and eternal life with God a sure thing. Because if you make a practice of doing the things I have just pointed out to you, you will never fall*. Peter is simply saying in v 11, which follows, that if you have diligently followed his instructions and warnings in the previous verses, *then* you will have a wide-open entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord.

So Peter recognized even in his second letter that it is with difficulty that one is saved.

Instead of an easy entrance *without difficulty*, Christ warned, *You must use extreme effort in order to gain entrance thru the narrow gate. Because I tell you, many will try to enter, but will not succeed*. Luke 13:24. The words *You must use extreme effort* are translated from the Greek word *agoneēzesthe*. Young states that this word means *to agonize, contend*. Strong says it means *to struggle, compete for a prize, contend with an adversary, to endeavor to accomplish something, fight, labor*

completely with whatever happens as a result.

A Word to Elders and Others

5 As a fellow church elder who saw Christ suffer, and who will also share in the glory that will soon be revealed, I have something to say to you who are elders.

²Be genuine shepherds of God's flock which is under your care. Act as truly concerned overseers, not because you feel you must, but because you are glad to do so; and not for the low reason of financial gain, but because of your eagerness to serve.

³And don't lord it over those entrusted into your care, but give them a worthy example to follow.

⁴Then when the Chief Shepherd appears, you

will receive a glorious crown that will never lose its radiant splendor.^a

⁵And this word to you younger men: Submit yourselves to the leadership of those who are older than you. Yes, all of you should be submissive to one another. Be literally clothed with humility, because

God works against those who are proud, but He wonderfully helps those who are humble.^a

⁶So be willing to take a low place under the mighty hand of God's leading,^a so that He may honor and elevate you at the proper time.

⁷Throw all your anxious cares upon Him, because He really cares about you.

⁸Don't allow yourselves to be stupefied by the cares, profits, and pleasures of the world. Always

ferently, strive. Thayer points out that it means *to endeavor with strenuous zeal, to strive to obtain something.* Bauer says the word in Luke 13:24 means *to strain every nerve* to enter. All of these authorities agree as to the meaning.

Christ also said, *You can enter eternal life only thru the narrow gate! The gate that leads to destruction is wide, and the road leading there is broad, and most everyone is traveling that easy road. The reason so many travel the broad road is because of the narrowness of the gate one must enter to get onto the road that leads to life, and because the road that leads to life is also narrow and difficult. So there are few who are looking for it with enough diligence to find it.* Matthew 7:13-14.

So Peter is not developing some new teaching. Remember that thruout the New Testament the emphasis is upon forgiveness thru the blood shed by Jesus Christ, *plus* the new birth. One is not born again by the blood of Christ. We are justified by the blood of Christ, but we are born again (which means made into a new person), regenerated, by the word of God and by His Spirit. John 1:13; 3:1-8; 1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18; 1 John 3:8-10.

Remember that there are two distinct steps to salvation—not just one. Those two steps are regeneration and justification. They are not one and the same, but they occur at the same time when one is genuinely converted. Even the devil and his demons believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross to save sinners. They believe the facts. In like manner, many people in our churches believe the facts about Jesus, but are unwilling to surrender their lives fully to Him so that they might be regenerated (born again).

Matthew Henry says about this verse, "It is all that the best of us can do to secure the salvation of our souls; there are so many sufferings, temptations, and difficulties to be overcome, so many sins to be put to death. The gate is so narrow and the way so difficult, that it takes all that the righteous can do to be saved." That may sound like salvation by works, but it is not. It is salvation by faith in the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, *plus* the true and absolute conversion from self will to God's will (being born again).

Don't look forward to eternity with God if you are simply trusting that your sins are forgiven because Christ died on the cross for you, while you are unwilling to be true to Him. To be only half converted means to be a rebel still. Peter asks a very thought-provoking question here, quoted from Proverbs 11:31. If true Christians can barely make it to Heaven, what will happen to *the ungodly and the sinner*? The implication of his question is that those who allow sin in their lives will just *not* make it!

While God does not demand sinless perfection, He does demand perfect intent. Both this world and God are sick and tired of people claiming to be Christians who have little love for God and little desire to please Him. The Spirit of God, Paul, Peter, and all who truly love God invite and urge you to surrender yourself wholly—body, soul, mind, and spirit to God, while there is still time. See 2 Corinthians 6:1-2, and 1 Timothy 6:12 note.

5:1-4a These four verses are important prophetically inasmuch as they call attention to the statement in v 4 that those who faithfully minister the word of God *will receive the glorious crown that will never lose its radiant splendor.* Actually, every true Christian is called to be a minister to others. All the unsaved need our witness, and so many fellow Christians need our encouragement and our

be awake and alert, because your enemy, the devil, is constantly prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to swallow up.

⁹You must remain unyielding in resisting his temptations, and remain firm and steadfast concerning every teaching of the faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world are experiencing the same kind of sufferings that you are.

¹⁰But after you have suffered a little while, may the God who has blessed us in so many ways, and who has called us through Christ Jesus to share His eternal glory, perfect, establish, strengthen, and make you firm and unwavering.

¹¹To Him be the glory and the great wisdom and power to rule forever and ever. So be it!

Final Greetings

¹²I have written you this short letter by the hand of Silvanus, whom I consider a faithful brother, teaching you and bearing witness to the fact that the faith in which you have put your trust is indeed the truth from God.

¹³The Lord's followers here in Babylon,^a who are chosen by the Lord along with you, send their greetings. My son Mark also sends greetings.

¹⁴Greet one another in Christian love. May God's peace rest upon all of you who are His through Christ Jesus. So be it!

Most sincerely,
Peter

warnings. Let us all be faithful to all, as we serve the Lord diligently, *presenting the full truth, without compromise*. 2 Corinthians 4:2b.

5:5a Proverbs 3:34.

5:6a A hand as gentle as it is mighty. "If His hand is mighty to depress, it is also mighty to exalt."—

Clarke's Commentary.

5:13a Some claim that Peter meant he was in Rome. But why would he say he was in Babylon if he was in Rome? Babylon was still an active city when Peter wrote. Likewise, there is no evidence whatever that Peter was ever in Rome.

Throw all your anxious cares upon Him, because He really cares about you.

⁸Don't allow yourselves to be stupefied by the cares, profits, and pleasures of the world. Always be awake and alert, because your enemy, the devil, is constantly prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to swallow up.

⁹You must remain unyielding in resisting his temptations, and remain firm and steadfast concerning every teaching of the faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters thruout the world are experiencing the same kind of sufferings that you are.

—I Peter 5:7-9

The Second Letter from PETER

Greetings, to all of you who have received the same incredibly precious assurances of eternal life that we have, thru faith in the morally right means made available to us thru our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is from Simon Peter, a servant and messenger of Jesus Christ.

²May God's many undeserved blessings, and peace of both mind and conscience, be very real in your lives in multiplied ways, as you consider the knowledge God has given you of Himself and of Jesus our Lord.

Making Sure of Eternal Life

³By His supernatural power, God has given us everything we need in order to live, and to live a life that is truly pleasing to Him. And it's by our coming to a definite understanding of God's call to us^a by means of His glory^b and moral excellence^c that we are now able to live a holy life.

⁴In fact, all of God's great and precious promises have been given to us by means of His glory^b and moral excellence.^c And God has given us these great promises so that, as we seriously consider their end result, we may be so greatly encouraged and challenged by them that we become partakers of His divine nature, and thereby escape the corruptions in the world that are caused by evil desires.

⁵For that reason, you must be very diligent about adding moral excellence to your faith; and to moral excellence, add knowledge.^a

⁶To knowledge, add self-control; to self-control,

perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness.

⁷To godliness add brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

⁸Because if you have these qualities, and if they are constantly increasing in your life, you will be neither inactive or without success in your efforts to increase your knowledge about our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹But the one who doesn't have these qualities is blind to the truth. At best, he is nearsighted, and has forgotten the obligation to God that is now his after being cleansed from his past sins.

¹⁰So for that reason, my brothers and sisters, be most diligent to make your calling and election^a to salvation and eternal life with God a sure thing! Because if you will make a practice of doing the things I have just pointed out to you, you will never stumble and fall.^b

¹¹By doing so, you will guarantee for yourself a glorious welcome, and the gates into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be thrown wide open for you.^a

¹²So for that reason, I won't neglect to keep reminding you about these things, even though you know them and are presently firmly established in the truth.

¹³Yes, I think it's only right that I continually stir up your thinking about these things as long as I'm still with you in this temporary body.

¹⁴Our Lord Jesus Christ has recently made it clear to me that I must soon leave this tent^a body.

¹⁵So for this reason too, I will be diligent in writing these things down. By that means, you will always be reminded of them, even after I'm gone.

1:3a See Romans 8:28-30.

1:3-4b All that God is has been involved in bringing His salvation to us. God's glory includes all the greatness of His being, all of His great attributes, all He has done and is able to do, etc.

1:3-4c God's moral excellence was involved in His designing a plan for our salvation that is so just and so morally right.

1:5a ... *knowledge about God, about His plans for man and His dealings with man.*

1:10a Romans 8:28-30.

1:10b In his book *Life In The Sun* (p 298), Robert Shank states, "All Calvinist theologians ultimately

agree with Hodge, Eadie, and Calvin that the only unfailing evidence and ground for assurance that one is elect is deliberate perseverance in faith in Jesus Christ. Professor John Murray of Westminster Theological Seminary aptly states the matter:

... *let us appreciate the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and recognize that we may entertain the faith of our security in Christ only as we persevere in faith and holiness to the end.*"

1:11a See 1 Peter 4:18b note.

1:14a A temporary, very primitive, and weak dwelling place.

We Were Eyewitnesses of Christ's Glory!

¹⁶ Because when we told you about our Lord Jesus Christ coming to earth, and about the great power He displayed, we weren't telling you cleverly invented fairy tales. We were there! We saw it all! We were actually eyewitnesses of His majesty!

¹⁷ We were even with Him when He was honored and glorified by God the Father, when the Most Excellent Glory spoke to us about Him, saying, "This is My Son, whom I love so dearly. I have found such great delight in Him."

¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice coming from Heaven when we were with Jesus on the holy mountain of transfiguration.^a

¹⁹ All of this confirms what the prophets wrote. So until the Day begins to dawn and the light of the morning star shines in your hearts, you will do well if you will read what they wrote, and always look to them as a light that continues to shine in a dark place.^a

²⁰ Realize first of all that no prophecy in Scripture was the private opinion of some man.

²¹ None of these prophecies ever came by means of some man imagining them. On the contrary, holy men of God spoke only as they were given God's message by the Holy Spirit.

False Teachers and Their Destruction

2 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. In underhanded, subtle ways, they will secretly introduce destructive heresies.^a They will even deny many of the claims and teachings of the Lord who bought them. But the result for them

will be a swift and terrible end.^b

² Many will put the immoral and destructive teachings of these false teachers into practice. And because of such people, and the way they will live, the Way of Truth will be scoffed at and ridiculed.

³ In their greed, these false preachers will preach whatever most people want to hear, in order to gain them as their followers and have their financial support.^a God's judgment has been hanging over them for a long time. He hasn't been asleep about the matter.

⁴ Don't forget that God didn't spare even the angels who sinned, but threw them down into the deepest part of Hell, where even now they are chained in darkness, awaiting the Day of Judgment.

⁵ Nor did God spare the ungodly people of the ancient world. He judged them with a great flood,^a saving only Noah and his family, a total of eight people. Noah was a preacher who preached that one must turn from his sinning and live to please God if he was to be saved.

⁶ God also condemned the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, overthrowing them with a fiery destruction that reduced them to nothing but piles of ashes.^a He made them an example of what will happen to all who insist on living to please themselves instead of living to please God.^b

⁷ But He rescued Lot, a good man who was constantly distressed by the filthy, unrestrained, outrageous homosexual behavior of the people of Sodom.^a

⁸ Day after day, as that good man lived among them, his righteous soul was tortured as he continued to see and hear their ungodly behavior.

1:18a Matthew 17:1-9.

1:19a There could have been charges that Peter, James, and John conspired to make up the story that God spoke to them about Jesus on the mountain. But the many prophecies telling about Christ's coming had been given hundreds of years before He came: 1) The prophecies were numerous, which was better proof than a single report by Peter; 2) They were recorded, and the fulfillments could be compared carefully with the predictions; 3) The prophecies had been written hundreds of years before, by different prophets, living in different ages, so they couldn't have agreed together.

2:1a ... *that will result in the damnation of all who believe and follow them.* The soft, easy way to Heaven, preached by many today is a prime example of a destructive heresy.

2:1b Man brings upon himself the vengeance that God brings upon him. The *swift and terrible* end

no doubt refers to *Judgment Day*. There will be no mercy at all for those who have deceived others. Their destruction will be both swift and terrible. The false prophets of today are the many preachers who explain away many of the warnings of God and preach an easy way to Heaven.

2:3a 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

2:5a Genesis 6:1 to 9:1.

2:6a Genesis 18:16 to 19:29; Jude 7.

2:6b Psalm 1:1-6; Romans 5:6-11; 1 Peter 4:18.

2:7a Genesis 19:1-11.

2:9a Those who demand freedom to live as they please, with little or no regard for God's will, go to Hell at death, there to await their final judgment (1,000 years after Christ's return to earth) in the lake of fire.

No, God will not accept your selective obedience; it's either unconditional surrender to God's will, or Hell, and the lake of fire! Revelation 20:7-15. Read

⁹ So the Lord knows how to rescue godly people when they are tempted. He also knows how to shackle and imprison the wicked while they await the Day of Judgment and their ultimate punishment.^a

¹⁰ This is especially true of those who live only to satisfy the corrupt desires of their body, and hate and resist the teaching of the Scriptures that they must submit to Christ, and obey Him as their Lord, if they are to be saved.^a Many of these are bold in their sinning, and thoroughly determined to do only what they want. They aren't even afraid to slander those in positions of authority.^b

¹¹ But even angels, who are stronger and far more powerful than these false teachers, don't accuse these dignitaries with insults when they report to the Lord.^a

¹² But like destructive animals that are made only to be caught and destroyed, which by nature have no powers of reason, these men rant and rave about things of which they know nothing. And because of their corruption, they too will be utterly destroyed.

¹³ They will soon receive the wages coming to those who live in sin.^a They settle for pleasure that lasts for only a day,^b and then deceive themselves by taking delight in your fellowship while feasting with you.^c They are dirty spots and blemishes in your fellowship!

¹⁴ Their eyes are always wandering around, looking for someone to commit adultery with. Never done with sinning, they are always looking for some unstable person to seduce. Their money-grubbing hearts are also soaked in greed. They are

so definitely under God's curse!^a

¹⁵ They have abandoned the right road^a and have gone astray. They're going the way that Balaam, the son of Beor, went, who loved the pay he would get for doing wrong.

¹⁶ But even Balaam's donkey rebuked him for his sin. Here was an animal that couldn't speak, but with a man's voice he arrested the madness of the prophet.^a

¹⁷ These men are wells without water, clouds driven by a storm.^a The awful gloom of the deepest darkness of Hell has been reserved for them forever.

¹⁸ Because by using great-sounding empty words^a that only puff people up and make them feel good about whatever they're doing, these preachers stir up lustful desires of the sinful human nature in people who have actually escaped from living the wrong kind of life.

¹⁹ While they are continually promising others freedom,^a they themselves are slaves of corrupt living, because a person is a slave of whatever controls him.

²⁰ If, after escaping the pollutions of the world by their knowledge of what the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has done for them, they again become entangled and overcome by those same pollutions, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

²¹ It would have been much better for them if they had never known the way to victory over sin, than after knowing it, to turn away from the Great News given them that demands holy living.

²² In their case, the proverbs have been proven to

The Amazing Story of God in Appendix 247, page 520, and decide for God and Heaven! You don't need to settle for Hell. Yes, it costs to follow and obey the Lord. It will cost you your sin. But think of the terrible cost in the lake of fire for ages upon ages to come if you don't accept God's mercy, and then live this very brief life for Him.

Even the sheer joy of daily anticipating the eternal joy and glory that awaits you with God will far exceed any cost in serving and living for Him!

2:13a John 3:36; Romans 2:1-10; 6:16; 2 Corinthians 10:6; Hebrews 5:9; 1 John 2:3-4,17.

2:10b This can refer to angelic dignitaries (either evil or godly angels) or to authorities in the church or state. It appears that the primary reference is to angelic dignitaries, according to v 11.

2:11a Jude 8-9.

2:13a Romans 2:8,9; 6:23; Philippians 3:19.

2:13b ... *when God offers pleasures in His presence that will continue on forever* ... Psalm 16:11.

2:13c ... *at your church fellowship dinners*, ...

2:14a They are under the sentence of God's curse now, and they will experience that curse in horrendous reality for ages to come, in Hell and the lake of fire, unless they, in all sincerity, turn from their sinning before it's too late.

2:15a Matthew 7:14.

2:15-16a Numbers 22:1-35.

2:17a They are like clouds that pass overhead but send down no rain. Farmers are often disappointed by such clouds. False teachers are like this. The greatest danger to the church is not from opposition or persecution from without but from perversion and corruption of the truth from traitors within!

2:18a God takes delight in hearing His truths made understandable.

2:19a ... *freedom from the Law and from needless restraints to sin*.

be true that say,

A dog will come back to lick up its own vomit,^a and

A pig that is washed will go right back to wallowing in the mud.

God's Sure Judgment Is Just Ahead

3 So, my dear friends, this is the second letter I am writing you for the purpose of stirring up your minds by reminding you to be most sincere and altogether clear in your thinking.

²I want you to be sure to remember what the holy prophets told us long ago. Also remember the information and commands given by our Lord and Savior, which were brought to you thru us, His apostles.

³In the first place, always keep this in mind: In the closing days of the age, scoffers who are concerned only about satisfying the desires of their flesh will be very outspoken.

⁴"Where is this Christ who promised He'd come again?" they'll jeer. "Ever since our earliest ancestors died, nothing has changed! Everything continues just as it did from the beginning of cre-

ation."^a

⁵But they deliberately ignore the fact that it was God who created the stars and the planets in the heavens in ages past by means of His command,^a and that by means of gathering the primeval waters together on earth, He caused the dry land to appear.^b

⁶Nor will they admit that it was God who later caused those same waters to return, causing all life on earth to perish in the great flood.^a

⁷But that same powerful word of God is now preserving the heavens and the earth as they presently exist. They are being kept unscathed until Judgment Day, when they will be burned with fire,^a and all ungodly people will be destroyed.^b

⁸But there's one thing, dear friends, that you must not forget: With the Lord one day is the same as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

⁹So the Lord isn't slow about fulfilling His promise, in the way that some consider being slow. But He is being patient with us. He doesn't want anyone to perish. He wants everyone to turn from their sinning and live in obedience to Him.^a

2:22a Proverbs 26:11.

3:3-4a ... "No one comes back from the dead!" Those who *scoff* at the promise of Christ's second coming are almost always persons who are *living to satisfy the desires of their flesh*. They are living in willful sin, and they do not want the Lord to return. They don't even want to think about the fact that He *promised* to return. He *promised* to return to judge the ungodly and to reward the righteous. Of course, this turn of events would not fit into their plans.

Many of these *scoffers* are *uniformitarians*. They claim there never have been any great catastrophes on the earth—that things have continued as they are now from the very beginning, and that things always will continue in this way. They say, "Ever since our earliest ancestors died, nothing has changed!"

The doctrine of the second coming of Christ is the first area of teaching that modernists attack when they abandon the faith. Today there is talk about classifying prophecy teachers as "dangerous influences toward erratic social behavior." No doubt "bate laws" will be enacted to suppress anything that thought police deem to be de-stabilizing to a new world order. Often the proponents are none less than backslidden or unregenerate preachers and teachers occupying pulpits and classrooms of today.

Thought police would be persons appointed to suppress any teaching that the new worlders con-

sider destabilizing and disruptive of their plans for the world. They would have power to arrest, jail, and even liquidate.

3:5a They want to be ignorant—they *deliberately ignore* the fact that the heavens were created *by means of God's command*. They are able to make great scientific discoveries, but they do not want to make any discovery which would prove the Bible to be true.

3:5b Genesis 1:1-10.

3:6a Genesis 6:1 to 9:1.

3:7a God has promised He will never again destroy the earth by means of a flood. However, He states that next time He will destroy it by *fire*. v 12; 2 Thessalonians 1:8. Fiery judgments will fall upon the earth during the last days of this age. Ezekiel 38:22; 39:6; Revelation 8:7-8; 9:17-18; 16:8. But the *fire* mentioned here is no doubt that which will occur immediately following the Battle of Armageddon, when the earth will be completely renovated by earthquake and by fire. Revelation 6:12-17.

This purging by *fire* will also involve the heavens, meaning the atmospheric band surrounding the earth. It does not appear that this refers to the planets and stars in outer space, although it is certainly possible that they will be included. But the last words of the verse evidently refer to the lake of fire. Revelation 20:10,14,15.

3:7b ... *in Hell and in the lake of fire*. Revelation 17:8,11; 20:10-15.

¹⁰But just like a thief in the night does, the Day of the Lord will come upon the ungodly when they are least expecting it. The heavens at that time will disappear with a great crackling roar. The elements will melt under extreme heat, and the earth and everything on it will be burned up.^a

¹¹So, since all these things will be dissolved, what kind of people should you be? Obviously, the only sensible thing to do is to live a holy life, truly dedicated to God.

¹²We should constantly be looking forward in great expectation to the Day of God, and with great eagerness desire its coming—the Day when God will dissolve the heavens by setting them on fire, causing the elements to melt with intense heat.^a

¹³Because when that happens, we can look forward (in fulfillment of God's promise) to new heavens and a new earth in which everyone will live good, God-honoring lives.^a

¹⁴Therefore, dear friends, as you look forward to all of these happenings, be diligent in making every effort to be truly at peace with God, living spotless, blameless lives.^a

¹⁵And you must always keep in mind that the reason the Lord is so patient with mankind, and is

holding back His judgment, is because He wants people everywhere to be saved. By means of the wisdom given our much-loved brother Paul, he said the same thing when he wrote you.

¹⁶Paul has spoken about these things in all his letters. He's also written about some things that are hard to understand, which those who are ignorant of the truth and unstable, twist and distort, just as they do with the rest of the Scriptures. So they're the cause of their own destruction.

¹⁷So, dear friends, in spite of the fact that you already know these truths, you must continually be on your guard so that you don't allow yourselves to be led astray by the sins of those who are not living in obedience to God, and thereby fall from your own secure position.

¹⁸Instead, you must continue to grow in your knowledge of all that the Lord has done for you and is continuing to do. Also, continue to grow in all there is to know about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May He be the One to receive the glory, both now and forever. So be it!

Most sincerely in Christ Jesus,
Peter

3:8-9a God is *not slow about fulfilling His promises*. His withholding judgment is enabling many to be saved who would never come to repentance otherwise. God has not willed or predestined that anyone should *perish*. His heart's desire is that everyone will repent. However, He does not force His will upon anyone. If we were forced to obey God, our reaction would not be love. God is looking for genuine, deep, and true love on the part of those who would live with Him as His children thru-out eternity.

3:10a The *Day of the Lord* is advancing closer every day. But sinful mankind is unmindful of what is actually happening. They are so engrossed in their own pursuits that they don't realize that the end is very near, and that the Lord's wrath is indeed coming upon them *like a thief in the night*. God is allowing the earth to become ripe for judgment. People are demanding that they be given freedom to satisfy every lust they have in any way they please, and it is quite evident that God has already stepped aside (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8) and is saying, "All right, go ahead, but you must soon suffer the awful consequences."

When God pours out His wrath upon the earth in the last 3 1/2 years of this age, mankind will have just begun to reap the harvest from their sins. The

final *Day of the Lord* will occur at the end of the first 1,000 years of Christ's reign on earth, when He will judge those who still insist upon following Satan, even after enjoying the light and health of Christ's supernatural reign. Revelation 20:7-9.

3:11-12a How temporary and passing are the material things of this life. The only things that are real and permanent are those treasures to be given us by our Lord following this life. When we consider the promised glory and indescribable joy of being with our God in eternity, how can we do less than give our all to Him in full submission? How can we keep from giving praise and glory to Him for loving us so and for having such great plans for us?

3:13a The earth will not be reduced to nothing, but it will be changed in marvelous fashion. There will be no more oceans (Revelation 21:1), no high mountains or islands. Revelation 16:20. Since the sun is to be seven times stronger than it is today (Isaiah 30:26), God will evidently place a protective canopy of ice particles in the skies over the earth. So there will be far less water on earth. Instead, the earth will be a single expanse of rolling hills and plains, divided only by lakes and rivers. Vast numbers of people will be able to live on such an earth.

3:14a See Ephesians 4:26-27.

But just like a thief in the night does, the Day of the Lord will come upon the ungodly when they are least expecting it. The heavens at that time will disappear with a great crackling roar. The elements will melt under extreme heat, and the earth and everything on it will be burned up.

¹¹So since all these things will be dissolved, what kind of people should you be? Obviously, the only sensible thing to do is to live a holy life, truly dedicated to God.

¹²We should constantly be looking forward in great expectation to the Day of God, and with great eagerness desire its coming—the Day when God will dissolve the heavens by setting them on fire, causing the elements to melt with intense heat.

¹³Because when that happens, we can look forward (in fulfillment of God's promise) to new heavens and a new earth in which everyone will live good, God-honoring lives.

—2 Peter 3:10-13

The First Letter from JOHN

The Word of Life

Let me tell you about the One who has existed from the very beginning. He is the Word^a who gives Life! And we have heard those marvelous words of Life from His very own lips. We have seen Him with our eyes, and have gazed upon Him in amazement! We have even touched Him with our hands.

²The very One who gives life actually appeared to us! We saw Him! And because of what we have seen, we now bear witness and report to you concerning this Eternal Life, who was with the Father and who was so clearly revealed to us.^a

³So we are here telling you about the One whom we have actually seen and heard, so that you may join us in our warm fellowship. And the wonderful truth is that our warm fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

⁴We are writing these things so that your joy may be full and overflowing.

1:1a *Word* is one of the names of Jesus Christ. He came with God's word, or God's message, to man. God revealed Himself, and expressed Himself to mankind thru Christ, telling us how we could receive His forgiveness and eternal life. And by His death and resurrection for us, Christ became the very means by which we can now receive that eternal life. As the Word of God, He is also the One thru whom God spoke the worlds into existence. Genesis 1:1-31; Hebrews 11:3; 2 Peter 3:5-7.

1:2a ... *in human form in such greatness, majesty, and power that there is no doubt in our minds as to who He is.*

1:5a *Light* is a sign of life, purity, truth, knowledge, wisdom, beauty, joy, prosperity, and happiness.

1:5b *Darkness* is a sign of all that is the opposite of light.

1:5c A strong negative. *No, not even one speck of darkness.*

1:7a Or *living a holy life* ... Hebrews 12:14.

1:7b The measure of light (i.e., holiness) which we may have is not the same in *degree*, but it is of the same *kind* that God has. The true Christian in his character and feelings resembles God. 1 John

Living in the Light

⁵This, then, is the message that we have heard from Him, and now share with you: God is light!^a There is no darkness^b at all^c in Him.

⁶So if we should say we are enjoying warm fellowship with God, but we're living in the darkness of sin, we're lying! We're not telling the truth!

⁷But if we're living in the light,^a as God does, and living as we sincerely believe He would live if He were in our place,^b we are having continuous, warm fellowship with Him, as well as with other true followers of the Lord. And when we are in that joyful relationship with God, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, continues to cleanse us from every sin.^c

⁸If we say we never sin, we're only fooling ourselves, and there's no truth whatever in our claim.

⁹But, if we humbly and sincerely make a practice of confessing^a our sins to God when we have failed Him, He will be faithful and true to His promise to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from

2:6.

1:7c Even when we walk in the light in the best way we know, we are not perfect. But if our heart is truly sincere with God, we have His promise of continual cleansing and forgiveness. But for this to apply to us, we must continually seek to know God's will, and do it. It requires the same surrender to Christ to live daily for God as it did when you were first converted.

Remember, the gate that leads to eternal life is narrow, but so is the path you must daily walk with God in order to get there. Matthew 7:13-14.

1:9a It's continuous action that's called for here. When you receive Christ as Lord and Savior, your past sins are forgiven. Then, with God's help (Philippians 2:13), God expects you to begin living as He would have you live. Christ's death on the cross was sufficient to enable God to forgive your past, present, and future sins. But according to the truth given here, you are not forgiven the sins of the present time until you confess to God that in spite of your best and holiest intentions you have sinned against Him—and name the sins.

An essential part of confession before our High Priest (Jesus) is the absolute sincere intention of

all the selfish and immoral things we have done.

¹⁰If we claim we never sin, we're calling God a liar, and have refused to accept what He has so plainly told us about ourselves.

Jesus Is Our Helper

2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you won't sin. But if any of us should sin, we have One who will act as our Lawyer and speak to the Father in our defense. He is Jesus Christ, the One who always does what is right and pleasing to God.

²He's the One who suffered and died on the cross to make amends to God for our sins. And He didn't die for only our sins, but for the sins of everyone in the whole world!^a

³Now here's how we can know if we are truly converted to Jesus—if we continue to do what He has told us to do, and if we refrain from doing what He has told us not to do.^a

⁴The person who says, "I'm a Christian," but doesn't do what Christ has told us to do, and not do, is a liar, and there's no truth in his claim.

⁵But a love for God has truly been perfected^a in anyone who makes a practice of obeying what Christ has commanded us. This is how we can have continued, definite assurance^b that we are united^b to Him.

forsaking the sins we confess. We cannot ask forgiveness for sins, and expect to receive God's forgiveness, if we have little or no intention of forsaking those sins. As we just said, it takes the same surrender to daily walk the narrow and difficult path that leads to Heaven (Matthew 7:13-14), as it did to enter the narrow gate that put you on that path in the first place. See Luke 13:23-30, and the notes.

2:2a So He died for your sins too, whether you ever accept Him as your Savior and surrender to Him as your Lord, or not. He's done all He can for you, until you accept the gift of everlasting life which God now offers you because of what Jesus did for you.

When in all sincerity, you accept God's forgiveness, and turn from living to please yourself to living to please God, there's no limit to what God may do for you and thru you for others. Yes, it will cost you something to be a Christian. It may cost you plenty. But with God's help you can do it. It will cost you infinitely more not to turn to God—both in this life, and in the great eternity that's ahead for all of us.

2:3a It's good that the Bible tells us here how we can know if we are truly converted to the Lord and are on our way to Heaven. Be honest with yourself

⁶And whoever claims that he is living in union with Christ, is under a special, personal obligation^a to consistently live and act as He did.

The Command to Love Others

⁷My dear brothers and sisters, what I'm writing you here is not a new teaching, but an old command that you've heard from the very beginning. I'm only emphasizing an old command that you've had preached to you continually since the time you first heard the Great News.^a

⁸And yet, I am also now writing you about a new command. It's also about what is true concerning Jesus, and what must now also be true about you,^a because the darkness^b is passing away and the true light is already shining.

⁹Anyone who says he is living in the light, and yet has hatred^a for someone,^b is still living in darkness.

¹⁰But anyone who truly loves others, is one who makes a practice of living in the light. He makes sure there is nothing in his life that will cause others to stumble and sin.^a

¹¹But whoever has hatred for someone is in darkness and walks about in darkness. He doesn't even realize where he's headed, because the darkness has blinded him.^a

¹² I am writing to you, my dear children,

when you make the test concerning your own spiritual condition. Realize that it's not only important that we refrain from doing that which is sin, but also that we obey God by doing what He has commanded us to do. And the New Testament is literally filled with instructions and commands for us. That is why we need to read God's word every day, because we forget so soon.

2:5a This word is in the passive voice in the Greek, indicating that the subject is receiving the action. We must each allow God and His word to bring about in us a true love for God. But this doesn't mean that we don't have a part in perfecting that love. The more we obey God and spend time with Him, the more we will love Him.

2:5b Both words are present tense (indicating continued state or action) and indicative mood (the mood of certainty).

2:6a Some versions use the words "ought" or "should" here, but the primary meaning of the Greek word *opheilo* is *owe*, *indebted*, or *obligated*. So to use the word "ought" or "should" is to water down this very important statement in God's word. For hundreds of years this mistranslated word has given comfort to sinning "Christians". It has and is still giving false hope to people who claim the hope

because your sins have been forgiven because of the effectiveness of what Jesus did when He suffered and died for you.

¹³ I am writing to you, fathers, because you have truly come to know the One who has been in existence from the very beginning.

I am writing to you, young people, because you have conquered the evil one.^a

I am also writing to you, dear children, because you have truly come to know the Father.

¹⁴ I wrote to you fathers in the past, because you have truly come to know the One who has been in existence from the beginning.

I wrote to you young people in the past, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have conquered the evil one.

Do Not Love the World

¹⁵ But stop your love affair with worldly ambitions and the things of this world! If you persist in loving the world, you show that you have no love for God, your real Father.^a

¹⁶ Because all the desires of those who live mainly for this very brief life—the desire to pamper and satisfy the various appetites of the flesh, the desire

to buy and have everything that appeals to them, and all the arrogant pride in what they have, do, or have done—doesn't come from the Father but from their love for the world.^a

¹⁷ Your life in this world, and all the demanding desires of your body and mind, are swiftly passing away,^a but the one who makes a practice of obeying^b God will live on in total fulfillment^c forever!

Warning About Antichrists

¹⁸ My little children, the end is near! You have heard that the great enemy of Christ^a is coming, but many enemies of Christ have already come. So by that we know that the end is near.

¹⁹ These people were once a part of our group, but they didn't really belong to us. Because if they had been a genuine part of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out from us so that it might be very clear that none of them really belonged to us.

²⁰ But all of you have an anointing from the Holy Spirit, and you know all about these things.

²¹ I have not written you because you don't know the truth; I've written because you do know the truth. And you know that no false teaching has truth as its foundation.^a

²² Who, then, is the monstrous^a liar? It's anyone

of Heaven in spite of their disobedience and disregard for Christ's commands, and in spite of the warnings in the previous three verses.

Anyone who preaches this error, or gladly accepts such preaching, is in danger of the judgment pronounced in Revelation 22:19! Study Christ's life and see what He really lived for, and go thou and do likewise! All of Christ's teachings command that we live as He did and for the same purpose. Christ's whole life was lived with eternity's values in view. The same must be true with us, or we don't belong to Him! To settle for anything less is to settle for less than being born again—which would mean judgment and the second death! Revelation 20:11-15.

2:7a ... *that you must live and act as Jesus did.*

2:8a John is referring to Christ's new command concerning love in John 13:34-35. This is verified in the next three verses.

2:8b ... *of envy, hate, selfishness, self-indulgence, unbelief, unfaithfulness, and disobedience* ...

2:9a To hate, detest, abhor, to regard with little affection. "Where love is not, there hatred is; for the heart cannot remain a void."—*Bengel, in J.F. & B.*

2:9b For family members, followers of Christ, neighbors, fellow humans everywhere. We can hate what they do, say, and live for, but we must love the

person. *Christ died for us when we were still living in rebellion against obeying or pleasing Him in any way.* Romans 5:8.

2:10a Romans 14:1-21; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13.

2:11a John insists that, apart from a sincere intention and attempt to do good and to avoid all evil, one cannot in honesty claim to be born again.

2:13a Concerning the great importance of *conquering Satan and triumphing over the temptations of the world* see Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 12:11; 21:7. Only those who conquer will be welcomed into God's Heaven.

2:15a Matthew 6:24.

2:16a If the *ruling principle* of one's life is to have and enjoy the things and satisfactions of this brief life, it shows that one's heart is not renewed and sold out to Christ, and that he or she will have no place in God's eternal Kingdom.

2:17a Your present body is surely and quickly passing away. You'll soon be gone—but where?

2:17b Hebrews 5:9.

2:17c Psalm 16:11.

2:18a Antichrist.

2:21a But many false teachings develop when truth is twisted and perverted.

2:22a An article here in the predicate indicates strong emphasis. Christ proved that He was the Son

who says that Jesus is not the Messiah! He is an enemy of Christ.^b He's denying both the Father and the Son.

²³Whoever denies the Son His rightful place in his life as both Lord and Savior, doesn't have the Father either. But whoever recognizes and accepts the authority of the Son, has the Father living within him as well.^a

²⁴So make sure that what you heard from the beginning continues to be a dominating force in your life. If you do, you will remain in union with the Son and with the Father.^a

²⁵And this is what Christ Himself has promised to give us^a—everlasting life!

²⁶I have written these things to warn you about those who are doing their best to lead you astray.^a

²⁷But as for you, the anointing of the Holy Spirit which you received from the Lord remains upon you, and you don't need anyone else to teach you.^a But under His anointing, the Spirit continues to teach you about everything. And what He teaches is the truth, not a lie. So believe and obey what the Spirit has taught you, and you will remain^b in Christ.

²⁸And now, my little children, remain in Christ^a so that when He is revealed in the heavens at His second coming to earth,^b we may approach Him with confident boldness, and not shrink away from Him in shame when He comes.^c

²⁹If you know that God always does what is right, you know that everyone who makes a practice of

doing what is right has been given spiritual birth by Him.

We Are God's Children

3Just think how enormously God loves us,^a when you consider that He calls us His children—which, indeed, we are! And the reason the people of the world refuse to recognize us for who we really are, is for the same reason they refuse to recognize Jesus for who He is.^b

²My dear friends, we are now already God's children, but it hasn't yet been revealed what God's ultimate plans are for us as His children. But we do know that when Christ is revealed in His glory in the heavens, we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He really is.^a

³And everyone who has this glorious hope in what God has promised, purifies himself—with the intent and desire to be just as pure as Christ is.^a

⁴Everyone who makes a practice of sinning is actually living in rebellion against God and breaking His laws, because all sinning is a breaking of God's laws.

⁵You all know that the Lord Jesus appeared among us to take away our sins.^a And not even once did He disobey God and sin.

⁶No one who lives in union with Him, in heart and mind, will keep on sinning. Anyone who does continue to live in sin hasn't yet come to understand Him^a or know Him.^b

of God in such numerous ways that only a monstrous liar can deny the proof. For itemized proof that He is indeed the Messiah, the Son of God, see *The Amazing Story of God*, Appendix 247, page 520.

2:22b Antichrist.

2:23a John 14:23; Revelation 3:20.

2:24a John 8:31; Acts 14:22; Colossians 1:23.

2:25a ... *if we do remain in Him* ...

2:26a John was evidently warning about those who claimed even then that it wasn't necessary to obey Christ as Lord in order to be saved, as long as they believed in Him as Savior. Such wrong teaching ends only in judgment and death! The Bible is literally filled with teaching that we must be done with sin, or face God's judgment.

2:27a Yes, read the word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to be your Teacher.

2:27b Same Greek word and tense as v 24.

2:28a Colossians 1:23a.

2:28b Acts 1:9-11; Matthew 24:29-31.

2:28c See 1 Corinthians 3:1-18; 2 Corinthians 5:10, and the notes.

3:1a See John 17:23, and the note there.

3:1b The reason is: People who live mainly for what they can get out of this brief life want to live in their sin without being reminded of Judgment Day. But Judgment Day is approaching nevertheless. Then, sadly, the Lord and Savior they have spurned will be their Judge!

3:2a To understand what this means, just ask yourself, "Who can see a human being as he really is?" The obvious answer is that it takes another human being, or someone higher and greater than a human being, to see that person as he actually is. The promise we have here is that we will see Jesus Christ as He really is. This is not speaking of seeing with the eye. This is seeing with the understanding.

Animals can see people with the physical eye, but they can't understand us because they're not like us. It appears that in God's Kingdom there are many beings who see God, but only His children, who are like Him, will really see and understand and know Him as He really is.

3:3a That is, the tendency of such a glorious hope is to make one strive to be holy now, even though the results may be imperfect; but the effect will be

⁷My little children, don't let anyone ever fool you into believing that a person can be right with God even if he doesn't live right. It's the person who lives a good, upright life in obedience to God, even as Christ did, who is right with God.

⁸Anyone who continues to live in sin is acting just like the devil, and he belongs to him, because the devil has continued to sin ever since he first introduced sin into the universe. The reason the Son of God came to earth in human form was for the very purpose of destroying the devil's work in our lives.^a

⁹When God makes someone His child, that person no longer continues to live in sin, because the new principle for living, which he has received from God, now operates in him. So he cannot continue living in sin, because he is now born of God.^a

¹⁰Here's how you can tell the children of God from the devil's children: Anyone who doesn't make a practice of doing what's right is not a child of God. The same is true of anyone who doesn't treat others with love.

We Must Love Each Other

¹¹Because this is the message you heard from the very beginning, that we are to always love each other.

¹²Don't be like Cain, who belonged to Satan and killed his own brother. And why did he kill him? Because he thought only of himself, and lived to please himself, while his brother lived to please

and obey God.^a

¹³So don't be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the people who live to please themselves instead of God during their brief time in this world, hate you.^a

¹⁴We know we have escaped the second death^a and now have the promise of eternal life, because we love all who faithfully love, serve, and obey the Lord.^b In fact, anyone who doesn't truly love all others who are true followers of Christ is still under the condemnation of the second death.^a

¹⁵Whoever hates his brother or sister is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

¹⁶We know what true love is, because we saw it when Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we should be just as willing to give our lives for each other, whenever necessary.

¹⁷So if we have the means to support life, and we see one of our own people in need, but we take no action to help that person, how can we dare say we love God?^a

¹⁸My dear children, we should always love with sincerity and in truth by what we do, and not merely talk about the situation.

¹⁹When our love is of the kind that results in sincere action, we can know that we are indeed true followers of the Lord. This will assure our own hearts and minds that we are truly pleasing to God.^a

²⁰Because if our conscience condemns us, just

to make him *perfectly* holy in the world to come.

3:5a He didn't come to make it possible for us to be free to sin! *For the reward for sinning is death.* Romans 6:23.

3:6a ... *hasn't yet come to grasp the meaning of who Jesus really is, and what His great love has actually caused Him to suffer for us, nor why, nor all the incomprehensible results that are involved for us for all eternity*—depending on whether we totally surrender our heart and will to Him, or continue toward Hell.

3:6b In other words, *cannot be a true Christian.* He is still unchanged, unregenerate, unforgiven—and lost, until he is truly converted from willfully living to please himself, to living to joyfully please and obey God.

3:8a So if the Son of God came to destroy all the works of the devil, the one who continues to live in sin can't be a true follower of Jesus.

3:9a Anyone who claims to be converted to Christ, but continues to live in disobedience to Him, is giving proof that his conversion was not genuine. He has not yet fully surrendered his will to Christ as

Lord—and this is what being born again is all about.

The new birth is of God, but it does not happen without the full consent and full cooperation of the one being converted. One who is truly converted to Christ has a hatred for sin of every kind, and has an unceasing desire to resist it. "It's true that in this conflict the child of God receives wounds daily, but he never throws away his weapons or makes peace with his deadly enemy." — *Martin Luther*

3:12a ... *And Cain became jealous when God showed He was pleased with his brother, but not with him.* Genesis 4:1-16.

3:13a John 15:18-25.

3:14a Revelation 20:11-15.

3:14b ... *no matter what race, color, age, intellect, wealth, or denomination.* John 13:34-35.

3:17a A true Christian also helps non-Christians who are in need, as God leads.

3:19a The meaning here seems to be that we will in this way dissolve the doubts, trouble, and guilt of our minds, and produce a state of quiet assurance by the evidence that we are indeed doing the will of

remember that God is far greater than our conscience. He knows every single thing about us.

²¹And so, my dear friends, if our conscience does not condemn us, then we can approach God with bold confidence.

²²When we obey His commands and make a practice of doing the things that please Him, it's then that we can expect to receive whatever we ask from Him.

²³And this is what God commands: that we believe in all that the name of His Son, Jesus Christ,^a implies—and that we love one another, as Jesus commanded us.^b

²⁴Now those who obey His commands are living in Him, and He is living in them.^a And it is by means of the Spirit within us, whom He has given us, that we know He is living in us.^b

Warning Against False Teachers

4 My dear friends, many false prophets have gone out into the world. So don't believe everyone who claims to be speaking for God. But test the spirits to see whether these preachers really do have the Spirit of God.

²Here's how you can recognize those who have God's Spirit: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus is the Christ who came to earth in human form, is God's Spirit.

³But any spirit that refuses to acknowledge that Jesus is God's Son in human form, is not from God. Instead, it is the spirit of the great enemy of Christ.^a You have been warned that Antichrist is coming,^b and his spirit is even now already in the

world.

⁴But you belong to God, my dear children, and you have won your fight against them,^a because the One who is living in you is far greater than the one living in the people of the world.

⁵Those false preachers belong to the world. And what they say is influenced by their love affair with the world. So the people who love the world gladly listen to them.

⁶But we belong to God. And those who know and love God pay attention to what we say. But those who don't belong to God have no desire to listen to our message. That's how we can recognize those who have the Spirit of Truth and those who are controlled by the spirit of error.

God's Love and Ours

⁷My dear friends, let us practice loving one another, because true love originates with God. And everyone who is truly loving and kind has been born of God and knows Him.

⁸Anyone who doesn't show kindness and love doesn't know God, because God's innermost and most compelling nature is to sincerely love.

⁹And the way God revealed His immeasurably deep love for us was to send His incomparable^a Son into the world, so that we might live because of all that His Son would suffer for us.

¹⁰Here is the very highest expression of love—not that we loved God, because we didn't—but that God's love for us was so overflowing and immeasurable, that He sent His Son to sacrifice Himself for us, so that He could be compassionate

God. Our consciences are often restless and troubled by thoughts of past guilt, but as we prove our love for others by our actions and our witness to them, we can assure our hearts and minds that we are truly born-again children of God.

Let us always realize that while there are physical needs that need to be met, the spiritual needs are the greatest. Be sure to always encourage others to read God's message and allow God to speak to them. You may even wish to give or loan them a copy of the Bible or New Testament. By this means, you can share eternal life with them and also give them peace of mind and the joy and assurance that only God can give.

3:23a *Jesus* means *Savior*, the One who died on the cross to save us from the penalty and power of sin. *Christ* means *the Anointed One*, the One whom God sent to earth and anointed with great power, as proof that He truly was and is the Son of God.

3:23b John 13:34-35; 15:12-13.

3:24a Matthew 28:20; John 14:20-23.

3:24b John 14:23; Romans 8:16.

4:3a Antichrist.

4:3b The word *antichrist* means *one who opposes Christ and works against Him*. All such opposers and false teachers are inspired by Satan and his spirits. At the end of this age, a powerful world leader (empowered by Satan) will organize all opposition against Christ. See Appendix 231 for a list of the names given Antichrist in Scripture.

4:4a ... *your fight against their lies and temptations and endeavors to draw you into error and sin* ...

4:9a See John 1:14 note.

4:10a Our reconciliation originates with God. He didn't allow Christ to be crucified to pacify Himself, but to enable Him to deal with sin in a just way, so that He would be doing what was honorable and right when He offered forgiveness to all who have sinned.

4:11a Matthew 22:39.

4:12a Even though no man has ever yet seen God,

toward us and offer us forgiveness for our sins.^a

¹¹My dear friends, if God loved us with such self-denying sacrifice and such genuine concern, we most certainly should love one another in the same way!^a

¹²No man has ever seen God.^a But if we practice sacrificial love and concern for one another, God is living in us, and His genuine, perfect love has been brought to perfection in us.^b

¹³Here's how we know that we are living in Him and that He is living in us—because He has given us a portion of His Spirit.^a

¹⁴And we ourselves have even seen the Son of God. And we testify to the fact that the Father has indeed sent the Son to be the Savior of the world!

¹⁵God very definitely continues to live within anyone who sincerely confesses to others that Jesus is the Son of God.^a And that person continues to live in God.

¹⁶We have actually known by experience, and have believed, that God does indeed love us dearly. Because the very character and essence of God is love! And whoever continues to love continues to live in God, and God lives in him.

¹⁷If^a God's love has been brought to a state of perfection in us, we will be able to approach Him with confident assurance on Judgment Day, because we will have lived our life on earth as Jesus would, if He were in our place.^b

¹⁸There is no fear of Judgment Day in the heart of one who in all sincerity loves God and his fellow men. Love that has been brought to a state of per-

fection drives out fear. Because the greatest fear that man has is fear of the torment of judgment in Hell.^a And anyone who has this legitimate fear is one who has not allowed God to make him perfect in love.

¹⁹But because God first loved us in such marvelous ways, let us now in all sincerity truly love^a Him.

²⁰If someone says, "I love God," but at the same time he has hatred in his heart for someone, he's a liar. Because how can anyone who doesn't love those he can see, love God, whom he has never seen?

²¹And Christ has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brothers and sisters.^a

Our Victory Over the World

5Whoever in all sincerity believes^a that Jesus is the Christ^b is born of God, and whoever loves the Father also loves the other children born to Him.

²When we truly love God and obey His commands, we know that the natural result will be genuine love for His other children as well.

³In fact, the only way we can prove that we truly love God is to obey what He tells us to do and not do. And it's not a burden to obey Him.

⁴Because every true child of God makes a practice of conquering the attractions and temptations of the world. And that which has given us the victory in conquering the world is our faith.^a

the angels constantly see Him. Matthew 18:10. And we have the promise that we will one day see Him. Matthew 5:8. But even now, if we are truly His, we have the witness within us that He is living in us—His Spirit in fellowship with our spirit! Romans 8:16.

4:12b A prayer for today, and for every tomorrow: *O my God, help me to so give of myself (my time, my strength, thoughts, ambitions, wealth, love), that I may truly be a rich blessing to You and others, both for time and eternity.*

4:13a But the Holy Spirit has been given without measure, in all His fullness, only to Christ. John 3:34; 14:16-17,23; 20:22; Romans 8:16.

4:15a Romans 10:9-10.

4:17a ... *with God's help* ...

4:17b 1 John 2:6.

4:18a Surveys reveal that 95 percent of all people believe in a real Heaven. But Hell is also real. Jesus warned about Hell more than all other persons in Scripture put together. And He should know. Give all diligence to make *sure* that Heaven is your eter-

nal home. 2 Peter 1:10. You can truly surrender your heart and life to God right now. Do it!

Then read your Bible every day to allow God to cleanse you daily by His word (Ephesians 5:26) and wash and renew you by His Holy Spirit. Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23-24; Titus 3:5.

4:19a The word for *love* here can be translated in either the indicative or subjunctive moods. But the context demands that it be translated in the subjunctive, as we have it here. The indicative declares a fact, while the subjunctive proposes a possibility. John is *encouraging us* to love God (subjunctive), but he's not stating that each reader does love God just because God loves him.

4:21a Matthew 22:39; John 13:34-35.

5:1a To believe that Jesus is the Christ means that we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior sent from God, and that we owe our all to Him—our very existence and salvation. We especially owe Him all our love, adoration, trust, and obedience.

5:1b Or *the Messiah*, the One promised by God.

5:4a That means *our faith* in God and in His Son,

⁵So who is it that continues to conquer the temptations of the world? Only the one who is believing that Jesus is indeed the Son of God.^a

Who Jesus Is

⁶Jesus Christ is the One who was endorsed by the Father at His water baptism, and again just shortly before He shed His blood for us on the cross. He came not only with the endorsement of His Father at His water baptism, but with both the water and the blood^a endorsements. And it is the Holy Spirit who now continues to bear witness about Him—because the Holy Spirit is the very embodiment of truth.

⁷So there are three that bear witness to the truth:

⁸the Holy Spirit, the voice of God at Jesus' baptism, and God's voice just before Jesus died. And they all say the same thing.^a

⁹Ordinarily, we believe what people tell us, but we should realize that what God tells us is of far greater importance and far more certain than anything anyone else can tell us. And God has clearly told us that Jesus is His Son!

¹⁰Anyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God, has the witness of the Spirit within himself that it is true. But anyone who refuses to believe what God has said about His Son is actually calling God a liar, by refusing to believe the testimony He has given about His Son.

¹¹This is what God has said about His Son: that thru Him He has given us the means of obtaining everlasting life, and that this life can only be

obtained thru His Son.

¹²Anyone who has sincerely invited God's Son into his life^a has everlasting life.^b But anyone who doesn't have the Son of God in his life^a doesn't have eternal life.

About Eternal Life

¹³I have written these things to you who are living out the true meaning of the name^a of the Son of God, so that you may know for certain that you have eternal life; and so that you may make certain that you continue to give full allegiance to the name^a of the Son of God.

¹⁴Then you can approach Him in prayer with confident boldness, knowing that He keeps listening to you when you ask Him for what you are certain He wants to give you.

¹⁵And if we know He is listening to us, we know that whatever we may continue asking for,^a we are definitely in the process of receiving from Him.^b

¹⁶If any of you sees a fellow Christian committing a sin that does not lead to death, you should earnestly pray for him, and God will give him life. I'm speaking of those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to certain death. I'm not saying you should pray about that.

¹⁷All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to certain death.

¹⁸We know that no one who is born of God makes a practice of sinning. But a person who is truly born of God continues to be watchful in order to keep himself from sinning.^a As long as he does that, the evil one isn't able to touch him.

Jesus Christ, our faith in the fact that Jesus overcame the temptations of the world, and that God will fulfill every promise He has ever made to help us overcome (Philippians 2:12-13), and that He will carry out the judgment in every warning of His that went unheeded. A faith that is active and alive is obedient to God.

5:5a The end and aim of this person is not the present life. All of his purposes and decisions about this world are made with eternity's values in view. All other persons are governed by worldly aims, reasonings, and principles.

5:6a There are numerous theories as to what is meant by *water and blood*. Our understanding is that these words mean: Jesus both began and ended His ministry on earth by confirmations from God that He was indeed the Son of God. This happened at His baptism by *water* (Matthew 3:16-17) and just before He shed His *blood* for our sins. Luke 9:28-35; John 12:27-33. This entire section, thru v 11, deals with the testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ.

5:8a ... *that Jesus is the Son of God.*

5:12a ... *as both his Lord and Savior* ...

5:12b John 5:24.

5:13a Trusting Him as Savior and obeying Him as Lord. Again, it is just as important that you *continue* to keep yourself in the will of God as it is that you be converted from living to please yourself to living to please God in the first place. Jude 21; Matthew 7:13-14.

5:15a ... *if it is indeed for our best good, and for God's glory* ...

5:15b ... *if we don't give up*. Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8.

5:18a You cannot do this by your own strength alone, but when you allow God to work within you (John 15:1-5; Romans 8:12-13; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Jude 1c) you can do it. God hasn't promised to live our lives for us, but He has promised to give us the strength to conquer sin and Satan. We *must* conquer sin, or we are lost. See Revelation 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21;

¹⁹We know we are children of God, even though all the rest of the whole world is under the control of Satan.

²⁰We also know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding of all that we need to know about the One who is the only true God.^a And we are now in Him who is the true God,

and in His Son Jesus Christ. He is indeed the true God, and our eternal life is in Him.

²¹My little children, keep yourselves from worshipping anything that might take God's place in your minds and hearts.^a So be it!

Sincerely in Christ,
John

21:7-8.

There are four things that are absolutely indispensable in the Christian life. They are: 1) Keeping in close touch with God by prayer; 2) feasting on God's word every day; 3) exercising, by taking a stand for your Lord at every opportunity (Romans 10:9-10); and 4) being refreshed and strengthened regularly by fellowship with other true believers who are faithfully obeying and serving the Lord.

5:20a There is only one true God, and that's the Father. John 17:3. All that is has come from the Father. 1 Corinthians 8:6. True, all things have been created thru Jesus, the Son of God (John 1:1-4), but it was the Father who did the creating thru Him. See John 1:3 note, also Hebrews 1:2.

5:21a Literally *keep yourselves from idols*. An idol is any thing or person you love, trust, revere, and fear more than God.

But stop your love affair with worldly ambitions and the things of this world! If you persist in loving the world, you show that you have no love for God, your real Father.

¹⁶Because all the desires of those who live mainly for this very brief life—the desire to pamper and satisfy the various appetites of the flesh, the desire to buy and have everything that appeals to them, and all the arrogant pride in what they have, do, or have done—doesn't come from the Father but from their love for the world.

¹⁷Your life in this world, and all the demanding desires of your body and mind, are swiftly passing away, but the one who makes a practice of obeying God will live on in total fulfillment forever!

—I John 2:15-17

The Second Letter from JOHN

From the elder, to a very dear lady chosen by God, and her children, all of whom I truly love. And I'm not the only one, but all who have come to know the truth about you have also come to love you all.

²You are loved because you love the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever.

³May undeserved favor, mercy, and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, be with all of you as you continue to promote His truth and demonstrate His love.

⁴I was so happy to find some of your children sincerely, and in truth, living in obedience to the command we received from the Father.^a

⁵And now I plead with you, dear lady, that we all continue to love one another. I'm not writing you a new command, but one that we've had from the beginning.^a

⁶This is how we can properly express our love for God: by living in continual obedience to His commands. And the command from Him that we love one another, as you heard from the very beginning, is a command that all of you should continually put into practice.

⁷Many deceivers have spread their lies thruout the world. Any person who refuses to acknowledge

that Jesus Christ came to earth in a genuine human body is a deceiver and an enemy of Christ.

⁸All of you need to continue to be extremely watchful as to what you believe, how you live, and that you continue to faithfully serve the Lord, so that you don't lose the rewards you have worked for. We need to be deeply concerned that we may receive a full reward.^a

⁹Whoever bypasses or goes beyond the prescribed limits of the teachings of Christ doesn't even have God in his life. But the one who is loyal to Christ's teachings has both the Father and the Son living within him.^a

¹⁰So whenever someone comes to you who teaches error about Christ and His teachings, don't receive him as a guest in your home. Don't even encourage him to have a good day.

¹¹In fact, anyone who encourages him is having a part in the evil he's doing.

¹²I have so much more to say to you, but I would rather not say it with paper and ink. I hope to visit you soon, and then we can talk face to face. In that way, our joy in fellowship will be complete.

¹³The children of your sister, also chosen by God, send you their greetings. So be it!

Most Sincerely,
John

1:4a That is, as He has commanded us to live in accordance with the truth which He has revealed thru Christ. Matthew 17:5.

1:5a ...from Christ. John 13:34-35; 15:12-13.

1:8a "It is painful to think of how many there are who begin the Christian life with burning zeal, as if they would strike out for the highest rewards in Heaven, but who soon waver in their course, and become entangled in some earthly pursuit, or error, until at last they receive, perhaps, only a small fraction of the reward they might have obtained.

"There will be degrees of happiness and bliss in Heaven, depending upon our faithfulness to, and our zeal for the Lord in this life. 1 Corinthians 3:1-15. But who can estimate the *full reward* of Heaven, the unspeakable glory of those who make it the supreme business of their lives to obtain all they can of its bliss. Surely, not one of us should be willing to settle for a crown in which even one gem is missing that might have sparkled there forever." — *Barnes' Notes*.

1:9a John 14:21-23.

The Third Letter of JOHN

From the elder, to my dear friend Gaius, whom I truly love.

²Dear friend, I pray that in all matters you will continue to prosper and be in good health, in the same way that you continue to prosper in living as a Christian should.

³I was so happy to hear the good report from some of the Lord's followers who came by and told us how firmly you believe the truth, and that you are also continuing to live it.

⁴Nothing makes me happier than to hear that my children are living in obedience to the teachings of Christ.

⁵My dear friend, you have been so faithful in doing what you've done for these traveling preachers and teachers who are serving the Lord, and even for some who were strangers to you.

⁶They have told the church here about your love. You will do well if you continue to send such people on their way in a manner worthy of those who are serving God.

⁷They have gone out to represent Christ in Christ's way, and have decided not to accept financial support from anyone who is not a follower of the Lord.

⁸We must give continued support to fellow servants like that, and in that way work together in getting the truth out.

⁹I wrote to the church about this, but Diotrephes, who insists on being the revered leader, refused to have anything to do with us.

¹⁰So, if I come your way, I will call attention to what he's doing, viciously accusing us with his gossip. But he's not even content with that. He not only refuses to receive the traveling workers, but even forbids the church members to show them hospitality, and puts them out of the church when they do.

¹¹Dear friend, don't imitate an evil person like that! Instead, imitate those who do what's right and good. Those who practice doing good prove that they belong to God, but those who practice evil don't have any acquaintance with Him.

¹²But everyone speaks well of Demetrius. And all evidence bears witness to the fact that he is a genuine child of God. We also bear witness to this, and you know you can trust our testimony.

¹³I have so much more to say to you, but I would rather not write it with pen and ink.

¹⁴I hope to see you soon, and then we will talk face to face. May you have every reason to be at peace. The friends here send you their greetings. And please give my personal greetings to our friends who are with you.

Sincerely in Christ Our Savior,
John

The Letter from JUDE

To all of you who have been effectively called^a to be devoted to God, who have been dedicated by God the Father to holy living, and are kept in the faith by Jesus Christ^b—greetings!

This is from Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and a brother of James.

²May God's mercy, peace, and love be yours in multiplied measure.

Beware of False Teachers

³My dear friends, I was fully intending to write to you about our salvation which is offered to everyone. Then I realized that what was most needful was for me to challenge you to be extremely in earnest in your battle for the truths,^a revealed once and for all time, in the Great News that has been entrusted into the care of all of us who are now living to please only God,

⁴because certain men have wormed their way into our churches. They are ungodly men, who were marked out for God's judgment long ago. They claim that God's undeserved kindness and mercy, and His offer of forgiveness, gives them license to live as they please. This, in effect, denies everything the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ have taught us!^a

⁵Even though you already know all about how

God undertook for Israel in Egypt,^a don't forget that after the Lord saved His people out of Egypt, He later destroyed those who didn't believe in Him.^b

⁶Also remember, the angels who were not content to do the glorious work that God had told them to do, but left their proper place, have been bound by God in darkness in everlasting chains^a until their judgment on that awesome Judgment Day.

⁷We should also be warned by what happened to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns, who gave themselves over to sexual immorality, and especially to homosexuality.^a They now serve as an example and warning of God's judgment. They are even now suffering^b the terrifying punishment of eternal fire!

⁸And now, just like the people of Sodom, these misleading dreamers I've been talking about are continually corrupting their bodies and refusing to allow anyone to tell them how they should live. And they constantly slander those in positions of authority.^a

⁹But even when the archangel Michael was arguing with the devil about who would have the body of Moses, he didn't dare to make a slanderous accusation against him, but simply said, "May the Lord deal with you!"

1:1a Romans 8:28-30.

1:1b This is true of all Christians. We would all fall away from God and perish if it were not for the constant watchcare of Jesus. John 15:1-5; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Romans 8:13,26,37; Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Peter 1:13-16. See also Appendix 218, page 482.

1:3a The word is *faith* in the Greek, and includes *all the truths God has given us regarding the Great News*—regarding all His promises to us, all that Christ has done and continues to do for us, and the obedient lives we must now live for God after He has forgiven us thru Christ.

1:4a Jude warns here about people who have *wormed their way into the churches*, pretending to be genuine Christians, but who teach that "we are saved by *grace*, plus nothing"—claiming that the lives Christians live have nothing to do with their eventual salvation. Such a message results in loose living!

Many of these preachers emphasize God's promises but explain away His warnings or completely ignore them. All who follow these men will fall into the same condemnation and judgment toward which these teachers are headed! See comments on Philippians 3:9-14.

1:5a Exodus 1:1 to 12:51.

1:5b ... *and disobeyed His command to move forward and possess the land.* Numbers 13 & 14; Deuteronomy 1:1-46.

1:6a That is, in a state of confinement from which they cannot escape.

1:7a Genesis 18:16 to 19:29. See Romans 1:26-27 note.

1:7b "Present participle, indicating that they are suffering to this day the punishment which came upon them in Lot's time." — *Vincent's Word Studies*.

1:8a ... *in the church and elsewhere.*

¹⁰But these corrupt teachers speak abusively against whatever and whoever they don't understand. They are destroying themselves, because, like unreasoning animals, their only concern is to satisfy their desires in any way they wish.

¹¹They are in for real trouble, because like Cain, they are rebellious and disobedient. They are rushing into the same blunder that Balaam made, being willing to do anything for money. Like Korah, they too will perish because of their rebellion against God.

¹²These men are as dangerous among you as hidden rocks are to the pilot of a ship, when they attend your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm. They are shepherds who think only about gorging and stuffing themselves, without a thought for others. They are like clouds carried along by the wind, which bring no rain. They are like trees that bear no fruit, even in autumn, trees that have been pulled up by the roots—twice dead.^a

¹³They are like wild waves of the sea, producing nothing but the unsubstantial and worthless foam of their own shameful words and deeds.^a Like stars that have strayed from their courses, the gloom of deepest darkness has been reserved for them forever.^b

¹⁴Enoch, who was seventh in the genealogical line of Adam, also prophesied about such men,

saying, "Look! the Lord is coming with myriads of His holy ones, too vast in numbers for anyone to count.

¹⁵"He is coming to execute judgment on everyone, to convict all among them who are ungodly of all the ungodly things they have done by their wicked actions, and of all the harsh things these ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."^a

¹⁶These men are always murmuring and complaining.^a They think only about satisfying their own desires and cravings. When they preach or teach, their only concern is to build people up in their own eyes, telling them how great they are. They do all this to gain the support of their listeners for selfish reasons.^b

Warnings and Instructions

¹⁷But you, dear friends, must remember the warnings given by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁸"In the last days," they warned, "there will be men who will ridicule the truth. Their only interest will be in satisfying their own ungodly desires."

¹⁹These are worldly men, who cause divisions among you—always motivated by their beastly passions and appetites. They certainly don't have the Spirit of God living within them.

²⁰But you, dear friends, must keep building yourselves up^a on the foundation of your most holy

1:12a Referring to spiritual death.

1:13a Isaiah 57:20.

1:12-13b Jude's condemnation of such teachers and preachers should be a warning to every Christian—real or so-called. Those who live ungodly lives, claiming to be Christians, but satisfying their own desires instead of the desires of God, will have their part *with the unbelievers!* Luke 12:46.

If you find yourself under such teaching, you should heed the Lord's warning *through the apostle Paul* in 2 Corinthians 6:17-18, "*Come out from among those idolaters and unbelievers. . . Have no part in their evil deeds and ambitions. Then I will welcome you to Myself. . .*"

These who have turned the grace of God into permission to live unrestrained and unchaste lives are actually "unbelievers". They have denied the faith! They accept and teach only those parts of God's word which suit their fancy, and which—they believe—allow them the freedom they demand. *Don't have anything to do with such people!* 2 Timothy 3:5. Read the word of God anew and see what the true teaching of Christ and His apostles really is.

Don't allow these evil teachers to cause you to

compromise any longer, thereby damning your eternal soul. Your own soul and the souls of your children and others you love are at stake! You must take action!

1:15a Many of these haven't spoken openly or audibly against God, but they have ignored their Father and Creator, living their lives as they wish, to please themselves instead of obeying and truly worshipping God. They refuse to be converted from their sinful ways to God's way for them. They refuse to openly acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God and their Savior, and that with God's help, they must turn from their sinning and obey Jesus as their Lord.

1:16a . . . *about their lot in life.*

1:16b As mentioned earlier in these notes, John Wesley said, "Mere promise mongers are not Gospel ministers."

1:20a We are all under obligation to do all in our power, as moral and responsible people, to build ourselves up spiritually. As dependent as we are on the Lord's help, we are still responsible to use the means for spiritual growth that God has provided—Bible reading, prayer, Christian fellowship, witnessing to the lost, encouraging fellow Chris-

faith, praying with prayer prompted and guided by the Holy Spirit.

²¹You must keep yourselves in God's love. Then you can look forward with great expectation for God's mercy thru our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.^a

²²When witnessing, you need to deal with each person in a different way. To some, speak gently, with kindness and tender compassion.

²³To save others, you need to put intense fear in them by warning them of the terrors of a real Hell. Don't forget that although you need to be intensely in earnest in pulling them out of the fires of that

Hell, you must also hate everything about their sin!

The Benediction

²⁴Now I commit you to Him who is able to keep you from falling away,^a and to present you without a single fault before His glorious presence with extreme joy.

²⁵To God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. So be it!

In Christ our Lord,
Jude

tians. But the main warning here is that we build ourselves up in the faith by constant fellowship with God in prayer. God intensely desires our friendship and fellowship.

1:21a It is our responsibility to keep ourselves in God's love (by obedience and devotion to Him) if we would have Him keep our souls safe.

1:24a See Philippians 2:13; and the note.

My dear friends, I was fully intending to write to you about our salvation which is offered to everyone. Then I realized that what was most needful was for me to challenge you to be extremely in earnest in your battle for the truths, revealed once and for all time, in the Great News that has been entrusted into the care of all of us who are now living to please only God,

¹because certain men have wormed their way into our churches. They are ungodly men, who were marked out for God's judgment long ago. They claim that God's undeserved kindness and mercy, and His offer of forgiveness, gives them license to live as they please. This, in effect, denies everything the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ have taught us!

²⁰But you, dear friends, must keep building yourselves up on the foundation of your most holy faith, praying with prayer prompted and guided by the Holy Spirit.

²¹You must keep yourselves in God's love. Then you can look forward with great expectation for God's mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

—Jude 3-4, 20-21

THE REVELATION

This is the record of future events that Jesus Christ revealed. God gave Jesus this revelation^a so that He might reveal to His servants on earth the future happenings that will take place very quickly.^b Jesus then sent His angel with the message to His servant John.

²John faithfully wrote down everything God said, and everything that Jesus Christ solemnly told him. He also wrote about everything he saw.

³Both the person who reads and those who listen to the words of this prophecy being read will be blessed if they continue to act upon the counsel and instructions given here,^a because the time is near.^b

Greetings to the Seven Churches

⁴This is from John to the seven churches in the province of Asia.^a

May undeserved blessings and peace of mind be given you from God, whose everlasting duration embraces all the past, present, and all time to come; and from the seven Spirits^b in front of His throne; and from Jesus Christ, God's faithful witness to man.

⁵Jesus was the first to be raised from among the

dead, and He is the Ruler of all the kings of the earth! All praise to Him who loved us so much that He washed our sins from us by shedding His own blood for us.

⁶He has also made us to be kings and priests who will serve His God and Father! To Him be glory and superior power to reign forever and ever! So be it!

⁷Look! He^a is coming with the clouds!^b Everyone will see Him, including those who had plunged a spear into His side. And everyone in every nation on earth will cry in remorse as they remember how they had treated Him.^c Yes, that's how it will be. So be it.

⁸"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," the Lord declares. "I am in the present, I have been in the past, and I always will be. I am the One with unlimited power."

John's Vision of the Risen Lord

⁹I, John, your brother, and also your full partner in patiently bearing all the indignities, privations, and sufferings for the sake of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom, was exiled on the island of Patmos because I had been preaching God's message and taking a bold stand for Jesus Christ.

1:1a If Jesus receives His knowledge of future events from the Father, just who is Jesus Christ? See Appendix 246, page 512, for the answer.

1:1b ... *in a brief period of time, when they once begin to happen.*

1:3a He is no doubt referring here to the instructions and warnings, especially in the second and third chapters.

1:3b *One thing is sure, you have only a limited time in which to act upon them.* Life is so brief and so uncertain for all of us. We must act upon God's truth **NOW**.

1:4a ... *in Asia Minor* (the western part of present-day Turkey).

1:4b *Or the sevenfold Spirit of God.*

1:7a Jesus Christ.

1:7b Clouds are appropriate symbols of majesty and glory. The term could refer to His shekinah glory. Speaking of His second coming, Jesus Himself said He would come "*with a majestic display of*

power and great glory." Matthew 24:30. *The clouds* could also refer to the multiplied millions of His angels who will accompany Him, or to the multiplied millions of His redeemed ones who have been caught up to meet Him, and now return with Him.

1:7c Those left on earth at this time of shocking, astounding, crushing, and profound truth will be those who have ignored or rejected Him. Now they will realize their disastrous folly, as He comes to be their judge. 6:12-17; Zechariah 12:10-14. It's at this time that all who have remained faithful to God will be taken up into Heaven to meet the Lord in the air. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Matthew 24:29-31. Those remaining on earth at this time will face Jesus as their Judge, as Christ related in Matthew 25:31-46. Those who survive this judgment will be the new generation of people on earth. They will be the nucleus for a great repopulation of the new earth. See Matthew 25:31-46, and the note there.

¹⁰One day the Holy Spirit came upon me; it was the Lord's day.^a Then I heard a loud voice behind me that sounded like a trumpet.

¹¹"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last!" the voice loudly announced. "Write down in a book everything you see, and send it to the seven churches in the province of Asia^a: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea."

¹²Immediately I turned to see who was talking to me, and I saw seven golden lampstands.^a

¹³Standing among the lampstands was someone who looked like the Son of Man^a! He wore a robe that reached down to His feet, with a golden sash around His chest.

¹⁴The hair on His head was as white as wool, or like snow, and His eyes were like blazing flames of fire.

¹⁵His feet gleamed like fine brass glowing in a furnace. And His voice sounded like the thundering cascade of a mighty waterfall.

¹⁶In His right hand, He held seven stars, and out of His mouth went a sharp, double-edged sword.^a His face glowed with radiance as brilliant as when the sun shines at noon.

¹⁷When I saw Him, I collapsed at His feet as a dead man. But He then put His right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid. I am the First and the Last."^a

¹⁸"Yes, I am the One who lives forever. It is true

that I died. But look! I will now continue alive forever and forever! You can have full confidence in that statement! Not only that, but I have the keys to release the dead from their death, and from the world of the dead as well.

¹⁹"So first write down the things you have just seen. Then describe conditions as they are now. And last, write down the things that are poised and ready to take place, after conditions as they are now, are things of the past."^a

²⁰"Now let Me unveil for you the mystery about the seven stars you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the pastors^a of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands you saw are the seven churches.^b

The Message to Ephesus

2"To the pastor of the church in Ephesus write, 'The one who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands has this to say to you:

²"I am well aware of all you've been doing—how hard you have worked, and how you patiently continue faithful to Me in spite of all kinds of opposition. I know that you refuse to tolerate sin among your members, that you've tested those who say they are sent by Me^a and are not, and have found them to be liars.

³"And you haven't become exhausted and given up as you've patiently continued your work for Me.

walks among His churches and sees and hears everything that is said and done. 3) And *the things that are poised and ready to take place* is the third part, from chapter 4 thru 22. This part deals with the time of the end of the age, which appears to be upon us now.

1:20a The Greek, *aggelos*, means *a sent one*, a messenger. It many times refers to angels, but in this case the *stars* refer to the pastors or chief elders in these churches, and in churches today.

1:20b The churches, the assemblies of God's people, are the lampstands (v 12) that are to hold forth the light of the Great News by their lives and by their witness, under the challenge, direction, and example of each pastor. Matthew 5:14-16; Philippians 2:14-15; Romans 10:9-10.

2:2a Literally *apostles*, meaning *one who is sent*, a messenger.

2:5a The lampstands are the churches (1:20), and each member is a responsible part of Christ's Church. What is Jesus saying to you here?

2:6a The Nicolaitans were seemingly a sect who claimed they received their teaching from Nicolas. Acts 6:5. They lived in unrestrained indulgence,

1:10a The first day of the week, Sunday.

1:11a ... in Asia Minor.

1:12a Or *menorahs*.

1:13a Jesus. Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:44, etc.

1:16a Like a sword that is both sharp and double-edged, God's word can penetrate immeasurably deep into the heart and soul. Hebrews 4:12. Such a portrayal is a striking picture of the penetrating power of God's truth. When backed by intense and earnest prayer, God's truth has the power and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to direct it to the most vulnerable area of the mind and heart.

1:17a Jesus is saying, "I always live. I have lived thru the past, and will live thru all eternity to come. Therefore I can fulfill all My promises, and accomplish all that I purpose to do."

1:19a God's message in this book is actually divided into three parts: 1) The first part is found in chapter one ... *the things you have just seen*, that is, the vision of Christ walking among the pastors and people of His churches. 2) The second part is chapters 2 and 3, where He speaks to the pastors—to the pastors of that time, and also of today. He speaks here of *conditions as they are now*, as He

⁴“But there is something about you with which I am not at all pleased: You don’t love Me now as you did at first!

⁵“Look back now and remember how much you loved Me in the beginning, and realize how far you have fallen in your coldness and indifference. Turn from your coldness, and do the things you did in the beginning when your love for Me was intense! But if you refuse to turn, I will come to you suddenly and remove your lampstand from its place!^a

⁶“But you have this in your favor: You hate the lewd way the Nicolaitans^a live, which I also hate!

⁷“If you have been given ears for the purpose of hearing, then pay close attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches!^a To the one who conquers Satan and triumphs over the temptations of the world, I will give the right to eat the fruit from the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of God’s Paradise.”^b

The Message to Smyrna

⁸“To the pastor of the church in Smyrna write, ‘The One who is the First and the Last, who was dead and came back to life, has these things to say to you:

⁹“I am well aware of all you’ve been doing, and of the persecutions and poverty you’ve endured. But the truth is, you are rich!^a And I know all about the harsh charges being made against you

by some who say they are God’s people.^b But they are not God’s people; they belong to the church^c of Satan.

¹⁰“Don’t in any way be afraid of the things you are about to suffer. Yes, the devil is about to throw some of you into jail so you may be tested. You will suffer persecution for ten days.^a But you must continue to be faithful to Me, even if you must die because of your stand for Me and the truth.^b Then I will give you the crown of life.^c

¹¹“If you have been given ears for the purpose of hearing, then pay close attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches! The one who conquers Satan and triumphs over the temptations of the world will not be hurt in any way by the second death.”^a

The Message to Pergamos

¹²“To the pastor of the church in Pergamos write, ‘The One who has the sharp, double-edged sword has these things to say to you:

¹³“I am well aware of all you’ve been doing. And I know where you live—in the city where Satan is in charge. But still, you continue to honor My name! And you have been honest with My word and haven’t omitted or explained away certain of My warnings and other teachings in order to please certain people instead of Me,^a even during the days when Antipas, My faithful witness, was killed right there among you in the city where

claiming their salvation was a gift from God and had nothing to do with how they lived. Jesus said He hated such teaching (2:15) and the way these people lived. He warned (2:16) that unless the church stopped allowing such teaching and living, He would judge and severely punish these people. No doubt the people in a church who allow such teaching will also be judged.

2:7a ... *because this all applies to you as members as well as to your pastor.* The messages to these seven churches are in the singular. Christ is speaking to the pastor of each church. They are the ones who are mainly responsible for the condition of the churches. But much of the messages apply to the members as well. Every Christian is to study hard to become well grounded in God’s truth, and to demand that the full truth be preached and taught. The deacons or elders are especially responsible to see that this is done. And each member is responsible to make sure that the deacons or elders are doing their job in this respect.

2:7b Only to those who conquer sin and triumph over Satan does Christ make this promise. To not be allowed to eat the fruit from the Tree of Life means

to not be allowed into Heaven.

2:9a You are rich in peace and happiness now, because you have God’s forgiveness and the promise of everlasting life with Him. Though you may have little or nothing now, you own everything, because your Father is fabulously wealthy! And you will soon inherit all He has prepared for you (John 14:1-3; Romans 8:14-18), but only on the condition that you *conquer Satan and the temptations of the world.*

2:9b Literally *Jews*.

2:9c Literally *synagogue of Satan*.

2:10a Any persecution is really of short duration, even if it lasts for the remainder of life—when compared to an endless eternity with the Lord.

2:10b Or *even unto the time of your death*. See v 26; Matthew 10:22; 24:13.

2:10c Everlasting life.

2:11a What will happen to those who don’t? The conflict is real, and at stake is eternal life or the second death, which is the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15.

2:13a Literally *And you did not deny My faith*.

Satan lives.

¹⁴“But I have a few things against you: You tolerate teachers in your church who teach the people in the same way that Balaam did. He taught Balak how to cause the downfall of Israel by having his women seduce the men of Israel to sin by encouraging them to eat food sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication.^a”

¹⁵“Also, you have some there who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans,^a which is a teaching I hate with a passion.

¹⁶“So change your mind and attitude about tolerating such teaching! Otherwise, I will suddenly come to you and fight against such people with the double-edged sword that comes out of My mouth.^a”

¹⁷“If you have ears with which to hear, then pay close attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches! To the one who conquers Satan and triumphs over the temptations of the world, I will give some of the hidden manna^a to eat. And I will give him a white stone. On the stone will be engraved a new name that no one will know except the one receiving it.”

The Message to Thyatira

¹⁸“And to the pastor of the church in Thyatira write,

“The Son of God, whose eyes pierce and penetrate like blazing flames of fire and whose feet are like fine brass glowing in a furnace, has these things to say to you:

¹⁹“I am well aware of all you’ve been doing. I know how you’ve proved your love for both God and man, by your service, faith, and perseverance. And you’re doing even more now than you did in the beginning.

²⁰“But I have several things against you, all because you are allowing that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach. In doing so, she is continually deceiving My servants, causing them to commit fornication^a and to eat things

offered to idols.

²¹“I have given her time to stop her fornication,^a but she isn’t willing.

²²“So pay close attention to My warning: I will throw her into a sickbed, and cause those committing adultery with her to experience awful suffering, unless they immediately stop their sinning.

²³“I will kill her followers by means of fatal epidemics of disease. Then everyone in the churches will know that I am the One who continually investigates and explores the minds and hearts of every one of you. And I will give to each of you according to what your deeds deserve.

²⁴“But as for the rest of you in Thyatira, who have not followed this evil teaching, and have not learned by experience what they call “the deep things” (which are actually from Satan), I say to you, I will put no further burden on you.^a”

²⁵“But you must hold firmly to the truth you have, and live lives that are pure until I come for you.^a”

²⁶“To the one who conquers Satan and triumphs over the temptations of the world, and continues right up to the end of life to live as I have commanded him to live and serve,^a I will give him power and authority over the nations.

²⁷“I am giving the same promise to you that I received from My Father, when He said,

You will shepherd the nations with a scepter of iron. As easily as clay pots are shattered, You will break in pieces all who oppose You.^a

²⁸“I will also give you the morning star^a as your own.

²⁹“If you have ears with which to hear, then pay close attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches!”

The Message to Sardis

3“To the pastor of the church in Sardis write, ‘The message to you from the One who has the seven Spirits of God^a and the seven stars, is this:

2:14a Voluntary sexual intercourse between persons of the opposite sex, who are not lawfully married to each other. The meaning of the Greek word also includes homosexuality, bestiality, and all other sexual immorality.

2:15a See 2:6 note.

2:16a The sword of the Lord is His word, especially His word of command. When the Word of God (John 1:1), the Lord Jesus, speaks, things happen! Make sure that His word regarding you will be a blessing, not a curse.

2:17a Food by which they will be nourished forever. But then consider what will be the case with

all who fail to conquer Satan and his temptations. See Philippians 2:12-13.

2:20 & 21a See 2:14 note.

2:24a ... *than the burden you’ve experienced of having these people with you, and your burden to purify the church.*

2:25-26a See Colossians 1:23 note.

2:27a Psalm 2:9. What kind of reign will this be, and who will they reign over? See Appendix 232, page 492.

2:28a Even though no one knows for sure what this gift will be, it will no doubt be of extremely great worth.

"I am well aware of all you've been doing. You have the reputation of being alive and full of energy, but you are dead!

²"Wake up! And strengthen the little good in your ministry that yet remains, which is also about to wither away and die! Because I have not found you to measure up at all to the way you have been commanded by God to live, to witness personally, and preach.

³"Look back now and remember how eagerly you yourself listened to the Great News, and so gladly received it. Turn now from your present lack of deep concern for the souls and lives of others, and continue to obey the message of the Great News that now applies to you as a pastor. And be sure of this: If you ignore My warnings, and refuse to shape up, I will come upon you as suddenly and as unexpectedly as a thief. You won't know when My judgment will strike.^a

⁴"But you have a few people even in Sardis who have not polluted their lives. They are the ones who will walk the streets of Heaven with Me, clothed in white, because they have shown themselves worthy of being called My followers.

⁵"Those who conquer Satan and triumph over the temptations of the world will be dressed in white and live in Heaven with Me. And I will not blot their names out of the Book of Life. But I will tell My Father and His angels that these are the ones who belong to Me.^a

⁶"If you have ears with which to hear, then give very close attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches!"

The Message to Philadelphia

⁷"To the pastor of the church in Philadelphia write,

"This is what the One who is holy, who faithfully follows thru on all His warnings as well as on all His promises, has to say to you:

"I have the key of David. What I open, no one

is able to shut, and what I shut, no one can open.

⁸"I am well aware of all you've been doing. I am also aware of the little strength you have, but you have obeyed My instructions and have not renounced My name. Therefore, look, I have opened a door in front of you that no one can shut.

⁹"And listen! As for that group^a that follows Satan, those liars who claim they are My followers^b but are not, I will make them come and bow at your feet. And they will acknowledge that I have indeed loved you.

¹⁰"Because you have obeyed My command to patiently persevere, I will also protectively guard you thru^a the time of trial that will come upon the whole world to test those who live on earth.

¹¹"Listen! I will come suddenly! Hold on tightly to what you have, so that no one robs you of your crown.^a

¹²"I will make the one who conquers Satan and triumphs over the temptations of the world to be a pillar in the Temple of My God. He will be a part of My Temple^a forever. I will also write the name of My God upon him, and the name of the city of My God. This city is the New Jerusalem that will come down out of Heaven from My God. I will also write My new name on him.

¹³"If you have ears with which to hear, then pay close attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches."

The Message to Laodicea

¹⁴"To the pastor of the church in Laodicea write,

"This is what the One who remains firm in His declarations (the Faithful and True Witness, the Lord and Ruler^a of God's creation), has to say to you:

¹⁵"I am well aware of all you've been doing, and that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!

¹⁶"So because you are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of My mouth.^a

3:1a Or *the sevenfold Spirit of God*.

3:3a A minister of Christ has the greatest opportunity of all people to be rich in God's heavenly Kingdom. But woe to the minister who is not faithful.

3:5a See Matthew 10:32,33 notes.

3:9a Literally *synagogue*.

3:9b Literally *Jews*.

3:10a Literally *to watch over protectively, to guard*. The sense is protection and preservation during this time. He doesn't say *take you from* or *take you out of*. Evidently referring to the time of great tribulation predicted by Christ, at the end of

the age. Matthew 24:21,29.

3:11a The prize of eternal life. 2:10; James 1:12.

3:12a Each true Christian is even now a Temple (a dwelling place) of God. v 20; John 14:23.

3:14a The primary meaning of the Greek word *arkay* is our word *beginning*. But the secondary meaning *lord, ruler*, etc. seems to apply here, as it does where the same Greek word is used in Luke 12:11; 20:20; Romans 8:38; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; 6:12, etc. where rulers are clearly referred to. The Scriptures do not teach that Christ was created by God. He was begotten (born) of the Father.

¹⁷ “Because you say, ‘I am rich! I’ve become wealthy, and there’s nothing I need that I can’t have.’ But you don’t realize how utterly wretched you really are. You are miserable, poor, blind, and naked!

¹⁸ “I most strongly warn and counsel you to buy gold from Me that’s been refined in the fire, so that you may be rich indeed. Buy white clothes from Me, so you can put them on and hide your shameful nakedness. And buy eye salve from Me, so you may anoint your eyes and be able to see.^a

¹⁹ “I rebuke and warn every single person whom I love dearly, and I punish them if they disregard My warnings.^a Therefore be zealous and in earnest about turning^b from your lukewarmness.^c

²⁰ “Listen to Me! I am standing outside, knocking at the door of your heart. If anyone takes notice of My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and we will begin a close, friendly relationship with each other.^a

²¹ “To the one who conquers Satan and triumphs over the temptations of the world, I will give the prize of sitting beside Me on My throne, just as I conquered^a and then sat down beside My Father on His throne.

²² “If you have ears with which to hear, then pay close attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches!” ’ ’ ’

John Sees the Glory of God’s Throne

4 After seeing and hearing all this, I saw a door that had been opened into Heaven. Then I heard the same voice I had heard before, that sounded like a trumpet. “Come up here,” it said, “and I will show you what must happen as the work and witness of the churches is drawing to a close.”

² Instantly I was in Heaven in my spirit, and there before me was a throne with Someone sitting on it!

³ The One seated there was magnificent in splendor, like a most beautiful jasper stone, and like a ruby-red carnelian. And a rainbow, glowing with the colors of an emerald, encircled the throne.

⁴ In a circle around the throne itself were 24 other thrones. And on these thrones were seated 24 elders dressed in white and wearing crowns of gold.

⁵ From the throne in the center came flashes of lightning, then rumblings, followed by loud, crashing thunder. Seven torches were ablaze in front of the throne, which are the seven spirits^a of God.

⁶ Also in front of the throne was a sea of glass, as clear as crystal. Then toward the middle, close to both sides of the throne, were four living creatures. They were totally covered with eyes, both in front and behind.

⁷ The first living creature looked like a lion, the second like a calf, the third had a face like a man, and the fourth was like an eagle in flight.

⁸ Each of the four living creatures had six wings which were also covered with eyes, even under their wings. And continually, day and night, they never stopped saying:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty One.

He is the great Eternal One, existing from all eternity past, existing now, and He shall continue to exist for all eternity to come—forever!”

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

¹⁰ the 24 elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and lay their crowns before the throne, saying:

¹¹ “You, O Lord, the One who has unlimited power, are worthy to receive glory and honor, because it was You who created all things. And

3:14-16a See Matthew 10:32-33, and the notes.

3:18a ... see *things as they really are, from eternity’s sense of values*.

3:19a Hebrews 12:5-8; Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 3:5-6.

3:19b Literally *repent*. Repent means to turn from the wrong you are doing to doing what is right. It’s not enough to be sorry, but you must turn—not only turn from, but turn to what you should be and to what you should be doing.

3:19c ... and become possessed with zeal about becoming totally pleasing to God and about the eternal life that can be yours.

3:20a This really happens. Open your heart in all

sincerity and ask Jesus to be your Lord and your Savior, and you will experience God’s forgiveness for all past sins, and the load of guilt removed. You will also experience refreshing and delightful fellowship with your God and Savior.

3:21a ... the same temptations that now press upon you ... Hebrews 4:15.

4:5a Or the sevenfold Spirit ...

5:6a Jesus, the Savior. John 1:29,36.

5:6b Symbols of power and authority. Deuteronomy 33:17; 1 Kings 22:11; Zechariah 1:18-19; Daniel 7:24.

5:6c Symbols of intelligence and complete knowledge.

all things were created and continue to exist in order to bring about all You have planned.”

The Scroll and the Lamb

5 Then I saw a scroll in the right hand of the One sitting on the throne. It had writing on both sides, and was sealed with seven seals.

²Next I saw a powerful angel cry out with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and unroll the scroll?”

³But no one in Heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll and read what it said.

⁴In great disappointment, I cried bitterly because no one could be found who was worthy to open and read the scroll, or even look at its message.

⁵But then one of the elders said to me, “Don’t cry. Look! The Lion of the tribe of Judah, King David’s Great Descendant, has won the victory! He can break the seven seals and open the scroll.”

⁶So I looked, and there, standing in the center of the throne area where the four living creatures are, and surrounded by the elders, I saw a Lamb^a that looked as if He had at one time been killed. He had seven horns^b and seven eyes,^c which are the seven Spirits^d of God that have been sent out into every part of the earth.

⁷He walked over to the One sitting on the throne and took the scroll out of His right hand.

⁸As He did so, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb. Each of them had a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people.^a

⁹Then they sang a new song:

You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, because you were put to death.

And with the blood of Your death, You redeemed us to God out of every tribe, language, people, and nation.

¹⁰**You have caused us to become servants of our God**

5:6d Or *the sevenfold Spirit of God.*

5:8a Our prayers are as beautiful and aromatic as incense to God.

6:1a An overview of the broad outline of end-time events is given us in this chapter. Remember, this is the overview chapter. In the chapters that follow, many of the details are given.

6:2a An emblem of military power.

6:2b The rider on the *white horse* is no doubt the Antichrist of the end times. The symbol of the white horse may indicate that he will appear at first to be *an angel of light*. 2 Corinthians 11:14. He will very likely appear on the scene as the Great Deliverer of

as kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.

¹¹Then I heard thunderous shouting. And when I looked for the cause, I saw thousands upon thousands of angels who had joined the living creatures and the elders around the throne. There were actually millions and millions of them!

¹²With a loud voice they were shouting:

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and praise!

¹³Then I heard every creature in Heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that they contain, shouting:

Praise, honor, glory, and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!

¹⁴Then the four living creatures said, “So may it ever be!” And the 24 elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

The Opening of the Seven Seals...

An Overview of Things to Come

6 Then I watched^a as the Lamb broke open the first of the seven seals and began to unroll the scroll. As He did so, I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, “Come and see this!”

²When I looked, there before me was a white horse, and the one sitting on the horse had a bow.^a He was given a crown, and he went forth conquering, with determination to conquer the whole world.^b

³When the Lamb had broken the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come and see this!”

⁴Out came another horse. It was fiery red.^a Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth, causing men to kill one another, and a gigantic sword was given him.^b

⁵When the Lamb had broken the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see

the Jews. But as the Great Pretender he will *destroy many by peace*. Daniel 8:25. He will no doubt be acclaimed by many as just the man the world has needed and has been looking for.

He will be given a certain amount of power, as represented by the *crown*. Not satisfied with the authority given him, he will go forth to *conquer* the rest of the world. For Scriptures regarding Antichrist see Daniel 7:1-17; 8:1-27; 9:24-27; 11:21-45; Revelation 13:1-18; 17:7-11; 19:19-20.

6:4a An emblem of bloodshed and fiery destruction.

6:4b The *fiery red horse* undoubtedly represents

this!” When I looked, I saw a black horse. Its rider held a pair of scales in his hand.

⁶Then I heard a voice from among the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat or three quarts of barley for a day’s wages.^a And be very careful not to waste the olive oil or the wine.”

⁷When the Lamb had broken the fourth seal, I heard the fourth living creature say, “Come and see this!”

⁸When I looked, I saw a sickly yellowish pale horse. The name of its rider was Death, and Hell followed right on his heels. They were given power over a quarter of the earth, to kill by means of war, famine, disease, and wild animals.^a

⁹When the Lamb had broken the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been killed because they had lived in obedience to God’s command, and had been faithful in sharing the Great News with others.^a

¹⁰With a loud voice they cried out, “O Lord, You who are holy, who follows thru in all of Your promises and warnings, how long will it be until You judge the people on earth and punish them for killing us?”

¹¹White robes were then given to each of them. And they were told that they should keep resting a little while longer, until their fellow servants and brothers and sisters, who were about to be killed as they were, had joined them.

¹²I then watched as the Lamb broke the sixth seal, and there was a most violent earthquake! The sun became a darkened orb, as if it were covered with sackcloth made of goat hair,^a and the moon looked like blood!

war. He takes *peace from the earth*. The opposite of peace is war. Antichrist will be the cause of many of these end-time wars. In vss 1-2 it is said that he will *go forth conquering, with determination to conquer the whole world*. The *gigantic sword* would seem to indicate extensive and powerful military equipment.

6:5-6a The rider on the *black horse* has a *pair of scales in his hand* to measure food—a symbol of famine. Bread by measure and weight signifies scarcity of food. The *quart of wheat* was a slave’s daily ration, an amount usually purchasable for one-eighth of a laboring man’s daily wage. Ordinarily one could buy eight quarts of wheat or 24 quarts of barley for a day’s wages, but at this future time, only one quart of wheat or three quarts of barley can be bought for the same day’s wages.

This informs us that food prices will be much higher in proportion to other goods. Food prices will be *eight times higher* than they normally are

¹³And the stars in the sky fell to earth, like late figs drop from a fig tree shaken by a strong wind.^a

¹⁴Then the sky disappeared like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain was leveled and there were no longer any islands.

¹⁵When all these things happened, the rulers on earth, the great men, the military leaders, the rich and powerful, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.

¹⁶And they cried out to the mountains and to the rocks to crush and cover them. “Fall on us!” they pleaded, “and hide us from the eyes of the One who sits on the throne and from the terrible anger of the Lamb!”^a

¹⁷“Because the terrible Day of Their anger has come, and who will be able to escape Their judgment?”^a

144,000 People of Israel Sealed

7Next I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, to keep them from blowing on the land or on the sea or against any tree.

²Then I saw another angel come up from where the sun rises in the east. He had the seal of the living God, and he called out loudly to the four angels who had been given power to devastate the land and the sea, saying,

³“Wait! Don’t harm the land or the sea or the trees until we have put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.”^a

⁴Then I heard how many had been marked on the forehead. There were 144,000. They were

because of its scarcity. You can imagine what other food will cost if it will take a day’s wages of a laboring man to buy only one quart of wheat, which would make about two small loaves of bread.

6:8a *Death and Hell* are personified here. *Death* is riding a *pale horse*, and *Hell* is *following*, though not necessarily on another horse. Death will ride wherever the hand of Antichrist is raised. There will be literal hell on earth as a result of the wars, famines, and diseases during this time. The *wild animals* could refer to germ warfare. Or it could mean that all animals on earth will become savage by nature and fiercely attack mankind.

6:9a Ezekiel 3:16-21; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:9-10.

6:12a Isaiah 2:17-21; 13:10; 50:3; Joel 3:14-16; Matthew 24:29; Revelation 16:17-21.

6:13a For a possible explanation of these falling stars see Appendix 240, page 496.

6:16a Luke 23:26-30. In their blind foolishness,

from every tribe of Israel.

⁵⁻⁸There were 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin.

The Enormous Crowd

⁹Then I saw an enormous crowd of people—far too many for anyone to count—from every race, tribe, nation, and language standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They wore white robes and held palm branches in their hands.

¹⁰They were all loudly shouting,

Our salvation^a has come to us from our God who sits upon the throne, and from the Lamb!

¹¹Then all the angels standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures fell to their knees and bowed low before the throne and worshiped God, saying:

¹²It is all so true! Praise and glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might belong to our God forever and ever. Indeed, may it ever be!

¹³Then one of the elders asked me, “Who are all these people dressed in white robes? Where do they come from?”

¹⁴“Sir,” I replied, “you must know.”

“Yes,” he said, “these are the people who have come out of the Great Tribulation. They have washed their robes and bleached them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵“That’s why they are here in front of the throne of God, continually serving Him day and night in His Temple. *And as their Father,*^a the One who sits on the throne will make them most welcome

and gather them around Him in His own home.

¹⁶“Never again will they grapple with famine or the pangs of unquenched thirst. Nor will they ever again suffer thru scorching heat from the sun, nor any other burning heat.

¹⁷“Because the Lamb in front of the throne will be their Shepherd, and He will lead them to gushing springs of the water of life. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

The Seventh Seal Is Opened

8When the Lamb had broken the seventh seal, there was silence in Heaven for about half an hour.^a

²Then I watched as the seven angels who stand before God were each given a trumpet.

³Then another angel, holding a golden incense burner, came and stood at the altar. A great quantity of incense was given him to add to the prayers of God’s people,^a after which he offered all of it upon the golden altar before the throne.

⁴And the fragrance of the burning incense mixed with the prayers of God’s people went up before God from the altar where the angel had poured them.

⁵Then the angel filled the incense burner with fire from the altar, and hurled the burning contents upon the earth. There were flashes of lightning, then rumblings, crashing thunder, and an earthquake.

The Blowing of the Trumpets

⁶Then the seven angels got ready to blow their trumpets.^a

they will hope to hide from God. But the eyes of the Lord are everywhere (Proverbs 15:3), and there is no escaping His judgment. Even those crushed into the earth will be raised later for judgment.

6:17a They now admit that the horrendous judgments of the last days have been warnings from God of the Great Judgment Day, when all will stand before Him for judgment.

The events taking place in the first eight verses of this chapter provide an overall picture of conditions on earth during the seven or more years of the period known as the time of the Great Tribulation, with particular emphasis on the last 3 1/2 years. But the events of vs 12-17, as revealed under the sixth seal, tell us what will happen immediately following the battle of Armageddon. Pictured here are the same events that are again recorded in Revelation 16:17-21, and also in Isaiah 2:10-21. Compare these verses in Isaiah with those in chapter 16 to better understand their relationship. The verses here are

simply the last part of the preview covering end-time events.

7:3a These judgments will begin when the earth has become fully ripe for judgment, when sin and lawlessness abound as never before (Daniel 8:23-25) after the Holy Spirit steps aside to allow people to sin without His restraint. 2 Thessalonians 2:7.

7:10a The Greek word literally means *safety, deliverance, preservation*. Secondary meanings are *welfare, prosperity, victory*. In the Christian sense, *deliverance from punishment and admission to eternal life*. Our deliverance from sin and its consequences is to be ascribed solely to God. Even so, that doesn’t end our responsibility to meet the conditions for so great a salvation.

7:15a Implied.

8:1a All Heaven seems to be in awe in anticipation of the momentous events which are about to begin.

8:3a As the end-time judgments appear to be near at hand, there will evidently be much praying on

⁷When the first angel blew his trumpet, hail and fire mixed with blood were hurled down upon the earth. And a third of the trees on earth were burned up, and all the green grass in that area was also consumed by the flames.^a

⁸Then the second angel blew his trumpet. And something like an enormous mountain, all aflame, was thrown into the sea. And a third of the sea turned to blood.

⁹A third of all life in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.^a

¹⁰When the third angel blew his trumpet, a gigantic star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the sources of water.

¹¹The name of the star is Wormwood. And a third of the fresh water supply became polluted with the wormwood, and many people died because of the contaminated water that had now become bitter.

¹²Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet. And the sun, moon, and stars were struck,^a so that they all lost a third of their brilliance. This caused the earth to receive only two-thirds of its normal light and heat both day and night.^b

¹³Then I saw an angel flying in midair, and heard him call out in a loud voice, "Woe! Woe! Woe! to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the frightful judgments that will strike the earth when the three other angels blow their trumpets."

9 Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star^a that had fallen from Heaven to earth. He was given the key to the bottomless pit.

²When he opened the pit, smoke poured out of it like smoke from a colossal furnace, so that the smoke darkened the sun and sky.

³And from out of the smoke came swarms of locusts upon the earth, and each was given power to sting as poisonous and painfully as that of a scorpion.^a

⁴They were told not to harm the grass or trees of the earth, or any other green thing, but only the people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

⁵They were not permitted to kill them, but to torture them for five months. The torture they inflicted was like the extremely agonizing pain experienced when a scorpion strikes a person.

⁶During those five months people will try to kill themselves, but they won't be able to. No matter how many times or ways they try to commit suicide, they will not be able to die.^a

⁷And the locusts looked like horses armored for battle. On their heads they wore what appeared to be crowns made of gold, and their faces resembled human faces.

⁸Their hair was long like women's hair, and their teeth were long and sharp like those of a lion.

⁹On their chests they had what looked like iron

the part of God's true people.

8:6a Scriptures point to the fact that evil will abound on earth during the last days of this age. Daniel 8:23; 2 Timothy 3:13. One of God's judgments upon this evil world will be to allow such a man as the Antichrist to arise and cause such havoc. But then God will also send other great judgments on the earth, as will be revealed from these seven trumpet judgments. These will be literal judgments on the earth from God.

8:7a Some Greek texts state that *a third of the earth was burned up* along with the trees and grass. If the trees and grass are burned, no doubt everything else in that third of the earth will also go up in flames.

8:9a This appears to mean that all sea life and all the ships in that third of the sea will be destroyed.

8:12a We are not told what God will use to strike this blow.

8:12b Such excessive dimming of the sun will have adverse results in regard to crops, heat, etc. It will result in frightfully frigid winters and extremely cool summers. The end result will be that many crops will not ripen, and will therefore not be edi-

ble. This great loss of food, and dreadfully piercing, frigid weather will cause great suffering and death to legions, both among man and beast.

9:1a In this case not an actual star, but an intelligent being.

9:3a It would appear that these locusts are actually evil spirits who are given, at least for this assignment, the bodies of locusts.

9:6a Evidently the torment from these scorpions will be so extremely painful that many people will try to commit suicide. God will be giving them a taste of Hell, in warning. But we are told that *they will not be able to die*. It will be most unusual for people to desire death and be completely unable to find it. But the same will be true in Hell...suicide will be impossible there as well.

9:11 & 14a Evidently fallen angels.

9:14-19a *The four angels tied up at the great Euphrates River* are fallen ones, because good angels are never bound. They are actually four powerful demons — fallen angels. They will be the leaders in the great slaughter mentioned in these verses.

Evidently this slaughter by demon forces (vss 13-

breastplates, and their wings made a roaring and thundering sound like a vast army of horse-drawn chariots furiously charging with abandon into battle.

¹⁰They had tails like scorpions, with stingers in them. So their power to torture people for five months was in their tails.

¹¹Their king was the angel^a in charge of the bottomless pit. In Hebrew his name is Abaddon, but in Greek it's Apollyon, meaning the Destroyer.

¹²That was the first horrible woe. But after these horrendous experiences there are still two horrible woes yet to come.

¹³Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet. When he did so, I heard a distinct voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar in front of God's throne.

¹⁴The voice said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels^a who are tied up at the great Euphrates River!"

¹⁵So the four angels, who had been kept in readiness for that very hour, day, month, and year, were released to kill a third of the human race.

¹⁶Then I heard the number of horsemen in their great cavalry. There were two hundred million (200,000,000) of them!

¹⁷This is how the horses and riders in my vision looked: The breastplates of the riders were fiery red, deep blue, and sulfur yellow. The heads of those horses looked like lions' heads. And from out of their mouths came surging streams of fire, smoke, and flaming sulfur.

19) will take place in a relatively short period of time. These are probably not horses as we know them. If God uses demon forces for this plague, the horses will no doubt come from this same underworld. How horses can be spirits is not known. God could even create the horses for this particular mission if He so chose. The riders upon the horses, however, are no doubt fallen angels, who are now the demons of the underworld.

The possibility of this invading army being a human army still exists, of course. An army under Antichrist, could use modern vehicles of war unrecognized by John, who could only call them horses.

Whether demon or human forces are used by God, they will be literal. Men will be killed by real *fire* and by real *smoke* and by real *brimstone*. The power of these demons or men will be in the horses or vehicles they ride. They will be deadly both from the front and the rear.

This will be a horrendous time of death and destruction. Revelation 6:8 tells us that a possible one-fourth of the population of earth will be killed

¹⁸One-third of the human race was killed by these three plagues—by the fire, the smoke, and the flaming sulfur that came out of their mouths.

¹⁹But the power to destroy is not only in the heads but also in the tails of these horses. Because their tails are like serpents, having heads, which they also use in doing great harm.^a

²⁰But the rest of mankind, those not killed by these plagues, still refused to stop all the evil they were doing. They still continued to worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which cannot see, hear, or walk.^a

²¹Nor did they stop their murdering, their witchcraft and drugs, their fornications,^a or their thievery.

The Angel and the Small Scroll

10 Then I saw another powerful angel coming down out of Heaven. He was draped in a cloud, with a rainbow over His head. His face was as brilliant as the sun, and His feet and legs were like pillars of fire.^a

²In His hand He held a small scroll that had been unrolled. He placed His right foot on the sea and His left foot on land.

³Then He shouted with a loud voice, as loud as when a lion roars. When He did so, the seven thunders answered with a roar.^a

⁴I was about to write down what the seven thunders had said, when I heard a voice from Heaven say to me, "Keep to yourself what the seven thunders said, and do not write it down."^a

by hunger and by other means. That would leave only three quarters of the population left. If one third of those left are now killed by the horseman, that would mean that the earth would be depopulated by 50 percent. And when you consider the other wars and carnage taking place at the same time, one begins to wonder just how many will be left on earth before the end comes, and Christ returns to set up His Kingdom on earth.

9:20a From the wording in v 20, it appears that man may literally fall back again to the worship of actual *idols*, especially when these idols are mentioned along with *demon* (or devil) *worship*.

9:21a See 2:14 note.

10:1a This Angel is evidently Christ.

10:3a "The Jews were accustomed to call thunder the seven voices, and to regard it as the voice of the Lord (Psalm 29), in the same way that they regarded lightning as the fire of God (Job 1:16)."—*Pulpit Commentary*

10:3-4a Here is one part of the Revelation that

⁵Then the angel I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised His right hand toward Heaven.

⁶And He most solemnly declared by the name of God, who lives forever and ever, who created Heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them, saying, "There will be no more delay!

⁷"But during the period of time when the seventh angel is blowing his trumpet, and even when he is about to blow it, God's whole purpose in human history will be in the process of being completed. All that He had previously announced to His servants the prophets will then be brought to complete fulfillment."

⁸Then the voice I had earlier heard from Heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go and take the little scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel standing on the sea and on the land."

⁹So I went to the angel and said to Him, "Please give me the little scroll."

"Yes," He said, "take it and eat it. In your mouth it will taste as sweet as honey, but after you swallow it, it will give you a bitter pain in your stomach."

¹⁰I then took the little scroll out of the angel's hand and ate it. It did indeed taste as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had swallowed it, my stomach turned sour.

¹¹Then the angel said to me, "Now you must prophesy further about the fate of many people, nations, languages, and kings."

The Two Witnesses

11 Then I was given a long stick that looked like a measuring rod. And the angel, still standing there, said, "Go now, and measure the Temple of God and the altar and the people wor-

shipping there.^a

²"But don't include the court outside the Temple area. Don't measure it because the Gentiles already have access to that area. But the time is coming when the Gentiles will trample thruout the entire^a holy city for 42 months.

³"And I will give authority to My two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, dressed in sackcloth."

⁴The two witnesses are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the God of the earth.

⁵If anyone tries to injure them, they will be met with flames of fire shooting from the mouths of these men, which will reduce their enemies to ashes. So if anyone plans to injure them, they should be warned that this is the way they will die.

⁶During the period of time these men prophesy, they will have power to shut the heavens, so that no rain will fall. They will also have power to turn various bodies and sources of water into blood, and to strike the earth with all kinds of plagues, as often as they wish.^a

⁷But when they have finished their 3 1/2 year testimony, the beast that comes up out of the bottomless pit will attack and overpower and kill them.^a

⁸Their dead bodies will then be left lying in the streets of the great city, which is spiritually like Sodom and Egypt, where our Lord was also nailed to a cross.

⁹From there in the street, people of the various tribes, languages, and nations thruout the world will view their dead bodies^a for 3 1/2 days and refuse to let them be buried.

¹⁰People everywhere on earth will be extremely

has not yet been revealed to us. These words remain sealed to this day. Some day, man will no doubt know the content of this message. Until then, God is withholding these words from humanity, and undoubtedly for good reason.

11:1a The literal dimensions of the Temple and the number of people in Israel will already be known facts, but this is evidently a spiritual measurement, to reveal the spiritual condition of the people, before judgment.

John knew that the *Temple* to be *measured* was not the Temple of Herod, which was the Temple of Jesus' day, because that Temple had been destroyed some 25 years before John received this revelation from Christ. It was destroyed in the year A.D. 70. Neither could this Temple be the Millennial Temple of Ezekiel's revelation (Ezekiel 40:1 to 43:12), because that Temple will not be built until Christ

returns. The Temple in question is the one which is to be built in Jerusalem in this present age.

Because the Jews now have control of all of Jerusalem, they are looking forward to building their Temple soon. It is the Jewish Temple and the Jewish people of today, and in the near future, who will be judged by God. The Jews will be judged by God for accepting the person of Antichrist after having steadfastly refusing the Christ of God. John 5:43. Antichrist will remove *the altar* in the middle of the seven-year treaty he will make with many, including Israel. Daniel 9:27a. He will erect his own image in place of the altar. Matthew 24:15. It is at that time that he will turn against the Jews, slaughtering them and enslaving the rest. (See 12:13-17 and the note there.) Thus Israel will be judged for refusing Christ but accepting the vile person of the Antichrist.

glad, and will celebrate by sending gifts to each other, because of what had happened to these two prophets who had caused them so much torment.

¹¹ But after the 3 1/2 days, the breath of life from God again entered them, and they stood to their feet. Those who were watching them were terrified!

¹² Then they heard a loud voice from Heaven say to them, "Come up here!" And as their enemies watched, they rose up into the heavens and disappeared in a cloud.

¹³ Immediately following, there was a most violent earthquake. One tenth of the city of Jerusalem collapsed, and 7,000 people were killed in the quake. The survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of Heaven.

¹⁴ The second woe is past, but the third horrible woe is coming very shortly.

The Seventh Trumpet

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in Heaven, shouting,

The kingdoms of this world have now become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah, and He will reign forever and ever!^a

¹⁶ And the 24 elders who were seated on their thrones in front of God, threw themselves face down and worshiped God, saying:

¹⁷ We give thanks to You, O Lord God Almighty, the One whose everlasting duration embraces all the past, present, and all time to come, because You

have now used Your great power and have begun to reign.

¹⁸ **The people of the nations were extremely angry.^a But now it is time for Your great anger to be revealed. It is also now time for the dead to be judged, so that Your servants the prophets, and all others, both great and small, who are truly dedicated to You and revere Your great name, should be rewarded. It is also time for You to destroy those who are destroying the earth.**

¹⁹ Then the Temple of God in Heaven was opened. And there, within His Temple, could be seen the ark^a of His covenant. Then there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, crashing thunder, and an earthquake, and then storms of massive hailstones rained from the skies.^b

The Woman and the Dragon

12 Then a great and most amazing sight appeared in the sky. A woman came on the scene dressed with the sun. The moon was under her feet, and on her head was a crown of twelve stars.^a

² She was about to give birth to a Child, and she screamed in pain as she labored to be delivered.

³ Then I saw another mysterious sight in the sky. It was a huge, fiery-red dragon,^a with seven heads and ten horns, and a crown on each head^b!

⁴ With its tail it dragged a third of the stars^a from Heaven and threw them down to the earth. Then the dragon stood in front of the woman who was

11:2a ... Temple and the ...

11:6a The preaching of these two men will be backed up by some tremendous demonstrations, proving that they are indeed messengers sent by God.

11:7a No one will be able to touch them until *they have finished their testimony*. Not even the beast, the supernatural spirit out of the *bottomless pit* (see notes on 17:7-8), the power behind Antichrist, will be able to touch them until their work is finished. However, when the 3 1/2 years are ended, and they have finished the ministry the Lord sent them to perform, they will then be overpowered by the beast, no doubt by the authority of Antichrist, and killed. It is very possible that Antichrist will overcome the two witnesses just shortly before he turns his wrath on the Jewish nation. Daniel 9:27

11:9a ..., *no doubt by television*, ...

11:15a This last blast of the 7th trumpet will sound just a few days after Armageddon. See Mat. 24:29-31; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thes. 4:16-17.

11:18a Psalm 2.

11:19a Exodus 25:10-22. A rectangular wooden

chest, covered with gold inside and out.

11:19b These events will take place on earth, especially the *lightning, earthquake, and great hail*. These happenings are not stated in sequence, as much more is to happen (as we will see) before this great finale.

12:1a The nation of Israel. This and the following were symbolized in Heaven, but fulfilled on earth.

12:3a Satan.

12:3b We find the same dragon mentioned in Revelation 13:1. There, the crowns are on the ten horns. The reason for the crowns being on the seven heads here is because the seven heads represent the six kingdoms that have persecuted Israel in the past, with one yet to do so in the future. (See Appendix 241, page 496.) The ten horns are actually not in existence at the time of this happening. The persecution here is by Satan during the rule of Rome, doing his best to do away with Christ, both at His birth, and during His life. *Continued* ➤

Later, the ten horns, representing ten kingdoms of the last days, will make up Revised Rome, the sev-

about to give birth, in order to eat her Child as soon as it was born.

⁵But when she gave birth to a Son, a male Child who is destined to shepherd all nations with a scepter of iron,^a the Child was snatched away up to God and to His throne.

⁶The woman^a then ran into the wilderness, where God has prepared a place for her, and where she will be taken care of for 1,260 days.^b

⁷Then war broke out in Heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.

⁸But the dragon and his angels were overpowered, and were no longer allowed in Heaven.

⁹So that great dragon was thrown out—that old snake who has been around so long, called the devil, and Satan. He is constantly misleading and deceiving the whole world. But now he's been thrown out of Heaven to the earth, and all his angels with him.^a

¹⁰Then I heard a loud voice in Heaven shout,

Now our deliverance^a has come! Our Almighty God has now revealed the great power of His Kingdom and the authority of His Messiah to reign! Because the accuser of our brothers and sisters,

who accused them before our God both day and night, has now been thrown out of Heaven and down to earth.

¹¹**They defeated their accuser by means of their faith in the effective power of the blood of the Lamb,^a and by the stand they took thru their bold words of testimony,^b and by their willingness to give up their lives^c and even die for the sake of the truth.**

¹²**“So for that reason, rejoice, you heavens, and all of you who live in them! But woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea, because the devil has now come down among you! And he's livid with rage, because he knows his time is now very short.**

¹³When the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to earth, he persecuted the woman who had given birth to the male Child.

¹⁴But the woman was given two wings like the wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she will be fed and taken care of for 3 1/2 years,^a out of the reach of the dragon.

¹⁵But as the woman was escaping, the dragon discharged out of his mouth a great torrent of water like a great river, in an attempt to destroy her.

enth power that will persecute Israel. That's the reason we see them wearing the crowns in 13:1. Shortly after they come to power Antichrist will conquer three of them (Daniel 7:20-28), and the rest will then surrender to him and rule under him.

For much further information about this dragon, see Appendixes 233, page 492, and 241, page 496.

12:4a Some believe this refers to the angels who rebelled with Lucifer against God.

12:5a See Appendix 232, page 492.

12:6a Israel.

12:6b That's 3 1/2 years of 360 days each year, plus 180 days for the one-half year. See v 14.

12:7-9a The exact time of this war in Heaven is not known. The result of it, however, is sure. Satan and his angels will be thrown out of Heaven to the earth. It seems quite possible that this event will occur just before the beginning of the last 3 1/2 years of the age. On the other hand, with lawlessness, rebellion, and immorality abounding everywhere today, one wonders if Satan and all of his fallen angels are not now in the earth, and working overtime.

12:10a ... *from Satan's power and accusations* ...

12:11a ... *Who thru the blood of His death on the cross gained forgiveness for their sins* ...

12:11b Romans 10:9-10; Revelation 21:8a.

12:11c ... *and live them for the Lord and for*

others, instead of for their own gratification ... See Matthew 10:38-39; 16:25; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 9:24.

12:14a See v 6.

12:13-17a One of the things Satan will do when he realizes he has been thrown out of Heaven forever, will be to persecute Israel. He will very likely have special indignation against Israel because of the very effective ministry of the 144,000 Jewish missionaries (7:1-8), and because of the special protection they will receive from God. His tool of persecution will be the Antichrist, who will turn against Israel with his armies. There will be great slaughter. Zechariah 13:8-9. The remainder of the citizens of Israel who escape the slaughter will be taken into slavery (Zechariah 14:1-2), except for those who flee into the wilderness. Matthew 24:15-28. As mentioned again in these verses, this remnant in the wilderness will be hidden and taken care of by God for 3 1/2 years.

The *two wings of an eagle* is symbolic, referring to the help God will give Israel when He opens a valley thru the Mount of Olives for their escape. Zechariah 14:3-7.

We have pictured here, Israel fleeing before a flood. Satan uses the flood in an attempt to destroy the Jews who are fleeing out of Jerusalem. Read Zechariah 14:1-7 in connection with this event.

¹⁶But the earth came to the woman's rescue by opening its mouth and swallowing the great flood from the dragon.

¹⁷This made the dragon so inflamed with fury in his anger against the woman that he rushed out to make war with the rest of her children who obey God's commands and testify that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, and their Lord and Savior.^a

The Beast out of the Sea

13 Next I was standing on the sandy shore of an ocean beach, when I saw a beast coming up out of the water! It had seven heads and ten horns!^a On each of his horns was a crown, and on each of his heads was a name written that arrogantly blasphemed God.

²Although this beast looked like a leopard, it had the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion.^a And the power, the throne, and the great authority this beast had were all given to him by the dragon.

³One of its heads had been mortally wounded and seemed to be dead. But then I saw it come alive again! The whole world was so amazed when that happened that it inspired reverential awe for

the beast.^a

⁴As a result, they worshiped the dragon who had given the beast such remarkable powers. They also worshiped the beast, saying, "Who else is like the beast? Who will ever be able to win a war against him?"^a

⁵The dragon also gave the beast the ability to be a most eloquent speaker. In his speeches, he made great claims for himself, and always heaped abuse upon God. Just the same, God allowed him to continue to carry out his plans—but only for 42 months.^a

⁶Whenever he opened his mouth, he spoke blasphemous words, not only against God and against His name, but also against God's Heaven and against all those living in Heaven.

⁷Still, he was allowed by God to wage war against those on earth who are His people, even to overpower them.^a And he was given authority over every tribe, language, and nation as well.^b

⁸Everyone on earth will worship him—everyone that is, whose names have not been written in the Lamb's Book of Life—the Lamb who was slain in the mind and plan of God even before the earth

Christ's descent upon the Mount of Olives at this time (Zechariah 14:3-4), possibly invisibly to most people, will cause the mountain to split wide open. A valley thru the mountain, to the east, will be created as a way for the people of Israel to escape from Antichrist to the country of Jordan. The flood which Satan will send in pursuit of Israel will undoubtedly be a flood of men. If we are correct in interpreting the water of v 15 to mean *people*, as explained in 17:1 and 15, Satan's flood can very well be one of Antichrist's armies, stationed in Israel on the pretext of protecting them.

We are told here that the earth will swallow the flood, and that the Jews who immediately follow escape instructions in Zechariah 14:1-15 and Matthew 24:15-21 will be saved. It's conceivable that this means that when Antichrist's armies enter this new valley, in pursuit of the Jews who have immediately obeyed escape instructions, that the Lord will cause the valley to close again, thereby destroying Antichrist's army. It's no more unlikely than what happened to Pharaoh's army in pursuit of Israel in Old Testament times. Chasing Israel thru the Red Sea resulted in the drowning of an entire Egyptian army. Exodus 14:1-31.

It seems from this account that many Jews will have come to faith in Jesus Christ by this time, possibly thru the testimony of the 144,000. As a result of the loss of his army, which was chasing Christians and other Jews thru the new valley in the

Mount of Olives (Jews who were heeding Jesus' warning and instructions in Matthew 24:15-21), Satan will turn on all the remaining Christian Jews in Israel with a vengeance. The time of Jacob's (Israel's) trouble (Jeremiah 30:4-7) will continue, its tide rising with every passing event.

13:1a For the identity of this beast, see Appendix 233, page 492.

13:2a What's the meaning here? See Appendix 234, page 493.

13:3a Who is mortally wounded here? See Appendix 235, page 493.

13:4a For the most part, the people of the world from then on will *worship the beast*, the Antichrist. Evidently many of them will be Satan worshipers as well, giving honor to *the dragon* whom they recognize as having empowered Antichrist. As people glory in this man, in his great accomplishments, in his victories, they will say, *Who else is like the beast? Who will ever be able to win a war against him?* They may also have reference to the *beast's* empire in this acclaim. A kingdom including the Middle East, most of Europe, and North Africa would be formidable indeed!

13:5a The last 3 1/2 years of this age.

13:7a 6:9-12; Daniel 7:20-22,25; 8:24; 12:7,10; Matthew 24:9.

13:7b The likely meaning is that he will rule over all the nations of the former world empires of

was formed.^a

⁹If you have ears with which to hear, then listen to this most carefully:

¹⁰The one who takes others into captivity will himself go into captivity. And the one who kills others with the sword must himself be killed with the sword.^a

Assurance that this is true will give those dedicated to God the inner strength needed to endure thru this time of testing.

The Beast out of the Earth

¹¹Then I saw another beast, coming up out of the earth! He had two little horns like a lamb, but he talked like a dragon.

¹²As the first beast watched, and granted him his authority,^a the second beast displayed the same supernatural power that the first beast did. And he continually caused the earth itself^b and those living on it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.

¹³He performed great miracles. He even made fire come down to earth out of the sky while people watched.^a

¹⁴By means of the miracles he was empowered to perform in the presence of the first beast, he was fooling people everywhere. Then he persuaded the inhabitants of earth to erect an image of the beast who had been fatally wounded by the sword, but was now alive.

¹⁵He was even given power to cause the image of the beast to come alive and breathe. It then also spoke, and gave the command that everyone who refused to worship it was to be killed.

¹⁶The second beast then ordered everyone, both small and great, rich and poor, free men and slaves, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their forehead.

¹⁷No one was then able to buy or sell except those who had the mark of the beast, his name, or the number that signified his name.

¹⁸Here's all the wisdom you will need to understand: Let the one who is able, calculate by simple arithmetic who the beast is, because it's the number of a man. His number is 666.^a

The Lamb and the 144,000

14 Then as I looked, I saw the Lamb^a standing on Mount Zion,^b and with Him were 144,000 who had His Father's name written on their foreheads.

²Then I heard a sound from Heaven like the roaring of an enormous waterfall, and also like extremely loud, crashing thunder. What I was actually hearing was a vast number of harpists playing on their harps.

³And the 144,000 were singing as if they were singing a new song as they stood before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been ransomed from the earth.

⁴They had never had sexual relations with women, so they are virgins, and they now follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They were the first to be ransomed from among mankind, so they became the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

⁵They had never lied or spoken hypocritically, so they stand before the throne of God blameless.^a

Greece and Rome. He will be at war with enemy nations to the very end. Daniel 11:44; Revelation 16:12. Other Scriptures indicate that his capital city, Babylon, will be burned by enemies just prior to the Battle of Armageddon. Isaiah 13:1-22; Revelation 18:1-24.

13:8a 1 Peter 1:20.

13:10a Numbers 32:23b. Proverbs 13:21; Isaiah 3:11; Matthew 26:52; Romans 2:5-9; Galatians 6:7.

13:12a ... *who gets his authority from the dragon* ... (Satan). v 2.

13:12b By his miracles, he will seemingly cause even the elements of the earth to bow to the will of the first beast, and thereby magnify and glorify him.

13:13a As he does this he may claim, "Even Jesus Christ couldn't cause a miracle in the heavens," referring to Christ's refusal in Luke 11:16 & 29-30.

13:18a See Appendix 236, page 494, for vital information concerning this second beast.

14:1a Jesus.

14:1b ... *in Heaven* ...

14:5a For an interesting speculation concerning these 144,000, see Appendix 237, page 495.

14:7a ... *by acknowledging that He is the only true God, and by sincerely worshiping and praising Him in your heart as the great Ruler of Heaven and earth* ...

14:8a ... *resulting in the fierce anger and judgment of God falling upon those nations too*. Jeremiah 50 and 51.

14:10a That is, Christ and the angels will be the witnesses when God judges those who have rebelled and lived in disobedience to Him. This can also mean that Heaven and the bliss there will be visible to those condemned. Luke 16:23. This would only add to their torment, when they saw what glory they had forfeited in exchange for the temporary pleasure or benefit from their sin.

14:6-11a The sin of worshiping the beast and his

The Three Angels

⁶Then I saw another angel. He was flying in midair. He had the everlasting Great News to preach to those who live on earth—to every nation, tribe, language, and to people of every race and color.

⁷With a loud voice he shouted,

Revere, honor, and obey God! Give Him glory,^a because the time has now come when He will judge mankind! So adore and worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all the sources of water.

⁸Following him thru the skies came another angel, shouting,

She has fallen! The great city of Babylon has fallen, because she seduced all the nations of the world to drink the inflammatory and maddening wine of her fornications!^a

⁹And another angel, a third one, followed them, loudly shouting,

Here's what will happen to anyone who worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his hand or forehead:

¹⁰**He will be included among those who will drink of the wine of God's furious anger, which has been poured out full strength into the cup of His boiling fury! And he will be tormented with fire and burning sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.^a**

¹¹**And the smoke from their torment will rise up forever and ever! Day after endless day and night after endless night they will have no rest. This awful judgment will fall upon all who worship the**

beast and his image, and upon all who receive his mark or his name.^a

¹²The knowledge and conviction that this will surely happen will give those truly surrendered to God the inner strength needed to continue to obey His commands and remain faithful to Jesus.

¹³Then I heard a voice from Heaven say to me, "Write this: 'From now on those who die as followers of Jesus are happy indeed.'"

"Yes indeed," the Spirit responded. "Now they will rest from all their labors. And all the rewards and harvest (as a result of all they have done for the Lord and for others) will follow them to Heaven."^a

Two Harvests of the Earth

¹⁴Then as I looked, I saw a white cloud. Sitting on the cloud was One who looked like Jesus, the Son of Man. There was a gold crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.

¹⁵Then another angel came out of the Temple and called out with a loud voice to the One sitting on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle now and reap the harvest, because the harvest of the earth is ripe, so it is time for You to reap!"

¹⁶So the One sitting on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and He reaped the harvest of the earth.^a

¹⁷Then another angel came out of the Temple in Heaven. He also had a sharp sickle.

¹⁸Then still another angel, the one who has power over fire, came from the altar and called out with a loud voice to the angel with the sharp sickle, "Use your sharp sickle now and gather the clus-

image and accepting his mark, will be so offensive to God, and the punishment so extreme, that God in His mercy will send a messenger from Heaven to warn mankind against worshipping Antichrist and accepting his mark. This angel's message will no doubt be sounded in ample time to warn all against giving any allegiance to Antichrist. Some believe the *three* heavenly messengers (angels), referred to here in 14:6-11, will not be actual angels, but satellites, beaming TV and radio messages of salvation and warning to earth in every language. This is very possible, because the literal meaning of the Greek word *aggellos*, translated angels here, is *messengers*. Interestingly enough, it takes only *three* TV satellites to cover the entire world with a TV message.

Those who accept the mark, name, or number of the beast will be judged by God and sent to punishment in fire and burning sulfur, with no relief from this torture day or night, forever, according to this

warning.

WARNING! All who receive any of the marks of Antichrist, thus paying tribute to him, will damn their souls. Notice in the verses of this Scripture the clear statement about the frightful judgment that awaits every individual who worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark, name, or number, in order to buy or sell. It will be far better to starve, or die a thousand deaths than to disregard this warning. Take careful note of the frightful fate of those who fail to heed the warning.

14:13a See Matthew 6:19-21; 25:34-40; Luke 16:9 and note; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 6:10-11.

14:14-16a These vss *do not* describe Armageddon or the Rapture of God's Church to Heaven. This is a picture of a great ingathering of souls to Christ in a great spiritual awakening during the last days of the age. This great ingathering will no doubt result from the great outpouring of God's Holy Spirit according to Joel 2:28-29 (which is symbolized in

ters of grapes from the vines of the earth, because her grapes are fully ripe!^a”

¹⁹So the angel swung his sickle into the earth, and gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's furious anger.

²⁰And they were trampled in the winepress outside the city until the blood that flowed out of the press resulted in a flood 200 miles long and almost five feet deep.^a

Seven Angels with the Last Plagues

15 Then I saw another remarkable scene in Heaven. It was indeed great, and most amazing. Seven angels were bringing the seven last plagues. They are called “the last plagues” because they will be the last expressions of God's furious anger.

²I also saw what looked like a sea of glass that shimmered like fire. And standing on this sea of glass were those who had gained the victory over the beast by refusing his mark or the image of his statue or the number of his name.^a

³Accompanied by harps that God had given them, they were singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb:

O Lord God, the Almighty One!

How great and marvelous are the things You have done.

O King of those dedicated to You!

You have been true to all Your promises and warnings, and You have displayed justice in everything You have done.

⁴Who will not revere, honor, and obey You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? Because You alone are altogether holy.

All nations will come and worship before You,^a

Because Your right actions in all Your judgments have been made clear to everyone.

⁵After the singing I was amazed to see that the Temple, that is, the tabernacle of the testimony in Heaven, had been thrown wide open.

⁶And out of the Temple came the seven angels who had the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean linen that literally glowed, and they wore golden sashes around their chests.

⁷Then one of the four living creatures gave each of the seven angels a golden bowl filled with the furious anger of God, who lives forever and ever.

⁸The Temple was filled with smoke from the divine glory and power of God, and no one was able to enter the Temple until the seven angels had finished pouring out the seven plagues.^a

Joel 2:23) following the restoration of Israel after a great invasion of that land by Russia and her allies, according to Ezekiel 38 and 39.

This great spiritual awakening and ingathering of souls to Christ could last for several months, or even years. (Some say seven years.) The greatest days for the Church of Jesus Christ are still ahead! Pray earnestly that this final harvest will be great indeed, to the glory of God. Let's pray for hundreds of millions to be gathered in, both for God's glory and that these millions might be saved before they are deluded by Antichrist in these last days, and lost.

14:18a ... for God's fiery judgment.

14:17-20a Notice that it's following the great harvest of the ingathering of souls to Christ that God's final judgments will strike the earth.

15:2a The people standing on the *sea of glass* are those who had lost their lives in their stand against Antichrist. These are the ones who had refused to worship him or accept *the mark of the beast*, which would have permitted them to buy or sell. They will be killed by the agents of Antichrist for refusing to worship him and accept his mark. Some may even starve to death because of their stand.

Antichrist may feel he has been victorious over these Christians in his struggle for supremacy. Actually, the opposite will be true. These verses state that the people on the sea of glass *had gained*

the victory over the beast. By starving and killing them, Antichrist had simply ushered them into the glorious presence of their God. And there before His throne, they will sing the song of victory in praise to their God, and to their Savior Jesus Christ.

15:4a People of *all nations* will indeed go to Jerusalem to worship the Lord during the millennium and into eternity. See Jeremiah 3:17b; Micah 4:1-2; Zechariah 14:17-19.

15:8a The *Temple* in these verses is a literal building in Heaven. Actually, the reference here is to the Most Holy Place in the Temple in Heaven, the dwelling place and throne of God. It is from God's throne that the angels, seven in number, are given *seven golden bowls filled with the furious anger of God*. God's glory is shown in His judgments as well as in His blessings.

While the seventh angel is blowing his trumpet (11:15), which is the third woe (8:13 and 11:14), the seven angels will pour out the seven plagues. 16:1-21.

16:2a We are not told how long people will be bothered with these *loathsome sores*, but the plague could continue for the remainder of the last 3 1/2 years of the age.

16:3a The sea to be thus involved is probably the Mediterranean Sea, which will be the center of Antichrist's kingdom. Imagine the awesome results

The Seven Bowls of God's Anger

16 Then I heard someone from the Temple shout to the seven angels, "Go now, and pour out the bowls of God's furious anger upon the earth."

² So the first angel went forth and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a miserable and malignant sore broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.^a

³ The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into a substance like the blood of a dead person. And every living thing in the sea died.^a

⁴ Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and streams, and they turned to blood.

⁵ And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say:

You have done right in judging as You have, O Lord, You who are and forever have been the Holy One.

⁶ They shed the blood of Your prophets and Your other dedicated people. Now You have given them blood to drink, as they deserve.

⁷ Then I heard another voice, which came from the altar, saying,

Yes, Lord God Almighty, You can be trusted to follow thru in all Your warnings of judgment, and

Your punishments are just.

⁸ Then the fourth angel emptied his bowl on the sun, and power was given the sun to scorch mankind with its fire.

⁹ But even as they were being scorched with its great heat, people cursed and slandered the very name of God, knowing it was He who controlled these plagues. But still they refused to turn from their sinning and worship God and admit that He was doing the right thing when He punished them for their sin.^a

¹⁰ The fifth angel then poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his entire kingdom was plunged into awful darkness. The people there even gnawed their tongues because of the pain.^a

¹¹ And they cursed and reviled the God of Heaven because of their pains and sores.^a But they still refused to stop the evil they were doing.

¹² The sixth angel then poured out his bowl on the great Euphrates River, causing the river to dry up and provide a way for the armies of the kings of the east to cross over.^a

¹³ Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs coming out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet.

¹⁴ These are the spirits of demons that will enter ambitious, receptive men, thru whom they will perform miracles. These men will go out to the

of such pollution. The stench of one dead fish is bad enough, but if all the fish in the Mediterranean Sea die, and come to the surface, the result will be devastating! Besides being extremely disagreeable, the condition will likely cause sickness and disease in much of the humanity inhabiting the area, resulting in many deaths. This plague could of course affect much more than the Mediterranean.

16:8-9a In just what way this intense heat will be produced upon the earth is not revealed. Isaiah 24:20 mentions that "the earth will stagger this way and that like a drunkard." And Isaiah 13:13 states that "the earth will be shaken out of its orbit and run about in space like a deer escaping the hunters." It is quite possible, then, in the light of these Scriptures, that the earth will leave its orbit and be drawn closer to the sun than it is today.

There may be some other supernatural means, of course, by which God will cause *great heat* to concentrate upon the area of the earth controlled by Antichrist. There is no guarantee, of course, that this intense heat will not affect other parts of the world as well. These plagues may all affect other parts of the world, in greater or lesser degree, as it appears that all the world is even now included in wholesale rebellion against God and His command-

ments.

People fret today when the temperature reaches 100 or 110 degrees. What will they do when the temperature literally soars, and the earth is *scorched with great heat*? According to the Scripture, they will *curse and slander God, knowing it is He who is controlling these plagues*.

In spite of knowing that these plagues are coming from God, they will still refuse to repent. Repentance means not merely to feel sorry about one's sin, but to radically change one's attitude regarding it, and to forsake it. It's possible and hopeful that some will repent, but for the most part, people's hearts will be hardened and set.

16:10a Exodus 10:21.

16:11a This statement indicates that the sores of the first bowl judgment will still be as painful as the day they came.

16:12a The *bowl poured out by the sixth angel* may not seem, at first glance, as destructive as the others. Very likely, however, its results will be the worst. How the waters of the *Euphrates River* will be dried up is not stated. Perhaps it will be an earthquake that will divert the flow of the river in a different direction. Or, a large dam in northern Syria could be captured by an enemy and be com-

national leaders all over the world,^a and by their words and miracles will convince them that they must join the battle in Israel on that momentous day when God Almighty will meet them in judgment.^b

¹⁵“Listen!” the Lord proclaims, “I am coming like a thief!^a The one who stays awake to duty and vigilantly alert to danger will be blessed. He must also make sure he is always dressed,^b or it will be evident to everyone when I come how naked he really is.”

¹⁶And He gathered^a the armies of those nations together to a place called Armageddon in Hebrew.

¹⁷Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air,^a and from the throne in the Temple in Heaven^b a loud voice shouted: “This is the finish!”^c

¹⁸Then came blinding flashes of lightning, fol-

lowed by ominous rumblings. Then loud, crashing thunder, and a gigantic earthquake—far greater in magnitude than any before it. It was by far the worst earthquake in all of history.

¹⁹And the Great City^a split into three parts, and the cities of the pagans everywhere thruout the world shook apart and crumbled. And God didn’t forget Babylon—Great Babylon, as she loved to be called. He made her drink the full cup of the wine of His awful, furious anger.

²⁰Every island disappeared, and the mountains couldn’t be found.^a

²¹Then storms of great hail, with hailstones weighing over a hundred pounds each, came crashing down upon the people from the skies, and the people cursed and reviled God because of the plague of hail, because the devastation caused by the hail was so extremely great.^a

pletely closed, thus drying up the river.

At any rate, the drying up of this river will enable great armies *from the east* to advance upon the territory controlled by Antichrist.

Many believe that these kings of the east will be friends of Antichrist, and will be called by him to the battle of Armageddon. This is unlikely in light of other Scriptures. Read Isaiah 13:1-16; and 19-22; 14:1-27; 47:1-15; 48:20-22; Jeremiah 50:46; Micah 5:5-6; Revelation 18:1-24; 19:1-5.

* * *

The first five bowls of judgment are judgments upon Antichrist and his kingdom. This *sixth bowl* is also a judgment from God upon Antichrist. It is most likely that these *kings of the east* will be enemies of Antichrist (no doubt constituting one or more of the “carpenter” nations of Zechariah 1:18-21) and will have been brought together against Antichrist by the “seven shepherds and eight national leaders” of Micah 5:5-6.

These 15 men will be leading Jews (evidently seven religious and eight political or business leaders) who will form a council of war outside Israel when Antichrist conquers Israel. These kings of the east will march against new Babylon, the capital of Antichrist, killing the inhabitants (Isaiah 13:9) and taking everything of real value. Jeremiah 50:10,37. Then they will burn the city. Isaiah 47:14; Revelation 18:8,9-19. The drying up of the Euphrates will provide a highway for the enemy and also cut off Babylon’s water supply to fight the fires.

This burning of Babylon will take place about 4 1/2 months before the battle of Armageddon. Daniel 8:11-14. This will be the *reason* for the battle of Armageddon. Antichrist will mobilize all his remaining forces thruout the world to counterattack these invaders who have liberated Israel and

much of the Middle East!

Following the battle of Armageddon, Babylon will be totally destroyed by the devastating earthquakes and great hailstones that will fall at that time. It therefore appears that the drying up of the Euphrates River will be another definite judgment of God upon Antichrist and his followers.

16:13-14a The *three evil spirits* that come out of the mouths of *Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet* will very likely inhabit receptive men, using them as their mouthpieces, performing miracles thru them, etc. These *evil spirits*, thru their cunning and the miracles they will be able to perform, will convince many rulers of the world that Antichrist is the savior of the world and that they must join their forces with him at Armageddon against the invading armies that have burned Babylon and conquered much of the Middle East.

By this time, the invaders will have liberated Jerusalem and all Israel from Antichrist. So the armies of Antichrist will gather in the valley of Megiddo in Israel to restore the kingdom to Antichrist. But there, the Lord from Heaven will destroy them. 19:11-21.

16:14b The Battle of Armageddon!

16:15a Really? How can that be right? See Appendix 238, page 495.

16:15b We must be dressed in righteousness if we are to be saved. Two kinds of righteousness are needed to gain eternal life—*imputed righteousness*, which we receive by means of cleansing and forgiveness of sins thru faith in what Jesus Christ has done for us thru His suffering and death—and *personal righteousness*, meaning we must turn from our sinning, and determine to live now as God would have us live. And we must *continue in the faith*, continuing to be clothed. Colossians 1:23. See

The Filthy Woman and the Beast

17 Then one of the seven angels who had poured out the seven bowls came and spoke to me. “Come,” he said, “and I will show you the judgment and calamity that will come upon the great whore, who sits on many bodies of water.

²“The world rulers have had immoral relations with her, and the people of earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornications.”^a

³So he carried me away in my spirit into the wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a bright red beast that had seven heads and ten horns. This animal was literally covered with names that belittled and slandered God.^a

⁴The woman herself was dressed in purple and bright red robes, and wore jewelry made of gold,

precious stones, and pearls. In her hand she held a golden cup filled with her corruptions and the filth of her fornications.^a

⁵On her forehead was written this title:

*Mysterious Babylon,
The Great Mother of Whores^a
And of All Kinds of Perversions And
Corruptions Taking Place on The Earth.^b*

⁶Then I saw that the woman was drunk—drunk with the blood of those who had been dedicated to God, that is, with the blood of those she had killed because of their faithful witness to others about Jesus. As I looked at her I was shocked, and greatly astonished.

⁷“Why are you so amazed?” the angel asked me. “I will explain to you the mystery connected with this woman, and what the beast with the seven

also Acts 20:20-21 note.

16:16a The Greek verb here is singular and refers to action by God, because God, Himself, will be the actual force behind the *gathering* of the nations at *Armageddon*. He will bring them there for judgment, even though Satan and Antichrist will have made the outward effort to get them together. See Joel 3:1-2; Zephaniah 3:8; Micah 4:11-13.

16:17a *The seventh angel* will empty *his bowl* at this time, immediately following the battle of Armageddon. vss 18-21; Isaiah 2:10-21; Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12-17. This will be the grand finale of God’s dealing with rebellious man, prior to the coming of Christ to judge the nations and to reign over the entire earth as King of kings and Lord of lords. Matthew 24:30.

16:17b ... *after the devastation and renovation of the earth by the judgment of the seventh angel had been set in motion* ...

16:17c This is evidently God speaking. He loudly proclaims that the whole series of plagues is now reaching its grand finale.

16:19a The *Great City* refers to Jerusalem. Present-day Jerusalem and a large area around it will be raised to a much higher elevation during this time of judgment and renovation of the earth. Psalm 48:1-2; Isaiah 2:2; Ezekiel 40:2; Micah 4:1; Zechariah 8:3. On this large raised area, to be called the new Mt. Zion, the new city of Jerusalem will be built when Christ returns. The area around this raised plateau will be a level plain for many miles in every direction. Zechariah 14:10-11.

The city of *New Babylon* will have already been burned some months prior to this final judgment. But now the great earthquake and great hailstones will make it completely uninhabitable, except for the doleful creatures of that area that will possess it

forever. Isaiah 13:19-22, 14:23; Jeremiah 50:12b-13, 39-40; 51:26, 36-37, 43.

16:20a See Appendix 239, page 495.

16:21a See Appendix 240, page 496.

17:1-2a At this point, one of the angels who had poured out one of the seven bowls, came to John to enlighten him about two Babylons—*Mystery Babylon* (vss 1-7, 15-18) and *the City of Babylon*, chapter 18. The angel explains facts concerning Mystery Babylon in this 17th chapter, while in the 18th chapter he tells about the fate of the great city of Babylon.

The angel calls Mystery Babylon *the great whore who sits on many bodies of water*. vss 1, 5. The *many bodies of water* refers to many peoples and nations. v 15. The 2nd verse explains that this woman has had illicit relations with the rulers of the earth. She has bargained, threatened, and connived in political dealings with rulers of nations and kingdoms. She has also tempted *the people of the earth* to indulge in her immorality, resulting in their being overcome in sinful stupor.

17:3a This same *woman* is seen here sitting on a *bright red beast*. Verses 9-13 state that this *beast* is a picture of Revised Rome (Daniel 2:40-45; 7:1-27; Revelation 13:1-4), the ten-kingdom confederacy of the last days. This confederacy will be anti-God—*covered with writings cursing and reviling God*. The woman will be riding this beast, which would seem to indicate her control of it.

17:4a See 2:14 note.

17:5a Prostitutes—harlots.

17:4-5b Evidently this woman represents a religious power. A renewed effort toward a single religious power in this world is being made today. The claim is that there will be no more wars or other major problems once everyone is united in their

heads and ten horns that she's riding represents.

⁸“The beast you saw was a world power at one time, but he is not so at present. However, he will come back up out of the bottomless pit for a few brief years, and then he will be driven away to a continual state of being destroyed.^a People living on the earth at that time, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life since before the world was created,^b will be astonished when they discover that the beast world power which was once in existence, but which does not now exist, has again come into existence.^c

⁹“Now here's the part that takes a mind with intelligence to interpret: The seven heads are seven

mountains on which the woman sits.

¹⁰“They also represent seven kings: five have fallen, one is in power at the present time, and the seventh hasn't yet come on the scene. When he does come, however, he will remain in power for only a short time.

¹¹“And the beast that was once a world power, but is not a world power now, is also the eighth king. Still, he is one of the seven,^a and he is the one who will be driven away into a continual state of being destroyed.^b

¹²“The ten horns you saw are ten more kings, who have not yet received their kingdoms. They will receive authority as kings, along with the

religious beliefs and goals. Even decadent Protestant denominations are preparing to unite. This united body will later join forces with Roman Catholicism in one great Christian body. The Roman Catholic hierarchy is doing everything in its power to make this union acceptable.

The plan is that following such union they will invite all the religions of the world to join with them in one great world brotherhood. Today, such a union is a conceivable possibility in the not-too-distant future.

The idea of using religion as a power over man began in ancient Babylon a few generations after the great flood of Noah's time when man rebelled against God and began to build the tower of Babel. This abusive treatment of God's purposes and name is still called *Babylon* by God, who hates mankind's persistent selfishness and our stubborn insistence on being satisfied in our own way on our own terms. The heathen Babylonian corruption of truth can be traced from Babylon, thru Egypt and other countries, and from there to Rome. The emperors of Rome were the High Priests of this religion.

* * *

This religious monstrosity, *mystical Babylon*, will quite possibly dominate the ten rulers of Revised Rome until Antichrist conquers them. It may be, however, that the ten rulers themselves will have sufficient power to destroy her (vss 16-18) before that time.

It's hard to say who is the most interested today in establishing a single powerful church—decadent Protestants or the Roman Catholics. Both seem intent on its establishment. But those with ambitions for a one-world government are no doubt the most interested. They are the ones who will use this church for their own ends, and then destroy it. vss 16-18.

17:8a Revelation 17:11; 20:10,14-15.

17:8b Romans 8:28-30.

17:7-8c The angel promises John that he will

explain to him *the mystery connected with this woman, and what the beast she's riding represents*. With regard to the term, *the beast*, we must remember that it is symbolic of four possible entities. See the explanation in the first paragraph of Appendix 233. *The beast* of v 8 is the supernatural being (a powerful demon), who *will come up out of the bottomless pit, and then* (after he has been allowed to do his second vile work) *will be driven away to a continual state of being destroyed*. This could be the same supernatural being referred to in Daniel 10:20 as the prince of Greece, the satanic spirit seeking to control the Greek Empire.

“Not only does the Bible teach that over every kingdom and nation there are both good and evil spirits, but also that over every individual person on earth there are good and evil spirits who are trying to dominate his life for good or evil. Psalm 78:49; 91:11; Matthew 18:10; Romans 8:38-39; Hebrews 1:14; Ephesians 2:2; 6:12; etc.” — *Finis J. Dake*, in *Revelation Expounded*.

* * *

When the Empire of Greece came to an end, the supernatural being controlling the Empire (one of the angels of Satan, mentioned in Daniel 10:20) was evidently returned to the bottomless pit. When the Greek Empire is revived, this same spirit being may very well return and be the satanic power behind Antichrist. *He will then be driven away to a continual state of being destroyed* when Antichrist is defeated by Christ at Armageddon.

This beast *was a world power* during the existence of the old Greek Empire. *He is not a world power* (when John prophesied). And yet this supernatural being is still in existence and is to return to the earth to set up the rule of Antichrist and to rule thru him. In studying the next verses, more details of this satanic power, the beast, will be seen.

The empire referred to here *was not* in existence at the time John wrote. The Empire of Greece had already died. But the same was true of the old

beast, but for only a brief period of time.

¹³“These ten kings will all have one goal in mind,^a and they will give their power and authority to the beast.”^b

¹⁴“These ten kings and the beast will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overpower them, because He is the all-powerful Lord over all lords and King over all kings. And those who are with Him are His called, chosen, and faithful followers.”^a

¹⁵Then the angel said to me, “The bodies of water^a you saw the whore sitting upon are masses of people of every race, language, and nation.

¹⁶“The ten horns you saw on the beast^a will hate the whore. They will strip her of all her power and

attractiveness and leave her naked. Then they will eat her flesh^b and destroy her city with fire.”^c

¹⁷“Because it is God who will cause these ten kings to be willing to fulfill His purpose by agreeing together to give the beast their power to rule, until all that God has said comes true.

¹⁸“And the woman you saw is the great city^a that rules over the kings of the earth.”

The Fall of Babylon

18After I was shown these things, I saw another angel coming down from Heaven. He had great authority, and the whole earth was illuminated by the brilliance of his glory.

²With a mighty shout at the very top of his voice

Assyrian Empire. While we state that the evil spirit power controlling the Antichrist may be the same spirit power that controlled the Empire of Greece, it could be that this spirit power will be the same spirit who was behind the rulers of the old Assyrian Empire. It is even more likely that this is true, because Antichrist is called the Assyrian more times than he is called by any other name. Isaiah 10:24-25; 14:24-25; 30:30-31; 31:8-9; Micah 5:5-6. So we feel confident he will first rebuild the Assyrian Empire, after which he will conquer Greece, thus again forming the Grecian Empire.

* * *

One reason why Satan may desire the spirit power which dominated the old Assyrian Empire to be the dominant force in this “new” empire could be because of the ultra wickedness of this spirit. When the Assyrian Empire was the dominating force in the world, their armies were the most devilish and cruel of any that ever marched. Ancient artwork uncovered in Assyria has revealed the atrocities and the cruelty with which the Assyrian army inflicted torment and death upon its victims. The Assyrian army has been called the Roman Army of Asia, but the Assyrian armies inflicted far greater cruelty than the armies of Rome.

Those who oppose the rule of God should take heed to the awful events which will befall them as this vile spirit once again dominates world events and activities, thru a thoroughly vile man who has sold out to Satan.

17:9-11a What’s the explanation for all this? See Appendix 241, page 496.

17:11b Present indicative—present, continuous action. This is actually future continuous action, because of the present tense and the context. Literally, *and into destruction he is being driven continually*. See 20:10.

17:13a ... *a one-world government* ...

17:12-13b This kingdom of the ten rulers and

Antichrist will not be a world kingdom in the true sense any more than any other kingdom before it has ever been a world kingdom. Together with Antichrist, these rulers will make war with other nations in an attempt to bring them all under one huge power (but they will not succeed in world rule). Antichrist will be engaged in wars up to the very end. In fact, just months before Armageddon, his capital city of Babylon will be completely destroyed and burned, as we will see in chapter 18.

17:14a Romans 8:28-30.

17:15a See v 1.

17:16a ... *that is, the ten kings* ...

17:16b They will confiscate all her property.

17:16c Here we find what will finally happen to *the whore*, the heathen religious system of Old Babylon, which has infiltrated much of organized Christianity, and which will evidently culminate in the great one-world church of the end time.

The ten rulers of Revised Rome will evidently use this religious power for their own purposes for a time, and then they will utterly destroy this religious system and burn the *city* of her headquarters, wherever that may be. God hates this heathen religious system which claims to be of Him. It is He who will place in the hearts of these kings the desire to destroy this system after they have used it to unite their empire. Thus will come to an end this Satan-inspired heathen monstrosity and her capital city.

17:18a The logical place for the headquarters’ *city* of the great one-world church would be in or near Jerusalem, the most noteworthy and respected religious city in the world. It’s likely that this religious monstrosity will ask permission of Israel to locate their headquarters there. We believe Israel will refuse that request, and they will then ask to locate in or near the city of new Babylon. In that event, this Babylonian religious system would return home, where it belongs.

he cried out, “She has fallen! Great Babylon has fallen! Now she has become a home for demons, a gathering place for all kinds of filthy spirits, and a territorial possession for every kind of unclean and contemptible bird,

³“because people in all the nations have drunk the inflammatory wine of her degrading and corrupting immorality. Even the rulers of the earth have had brazenly immoral relations with her. And businessmen thruout the world have become rich from the extravagance of her inconsiderate, sensuous, unrestrained life style.”

⁴Then I heard another voice from Heaven saying, “Come out of her, My people, so there won’t be any danger of your taking part in her sins! Because if you do, you will also be judged with the judgments that will soon strike her.

⁵“Because the stench of her sins has reached all the way to Heaven, and God is prepared and ready to judge her.

⁶“Pay her back now, full measure, as much as she did to you! In fact, pay her double harm for all the harm she has done. She mixed a poisonous drink for you. So now mix a double portion of the same drink for her, in the same cup with which she served you.

⁷“And to the extent that she glorified herself and selfishly lives in sensuous luxury, now give her the same measure of torture and sorrow. Because in her heart, she keeps boasting to herself, ‘I’m sitting here as the queen. I’m not a widow. I’ll never experience any sorrow.’

⁸“Her plagues will therefore overtake her in one day—death, mourning, and famine—and she will be totally consumed with flames, because the Lord God who judges her is powerful.^a

⁹“And the world rulers who’d had immoral relations with her and had shared her sensuous, luxurious life style, will weep and grieve over her when they see^a the smoke rising from the devouring flames that consume her.

¹⁰“They will stand far off^a because of their fear of the torture she is undergoing. ‘Oh, what a calamity!’ they will cry out. ‘Babylon, that great city, that powerful city! It took only one hour to seal your doom!’

¹¹“Businessmen all over the world will weep and mourn over her, because there will be no one left there to buy their goods.

¹²“She was their main customer for shipments of gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet cloth; every kind of citron wood, and all kinds of articles made from ivory, expensive wood, brass, iron, and marble;

¹³shipments of cinnamon and other spices, and incense, perfumes, and frankincense; wine and olive oil, fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves—even the very souls of men.

¹⁴“And all the ripe fruits and other choice things you loved so much,’ they will say, ‘are no longer being brought to you. All the rich and splendid things have left you. There is no way that you will ever again obtain them.’

The reason for believing that Babylon, or more likely an area next to Babylon, will be where this super church will build its headquarters’ city, is both because of the name God gives it (Babylon) and because Zechariah 5:5-11 seems to indicate that this is what will happen. In that Scripture something very sinful tries to locate in Israel, but will be refused. She will then be taken to Babylon, *where a palace will be constructed for it. There it will be established upon its own base.*

18:8a In chapter 17, we read about mystical, religious Babylon, and how she will lord it over the end-time nations of Revised Rome until these nations receive enough power to crush her and burn her headquarters’ city. In this chapter, *the actual city of Babylon* is the subject.

Babylon must be rebuilt if Bible prophecy is to be fulfilled. The city will play a large part in the end-time scene, finally being burned and totally destroyed.

Some claim Bible prophecy states that Babylon will never again be rebuilt. But the prophecy states

that she will never be rebuilt after she has been destroyed by fire. She has not yet been destroyed by fire since those prophecies were made. Babylon was even in existence at the time of Christ, and for many years after. Babylon simply died as a city, and the building stones of the city were carried to many parts of the Middle East.

When Babylon is finally destroyed by fire, the prophecy is that not even one stone will be carried from her. Jeremiah 51:26. All who pass by or fly over the ruins of Babylon, in all time to follow, will be amazed at the destruction wrought here by the Lord and left by Him as a perpetual reminder of the punishment given rebellion and sin. Those who see the spectacle will hiss in scorn at the memory of the wicked lives of the inhabitants of this rebellious city. Jeremiah 50:13. After Babylon is destroyed, no one will ever again even pass thru the area. Jeremiah 51:43.

As one Bible teacher has stated, “Babylon was the place of the first rebellion against God (Genesis

¹⁵ “The businessmen who sold her these things and became wealthy by doing business with her will stand far off from her because of their fear of the torture she is enduring, and they will weep and mourn.

¹⁶ “Oh, what tragedy!” they will cry out. “That great city! She once dressed herself so beautifully in fine linen dyed purple and scarlet, and adorned herself with gold and precious stones and pearls!

¹⁷ “But in just one hour all that great wealth has utterly disappeared!”

“And every sea captain and all who travel the seas, every sailor and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off and watch.

¹⁸ “When they see the smoke from her flames, they will cry out, ‘What city in all the world can be compared to this great city?’

¹⁹ “Weeping and wailing, they will throw dust on their heads, and cry out, ‘How terrible! How terrible! That great city, by which all who had ships on the sea became rich thru her wealth! But in only one hour she is made utterly desolate!’”^a

²⁰ “But rejoice because of her destruction, all of you who live in Heaven, especially you holy apostles and prophets, because God has now judged her for the evil way she treated you!”

²¹ Then a powerful angel picked up a great boulder the size of a large millstone and hurled it into the sea, saying, “That’s the unmerciful way the great city of Babylon will be violently thrown down, never to rise again.

²² “The music of harpists and other musicians of

every sort, including flute players and trumpeters, will never again be heard in you. No workman of any trade will ever again set foot within your city limits, and the sound of a millstone grinding grain will never again be heard in you.

²³ “Never again will the light of even a single lamp shine in you. Never again will the cheerful voices of the bride and bridegroom be heard within you. Your businessmen were the most powerful on earth; and by your poisonous magic^a all the nations were led astray.

²⁴ “In your streets, flowed the blood of prophets and others who were dedicated to God. In fact, you are responsible for the killing of all of God’s people on earth who have ever been killed.”^a

The Chorus of Praise

19 After I was shown all this, I heard a chorus of thunderously loud praises coming from an enormous crowd in Heaven. “Hallelujah!” they were all shouting. “Our salvation is from the Lord our God! It is He who saved us! To Him alone belong honor and glory, because it was accomplished thru His great power!”^a

² “Because all His judgments are fair and just,^a He has most severely judged the great^b whore because of the way she corrupted the people of earth with her filthy, degrading, and immoral standards. God has also judged her and made her pay the price for all the servants of His that she murdered.”

11:1-9) and it will be the scene of the last rebellion.” Babylon will not only be the capital of Antichrist as he comes to power, but it will probably serve as the headquarters for all kinds of sorcery and Satan worship as well. So this city too will likely be a religious center, but totally controlled by Antichrist when he comes to power.

It’s likely that people from all over the world will flock to the new city of Babylon to take advantage of business opportunities. But as the wickedness of the city again becomes apparent, God will call his people to *come out* of this city, so that there won’t be any danger of their taking part in her sins. Because if they do, they will also be judged with her plagues. This falling into her sins would make them likewise eligible for the judgment that will be poured out upon her. v 4.

18:9a ... *by means of television?* ...

18:10a ... *where they hope they are safe* ...

18:19a The owners of ships, which would likewise in this day include airlines, will be in utter dismay, because for them this city will be their greatest port

for passengers, freight, etc. The loss of this city will greatly reduce their business.

18:23a This can refer to drugs, magic arts, or witchcraft.

18:24a This likely refers to Babylon’s religious system that in its various forms has persecuted and killed God’s people thruout the centuries. Babylon will again, in our day, be the center for all manner of ruthless killings and persecution of God’s people thruout the earth. This city will finally receive its just reward in a burning death. For further information on the destruction of New Babylon see 14:8; 16:19; 19:1-5; Isaiah 13:1-22; 14:1-27; 47:1-15; 48:20-22; Jeremiah 50:1 to 51:64.

19:1a *First* He redeemed us by the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, who willingly suffered and died that we might live. *Second* He has given each of us who are true followers of the Lord a new birth spiritually by means of the Holy Spirit (John 1:12-13; 3:7-8) using the word of God (1 Peter 1:23) to convict us of our sins and of The Judgment, and of our need to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior. *Third*

³Again they shouted, “All praise to our God! The smoke from her burning will rise up forever and ever!”

⁴Then the 24 elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. “So let it be!” they shouted. “God be praised in all He has done!”

The Wedding Feast of the Lamb

⁵Then a voice came from the throne,^a saying, “Continue to praise our God, all of you who are His servants who revere and obey Him, whether you are small or great!”

⁶Then again I heard the extremely loud shouting of that enormous crowd. And again it sounded like the combined roaring of a great waterfall, together with enormous crashes of thunder. They were all shouting, “All praise to our God! For the Lord God of unlimited power reigns!”

⁷“Let us rejoice and be extremely glad, and give all praise to Him for His greatness! Because the wedding of the Lamb^a is about to take place, and His bride has made herself ready.”^b

⁸She was given a wedding robe of the finest linen to wear—clean and white—because fine linen represents the good lives lived by those who belong to the Lord.

⁹“Write this down,” the angel then said to me: “Those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb are supremely and inexpressibly happy!”^a Then he added, “These are words from God. So no words could be more true.”

God has not left us to battle Satan and life’s temptations and trials alone. He has promised to always be with us to help us overcome each temptation (John 15:1-5; Romans 8:13,26,37; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Jude 1c) and to offer us forgiveness upon our sincere confession and repentance if we should sin in an unguarded moment (1 John 1:8-10; 2:1-5) until we are finally safe at home with Him in Heaven.

19:2a ... *because He judges according to His great knowledge of the truth regarding all things* ...

19:2b She is called *great* because of her great, though corrupted, power.

19:5a This appears to be the voice of Christ, the Son of God. Psalm 22:22-23a,25.

19:7a Jesus Christ.

19:7b All who are truly dedicated to Christ are a part of His bride. It’s important to notice that the bride of the Lamb *has made herself ready*, which shows that certain preparations are necessary on the part of the bride. This seems clear from her

¹⁰When he said that, I was so overwhelmed that I fell at his feet to worship him. “Don’t do that!” he quickly said. “I’m only your fellow servant, and a fellow servant of your brothers and sisters who have also told others about Jesus. Worship God! Because it’s what Jesus has told us about Him that inspires all true preaching and witnessing.”

The Rider on the White Horse

¹¹Then I saw Heaven flung wide open. And there before me was a white horse, and the One^a riding the horse is called Faithful and True. He always does what is right, even when He makes a judgment and wages war.

¹²His eyes were like flames of fire, and on His head were many crowns. There was a name written upon Him, but He was the only One who knew what it meant.

¹³He was dressed in a robe that had been dipped in blood, and the name by which He is called is The Word of God.

¹⁴Dressed in fine linen, white and clean, were the armies of Heaven, following Him on white horses.^a

¹⁵And out of His mouth came a sharp sword, with which He will strike down the nations. Then He will shepherd them with a scepter of iron.^a At that moment, however, He was preparing to tread the winepress of the furious anger of the Almighty God.^b

¹⁶On both His robe and His thigh was written the name:

white robe, which represents the good lives lived by those who belong to the Lord. v 8. But she never could have made herself ready without Christ dying to purify her.

So it is true both that Christ makes His followers ready for Himself, and that they also must make themselves ready. Without Christ’s sacrifice for her and without His Spirit’s constant help, she would be altogether unable to make herself ready to be His bride. She is able to work out her own salvation because God is working within her to enable her to both determine to do what is pleasing to Him, and then do it. See Philippians 2:12-13.

19:9a ... *far beyond present human understanding.*

19:11a Jesus, the Messiah.

19:14a Those dressed in white, riding on white horses, are no doubt the angels and the bride of Christ. This does not necessarily mean that all who will compose the bride of Christ are with Him by then. See Matthew 24:29-31. But notice that Christ alone bears the sword. He alone (vss 15,21) uses

**KING of kings
and LORD of lords.^a**

¹⁷Then I saw an angel standing in the sun. And he called out with a loud voice to all the birds that fly thru the air. “Come!” he shouted, “and gather together for the great feast prepared for you by our great God!

¹⁸“Come, and eat the flesh of kings, of generals and powerful soldiers, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free men and slaves, small and great.”^a

¹⁹Then I saw the beast^a and the rulers of the earth and their armies all gathered together in battle array to wage war against the One sitting on the white horse and against His army.

²⁰But then the beast was captured, and also the false prophet who had performed miracles in the presence of the beast,^a by which he had deceived those who had accepted the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were then thrown alive into the lake of fire, a lake of flaming sulfur.

²¹Then the rest of those great armies were cut down and slain by the sword that came out of the mouth of the One who sat on the white horse. And all the birds gorged themselves on the flesh of the dead.

The Thousand Years

20 Then I saw an angel come down from Heaven with a massive chain in his hand and the key to the bottomless pit.

²He grabbed hold of the dragon, that old snake who has been around for ages—that is, the devil, or Satan—and chained him up for a thousand years.

³Then he threw him into the bottomless pit, and locked it up and sealed it. He did this to keep Satan where he would be unable to deceive the nations anymore, until the thousand years come to an end. After that he must be set free for a short time.

⁴Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those who had been given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their witness to others about Jesus, and had faithfully and fearlessly proclaimed God’s message.^a Also, they had not worshiped the beast nor his image, nor had they received his mark on their forehead or their hand. They all came back to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

⁵This is the first raising of the dead. The rest of the dead, however, did not come back to life until the end of the thousand years.

⁶Those who will be raised back to life in the first raising of the dead will be extravagantly blessed by God and extremely happy, far beyond anything anyone can presently imagine.^a But only those

the sword. He alone is the One who defeats this opposing army at the Battle of Armageddon.

19:15a Just what does this mean? See Appendix 232, page 492.

19:15b See 14:17-20.

19:16a 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 1:10; 1 Timothy 6:15.

19:18a The birds of the air will be invited to gather at Armageddon to devour the armies that will be slain by the Lord. All those who have opposed Christ and are gathered together in united strength against Israel will be reduced to bird feed. The high and the low, the kings, the captains, the mighty men, as well as all other men, both free men and slaves, with all their sophisticated modern war machinery, will find their strength to be as a drop in the proverbial bucket in comparison to the great power of our great God.

Although the great judgment from God of earthquake, fire, great hailstones, and darkness will follow *immediately after the tribulation of those days* (Matthew 24:29), it appears that the idea of immediacy need not be understood in its most liter-

al sense. *The birds that fly thru the air* will have time, first, to gorge themselves on the armies of the slain following the battle of Armageddon. There is no mention in Scripture of any burial of these bodies or bones. Undoubtedly, the great judgment to follow the Great Tribulation (Psalm 46:1-11; 97:5-6; Isaiah 2:10-21; 24:1-23; 34:4; 40:3-5; 42:15; Jeremiah 4:23-29; 30:23-24; Daniel 12:11-12; Joel 3:15-16; Nahum 1:2-6; Haggai 2:6-7a; Malachi 4:1-3; Matthew 24:29; 2 Peter 3:10-12; Revelation 6:12-17; 16:16-21; 21:1c) will erase every trace of these human bodies. Either the earthquake, fire, or the great hailstones will take care of them completely.

19:19a Antichrist.

19:20a That is, by the permission and power of Antichrist, who got his authority from the dragon (Satan). 13:2.

20:4a ... *without adding to, taking away, softening, explaining away, or ignoring certain parts.*

20:6a 1 Corinthians 2:9.

20:6b You will not automatically become holy

who have sincerely dedicated themselves to live holy lives for God will be included.^b The second death will have no power over them. But even more than that, they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Christ a thousand years.^c

The Defeat and Doom of Satan

⁷When the thousand years come to an end, Satan will be let out of his prison.

⁸He will then go out to deceive people in the nations thruout the world, including Gog and Magog. He will recruit a huge army for war, as vast in numbers as the numberless sands on the seashore.

⁹Then they will advance from everywhere on earth against those dedicated to God, who have encamped around the city loved by God.^a But before they can attack or harm God's people or Jerusalem in any way, fire will come down from God out of Heaven and consume them.

when you enter Heaven. The Scriptures are clear on the fact that you must be living a holy life on earth even to be allowed into Heaven. See 21:27 and Hebrews 12:14 note.

20:6c *The second death*, which is separation from God in the lake of fire, will have no power over those who have been resurrected to a glorified state. All people involved in the first resurrection will serve Christ, as God's representatives, as His *priests*. They will serve in various capacities in the Millennial reign of Christ, and on into eternity. Daniel 7:18; 12:3; Revelation 22:3-5. Such great promises of glory, power and intimacy with Christ and with God the Father certainly merit the most intense effort on our part to obtain. The greatest encouragement to the Christian thru all of life's testing and trials is that Jesus Christ will never leave nor forsake any true follower of His. Hebrews 13:5-6.

Someone might ask, "But how could a loving God ever send anyone to a lake of fire? How could He do such a thing to anyone?" Well, just because you might not do so, does not mean that God will not. God has good reason for everything He does. One of the reasons the USA at this time is becoming weak is because of her soft attitude toward crime and the criminal. No one knows the mind of God in any perfect sense. No man knows His thoughts or His understanding. It is His definite word, however, that the *lake of fire* is real, and terrible, and will endure *forever and ever*.

The matter of God's judgment upon every rebel must be left with Him. But likewise, we must each be concerned that we are not included in God's

¹⁰Then the devil, who had fooled them, will be thrown into the lake of fire, a lake of flaming sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet already are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.^a

The Judgment of All the Dead

¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and the One who sat on it. The earth and the heavens fled from His presence, and no place was found for them.^a

¹²And I saw the dead,^a both small and great, they were all there, standing before God. Then the books were opened.^b Then another book was opened, which is the Book of Life.^c And the dead were judged according to the things they had done, which were recorded in the books.^b

¹³The oceans and seas gave up the dead bodies which were in them. The dead in every grave were raised.^a And Hell^b released for further judgment all the souls of the dead it was holding. And they were each judged according to what they had done

judgment of sinners. All believers are warned to make certain that their surrender to Christ as Lord is very genuine. 2 Peter 1:10. Only those who are truly born again, giving evidence of lives truly surrendered to the will of God, will be saved. See John 3:3 and 2 Corinthians 5:17.

20:9a Jerusalem.

20:7-10a See Appendix 242, page 497, for a very important note on these verses.

20:11a For those who will stand before God for this judgment, *the earth and the heavens* will lose all significance in comparison with Him. It will be as though they no longer existed. His glory and majesty will completely overwhelm every other consideration.

20:12a These are the people who are also dead to God: the openly rebellious, the religious pretender who practiced selective obedience (being disobedient to God in areas where he felt he didn't need to obey, or could get away with it), and all other hypocrites, and all liars, thieves, and all other sorts of sinners who refused God's forgiveness on His conditions. They hadn't been included in the first resurrection, but they have all been resurrected now for judgment.

20:12b Just what are the books mentioned here? See Appendix 243, page 498.

20:12c This is the *Book of God's Record in Heaven* of those who had been truly born again and had remained faithful to Him in their living and in their witness to others about Him. Romans 10:9-10; Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 12:11. Regarding those ashamed and cowardly about witnessing, see Mark

in life.^c

¹⁴Then all the dead who had been in Hell were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death.^a

¹⁵And all whose names were not found written in the Book of Life were thrown into the lake of fire.

The New Jerusalem

21 Then I saw a new sky and a new earth, because the first sky and the first earth had passed away. There weren't even any oceans on the new earth.

²Then I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God. It was most beautifully adorned, like a bride beautifully dressed and adorned for her husband.

³Then I heard a loud voice call out from Heaven, "Look! God's home is now with the people of earth, and He will live with them! The people of all the nations of earth will then be His people, and

God Himself will be with them and be their God.

⁴"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death, no more mourning or crying or pain, because the old order of things has passed away."

⁵"Look," said the One sitting on the throne, "I am making everything new." Then He said to me, "Write that down, because these words are the truth and can be trusted."

⁶Again He spoke to me. "It is done!"^a He said. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the one who is thirsty, I will give an ample supply of water without charge from the spring of the Water of Life."^b

⁷"Those who conquer Satan and triumph over the temptations of the world will inherit everything."^a And I will be their God and they will be My children.

⁸"But those who were fearful and cowardly,^a and all unbelievers, the vile and abominable,^b the murderers, the sexually immoral,^c those who

8:38; Revelation 21:8a.

20:13a And don't ever fool yourself that your cremated body will be impossible for God to reconstruct—you'll be there, unless you were included in the first resurrection.

20:13b Or *Hades*, the temporary place of punishment for the ungodly.

20:13c At this judgment, all dead bodies of persons who had not previously been raised to eternal life will be raised from wherever they are and brought back to life and joined to their souls that have been in Hell. The body that sinned shall, in righteous judgment, also be the body that shall suffer. The righteous will live joyfully forever, but the wicked will linger on in a state never to be ended by death.

20:14a Death is separation. The first death is physical, taking place when the soul is separated from the body. (The soul is the personality, the real person who lives in a body.) *The second death* is reserved for the soul that has rejected Christ and His will, and is living his life mainly to please himself. Some have received Christ as Savior, desiring to use Him as a fire escape from Hell, but they have rejected Him as Lord, still rebelling and going their own way whenever they choose. They have not been diligent in obeying the commands of Christ in the books, and their doom will be in accordance with what they have actually done. 2 Corinthians 11:15. See also Matthew 7:15-29. *The second death* will result in the soul's separation from God in the lake of fire, where they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. v 10.

But you are still alive. There is still hope for you. *If you realize that God is speaking to you today, don't harden your heart!* Hebrews 4:7b. Turn to Appendix 247, page 520, and read *The Amazing Story of God*, which is also your story. Make sure today that your story has a happy and marvelous eternity. And bring many with you.

21:6a ... *My great plan and purpose has now been realized and fully completed!* ...

21:6b This is the everlasting life that continually flows to mankind thru the sacrifice Jesus Christ gave to free us from sin. But as God states in the next verse, this promise is conditional upon *conquering Satan and triumphing over the temptations of the world*.

21:7a We have another reference here to *conquerers*. See the notes on chapters 2 and 3 concerning the overcomer. Only the overcomer *will inherit everything*. Only to the overcomers does God say, *I will be their God and they will be my children*. The overcomer is one who has believed on Christ as Savior and has also died to self, taking up his cross. Matthew 10:38-39; Mark 8:36-38. He it is who has truly experienced the reality of 2 Corinthians 5:17, which reads, *So anyone who is a true follower of Christ is a new person. His old goals and ambitions and his old way of living are things of the past. Listen! Everything about him or her is now new*. His desires now are to please his Lord and to live wholly for Him. Only those people who are truly born-again believers, in all truth, are the overcomers who *will inherit everything*.

21:8a Here we have a description of some of those

practiced witchcraft and the magic arts, and idolaters, and all liars—they will all be thrown into the lake of fire, a lake of continually burning liquid sulfur, which is the second death.”

⁹Then one of the seven angels who had emptied the seven bowls upon earth, filled with the seven last plagues, came to me and said, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”

¹⁰And he carried me away in my spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the great city, the Holy Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God.^a

¹¹It was most beautifully and brilliantly aglow with the glory of God. It sparkled with a radiance like the most precious jewel, like a great stone of crystal-clear jasper.

¹²It was encircled by a great, high wall with twelve gates, with each gate guarded by an angel. There were names written on the gates—the names of the twelve tribes of the people of Israel.

¹³There were three gates on the east wall, three on the north, three on the west, and three on the south.

¹⁴The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were inscribed the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵The angel talking with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.

¹⁶The city is in the form of a great cube. It’s as long as it is wide, and when he measured the city with the rod, it was found to be fifteen hundred (1,500) miles long! And its length and width and height are all the same!

¹⁷Then he measured its wall. It was 216 feet thick.^a The angel was using man’s standard of measurement.

¹⁸The entire wall was made of jasper, and the city itself was made of pure gold, so pure that it was as clear as glass.

¹⁹The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald.

²⁰The fifth was sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

²¹The twelve gates were twelve great pearls, with each individual gate a single pearl. In the main parkway thru the city, the street was made of pure gold, as transparent as glass.

²²But I didn’t see any Temple in the city, because the Lord God, the Almighty One, and the Lamb, are its Temple.

²³The city doesn’t have any need for the sun or the moon to shine on it, because the glory of God illumines it, and the Lamb is also its light.

²⁴And the people of the nations that are saved will walk in its light, and the rulers of the earth will bring their glory and honor into it.

²⁵The gates of the city will remain open all day. In fact, they will never be closed, because there will be no night there.

²⁶So the people and their rulers will continually bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.

²⁷But in no way will anything ever be allowed to enter it that would pollute it, which would include anyone who is immoral or a liar. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life will be welcomed there.

who will *not* be included among the overcomers. Some of these people have even made a profession of believing in Christ. Many of them were members of good churches. They say they believe, but their fear of man is greater than their fear of God. They are ashamed of Christ (Mark 8:38) and fearful to take a bold stand and speak out for Him.

Some were even preachers. Matthew 7:22-23. But they were more concerned about pleasing the people and being well thought of by them than they were about fully pleasing God. They have preached an easy way to Heaven, explaining away many of God’s warnings, and ignoring other warnings as if they weren’t even there. These are the ones who are *fearful and cowardly*. They have been too cowardly to speak out boldly for Christ in accordance with Romans 10:9-10. *These will all have their*

place in the lake of fire, together with the many others whose sins mark them unmistakably as enemies of God. Mention is made again that this is the *second death*. See Ezekiel 33:1-9; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:9-10; James 2:13.

For a further list of those who will not make it to Heaven, read 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and Galatians 5:19-21, and be warned.

Be most diligent to make your calling and election to salvation and eternal life with God a sure thing! 2 Peter 1:10.

21:8b This includes all whose filthy actions in life are abominable in the eyes of God.

21:8c See Romans 1:26-27, and the note.

21:9-10a This city is likely called the bride of Christ because of its beauty and perfection, but also because of the bride of Christ (19:7) who will live

22 Then the angel showed me a perfectly pure river. It was the Water of Life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb, and running down the middle of the main parkway of the city.

²The Trees of Life were growing on each side of the river, and they bore a different kind of fruit each month of the year.^a And the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the people of all nations. No longer will God's curse^b be upon the earth.

³And the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will take great pleasure in serving Him.

⁴They will see Him face to face, and His name will be on their foreheads.

⁵Since there will be no night there, they won't need any lamps. Nor will they need any light from the sun, because the Lord God will shine upon them continually. And they will reign forever and ever.^a

⁶Then the angel said to me, "You can believe what you have heard, because it's the truth. The Lord God of the holy prophets has sent His angel to show His servants the things that must take place quickly.^a And listen! It's Jesus who has said, 'I will come suddenly!'"

⁷God will bless those who pay careful attention and put into practice the commands and instructions contained in the words of prophecy in this book.

⁸I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And after I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had

shown them to me.

⁹But the angel quickly said, "Don't do that! Because I am a servant of God just like you and your brothers the prophets and all others who sincerely consider and obey all the words in this book. Worship God!"

Final Words from Jesus

¹⁰Then Jesus said to me, "Don't seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time for these things to begin is near.

¹¹"Let the one who insists on living in disobedience to God continue on in his rebellion. Let those who insist on living filthy lives continue on in their filthiness. But the one who is intent on pleasing God, let him continue to live for God. And the one who is dedicated to doing what is right, let him continue to live a holy life.^a

¹²"And listen," Jesus continued, "I will come suddenly! I will bring My rewards with Me, and I will reward everyone according to what he has done.

¹³"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.

¹⁴"God will indeed bless those who live in obedience to His commands, because they are the ones who will have the right to enter thru the gates into the city, and to eat the fruit from the Trees of Life.^a

¹⁵"But those who will not be allowed into the city are the dogs,^a including those who practice witchcraft and all kinds of sorcery, the sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters, and everyone who loves to do wrong and practices lying.^b

¹⁶"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to you so that these things may be preached in the churches. I am both David's Root and his Descendant,^a the

there.

21:17a Or *high*.

22:2a There will no doubt be plenty of variety of fruit at all times.

22:2b Genesis 3:16-19.

22:5a 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:10.

22:6a ... *in a brief period of time, when they once begin to happen* ... 1:1.

22:11a "Sow an act—reap a habit; sow a habit—reap a character; sow a character—reap a destiny."—*Author not known*. "No worse punishment can God lay on ungodly men than to give them up to themselves."—*J.F. and Brown*.

Our condition in the coming life depends so absolutely upon our conduct in the present life! Are you born again? Does your life of obedience to God say so? See v 14; Romans 2:1-10; 6:16; Hebrews 5:9.

22:14a How do you expect to enter the Holy City,

the New Jerusalem, where Christ is preparing mansions for those who love Him, if you are refusing to *obey Him*? This verse so pointedly declares that only those who obey Him have the *right to enter thru the gates into the city, and to eat the fruit from the Tree of Life*. What a frightful loss will be sustained by those who determinedly continue to go their own way instead of in the way of the will of God. The Lord did not limit His commands to the Old Testament times. His New Testament is filled with His commands. Study them diligently, and obey them heartily. v 12.

22:15a A symbol of the wicked, the vile and abominable, those disobedient to God.

22:15b See 21:8.

22:16a See 5:4-5; Matthew 22:41-46.

22:17a These are all in the imperative mood, the mood of command. The implication here is that

Bright Morning Star.”

¹⁷“You must^a come!” is the urgent invitation from both the Spirit and the bride.^a If you have heard and accepted the Great News for yourself, you must^a now urgently invite others to “Come!” There are so many who are thirsty who must^a be invited to come. And let the person who is interested know that in order to live he must^a accept the Water of Life as a gift from God. It is free!^b

¹⁸I confirm and solemnly warn everyone who hears^a the words of the prophecy of this book: If you add anything to what is written here, God will plague you with the curses described in this book.

both the Spirit of God and those redeemed by God (19:7-9) give the invitation to those still outside to come to the Savior and be healed, that they might receive God’s forgiveness and become partaker in all of the glorious promises He has made to those who become His own. All who *bear* and accept this message are to repeat it to others and encourage them also to surrender their stubborn wills to their Creator and Savior.

Every soul without the Savior is restless, nursing a thirst that only Christ can quench. The offer made in this book is to *all who desire* forgiveness, peace, joy, and everlasting life. Let anyone who will, drink deeply of Christ Himself and of His wondrously revealed word, with all the promises and directions that are here to be received.

22:17b No matter how unworthy you may feel, and no matter what your past has been, God offers to forgive.

22:18a ... or reads ...

22:19a ... of all that is promised those whose names are ...

22:18-19b These verses sound a very serious warning to anyone who teaches from this book of

¹⁹And if you take away any of the words of the prophecy in this book, God will take from you your part^a in the Book of Life. You will not enter the Holy City nor have any part in the promises written in this book.^b

²⁰The One who has solemnly given us this message from God, says, “Be sure of this: I will come suddenly!”

Yes! May it all happen exactly as You have said. **Come, Lord Jesus!**

²¹May the kindness and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. So be it!

the Revelation, or from any other part of God’s word. To add things which are not revealed is positively dangerous. Likewise, to *take away any of the words of the prophecy in this book will result in God taking from Him his part in the Book of Life. He will not enter the Holy City nor have any part in the promises written in this book.*

Please permit a final warning to anyone who is tempted to disregard or soften the vivid details from the Lord in this Revelation concerning the overcomer, especially in 2:1 to 3:22. To water down these warnings is to *take away some of the words of the prophecy of this book!* And be sure that you as a reader accept the Lord’s message in its completeness for yourself. Be careful, as well, when presenting the teachings of The Revelation (and the rest of the Bible) to others, that it is done in absolute honesty. To do otherwise is to be a traitor, both to your hearers and to God! May you truly be an overcomer in all you do and in all you teach.

T

hen as I looked, I saw a white cloud. Sitting on the cloud was One who looked like Jesus, the Son of Man. There was a gold crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.

¹⁵Then another angel came out of the Temple and called out with a loud voice to the One sitting on the cloud, “Thrust in Your sickle now and reap the harvest, because the harvest of the earth is ripe, so it is time for You to reap!”

¹⁶So the One sitting on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and He reaped the harvest of the earth.

—Revelatin 14:14-16. See footnote.

APPENDIXES

200 Matthew 5:12

Do lukewarm “Christians” and unbelievers speak well of you? If so read what Christ has to say about you in Luke 6:26.

To be like the prophets of old, from the distant past to the recent past, is to be outspoken (as Christ and His apostles were) and to teach what they taught! There are so many these days who are called “a really nice guy” who preach a watered-down, easy way to Heaven. They are a stench and a disgrace to Christianity! You cannot be like them and expect a great reward in Heaven. They want their rewards now, and that’s all they will have. Matthew 16:24-27.

Jesus taught that the way to Heaven is **difficult**. Matthew 7:14. Be like Christ, and like His faithful servants of the past who have faithfully preached the whole message of the New Testament, without compromise. Christ doesn’t promise popularity in the present life when you do this, but He does promise a GREAT REWARD in Heaven.

Live and speak out boldly for God right where you are, and there’s no telling what the final great results will be. Never feel sorry for yourself under persecution, but rejoice—leap for joy! Your future is great! Jesus guarantees it.

200A Matthew 7:13-14

Just what is the narrow gate that leads to everlasting life? In John 10:7-9 Jesus states that He is the door and the gate that leads to life. What does He mean by that?

First of all, He means that because of your sin, He, God’s incomparable Son and your Creator (John 1:2-4), became man, and suffered and died on the cross to make amends for your sin, to make it possible for God to forgive you. But He also means that He is the Lord whom we must now obey if we are to gain life. See Romans 6:16; Hebrews 5:9.

So the key that now opens the gate for you to enter eternal life is your acknowledgment that Jesus Christ is your Savior, and that you will from now on, with God’s help, obey Him as your Lord. Romans 10:9-10.

The narrow gate gets us started on the right road. But also, the road that leads to eternal life is narrow and hazardous. There are all kinds of temptations along the way that must be overcome. There are tests of obedience that you will constantly meet up with. It’s not easy to triumph over natural inclinations day by day.

Another time (Luke 13:24) Jesus said, **You must use extreme effort in order to gain entrance thru the narrow gate.** And the same is true as you walk the path that leads to life. It’s easy enough to believe and to accept the fact that Jesus is the Savior, but to truly obey Him as Lord is difficult indeed.

* * *

The extreme effort needed to enter the gate that leads to Heaven involves determination to overcome (Revelation 2 & 3), with God’s help, the various sins of the flesh, and all other sins with which Satan has you enslaved to himself. He is passionately anti-God, and he doesn’t want you to become a child of God and inherit Heaven. He will do everything in his power to keep you from making the decision in the first place to enthrone Jesus in your life as Lord.

And once you enter the gate that leads to life, Satan will do his dead-level-best to trip you up and get you to leave the path to Heaven. But Jesus has promised to be with you (Revelation 3:20-21; John 14:23; Philippians 2:12-13) to help you overcome. With His help you will safely arrive home in Heaven!

But until you have entered the narrow gate in truth, you are not on the way to life at all. No one becomes a follower of the Lord without first counting the cost. But you must also consider the awful cost of not becoming His follower. The way to Heaven is not an easy way, but it’s a most rewarding way. There’s no middle road. No lukewarmness is accepted by God. Revelation 3:15-16. There’s no fence to straddle, to keep from being on either of the roads. You’re already on one of them.

The path to life is rough, steep, and hedged in on both sides, because in the will of God we must crucify evil passions—we must forgo many pleasures and activities, especially if Christ would have

no part in them.

You must be willing to let some of life's prizes go by. You're living for much higher and unsurpassed eternal prizes. You must be willing to part with much of what the world calls success. You are called to take up your cross and follow in the footsteps of your Lord. See notes on Matthew 10:38 and Mark 8:34-38.

* * *

As a wise person is willing to do without many things as He devotes himself to his education, in preparation for a short and uncertain future of possibly 60 or 70 more years, how much wiser it is to be willing to suffer the loss of even all things (if necessary), for the next 60 or 70 years, in order to make certain that your endless eternal future will be truly rich and fulfilling. So much is at stake!

"He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."—*Jim Elliot*

As the next verses in Matthew warn, beware of false teachers! They are everywhere. They are preaching an easy way to Heaven, which will never get you there. They are agents of Satan. If a minister's message doesn't go all the way with Christ's teachings, do not believe him. Believe what Christ and His apostles taught, and you will be safe.

* * *

But don't ever think that the Christian life is a cheerless life. No, it's a thrilling, challenging, and fulfilling life! It's a real challenge to live for Christ and speak out for Him, especially when we have the promise from Him that He will always be with us. Matthew 20:18-20. He has also promised He will always be at our side to help us to overcome every temptation and trial. See Philippians 2:12-13 and the note there. See also 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Peter 1:15; Hebrews 12:1-2; John 15:1-5.

And just like going on a trip, part of the joy of the Christian life is anticipating the pleasures, riches, and total fulfillment ahead at end of the road. You may be a pilgrim as you walk the narrow road, but a crown awaits those who overcome!

Christ never promised that the Christian life would be easy, but He has promised that the results in an endless eternity will be glorious indeed! You cannot afford not to enter the narrow gate and then walk the narrow way with resolute, unflinching, and zealous determination!

200B Matthew 7:23

The present tense here indicates that they are fresh from the scenes and acts of their disobedience. Those who pick and choose the commands in the New Testament they are willing to obey, and disregard (thereby disobey) the rest, are living in blatant disobedience to God! According to this warning from Christ, they will be barred from Heaven. Therefore, if this applies to you, repent, and make absolutely sure that you are genuinely born again. 2 Peter 1:10.

Also, remember, God won't accept *work* for *obedience*. Teaching, preaching and active zeal for Christ are no guarantee that you are living in obedience to Him in other matters, or that you are teaching others the absolute necessity of obedience. Read your Bible to know what God would have you do. Then do it, no matter what the cost. Your very life depends on it.

These words of Christ are indeed future prophecy. They are prophecies of warning that only the rebellious will ignore or regard lightly. As we will point out several times in these notes:

The obedience of even the most godly Christian will be imperfect; but even though imperfect, the intent to fully obey God must be real.

200C Matthew 7:26-27

The **sand** of these verses does not refer to the works of a person whose hope of salvation is in his own human efforts, as some teach. *It is absolutely necessary to be honest with God's word!* To change the meaning of God's plainly written word is both dishonest and dangerous. Revelation 22:19. The **sand** refers to the failure of this "believer" to make Christ the Lord of his life and *obey* Him.

It is true that we are born again (regenerated) by God, by His word and by His Spirit working in us. But God does not force any person to become a "new person in Christ" against his will. And the will cannot be passive. One must have an intense and strong *desire* to do God's will. See vss 13-23 and Luke 13:23-27. It is only in the truly sincere person that God can effectively work **to help you first of all to desire and determine to do what is pleasing to Him, and then help you to do it.** Philippians 2:13.

* * *

Malachi 3:18 states the following concerning Christ as future Judge: **Then you will again see what**

happens to those who lived righteous lives and to those who lived in sin, to those who served God and to those who did not. It is vital to realize that the Lord demands obedience and service on the part of those who would be His. Many will have some shocking and terrifying disappointments on that Great Day. But these disappointments will not be the portion of those who, in heeding the warning, become truly converted to Christ. Obviously, people's actions have a great deal to do with their salvation, as indicated by Jesus Himself.

If obedience to the Lord is lacking, there will be no salvation for that person, no matter how fine a Christian he may think himself to be. See also Matthew 8:11-12; 10:32-33; 12:36-37; 13:24-30, 36-43; 15:12-14; 16:24-27; 21:42-46; 25:1-46; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-24; Ephesians 5:5.

201 Matthew 24:29-31

Many Christians believe that Christ will have taken His own people to be with Himself before the Great Tribulation. Others believe the Lord will take His own from the earth near the middle of the last seven years of the age, or shortly thereafter. Still others believe this great event will not take place until Christ returns in power and glory at the Battle of Armageddon, or just previous to that battle, or immediately after. Then there are those who believe that Christ will not call His own to Himself until the moment described in vss 30-31.

It would be easiest, of course, if the first possibility were correct. How much better to be with the Lord than to go thru the Great Tribulation! Those who believe that Christians will go thru the Tribulation, or at least thru the first part of it, however, have some very convincing Scriptures to support their views.

One of the Scriptures used in support of their contention is 1 Corinthians 15:51-53: Now listen to me, and I will tell you something that has been a secret: Not all of us will die, but we will all be changed. It will happen in a fraction of a second, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sounding of the last trumpet. Because when that trumpet sounds, all the dead who belong to Christ will be resurrected back to life with bodies that will never die. And we who are still alive will also be changed. Because it is absolutely necessary that these decaying, dying bodies be exchanged for bodies that will never decay or die, that these temporary bodies be exchanged for bodies that are everlasting.

According to this Scripture, the Rapture will take place at the sounding of the last trumpet. The last trumpet mentioned in the book of The Revelation is the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:15; 15:1,5 to 16:21) which brings forth the seven vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. The proponents of a mid-tribulation Rapture point out correctly that the seventh trumpet begins to blow in the middle of the last seven years of the age, which period is known as the seven years of the Great Tribulation. The more severe part of the Tribulation will occur during the last 3 1/2 years. It will be a time of tribulation for the nation of Israel, and for all upon earth at that time who are true believers in Christ.

But also, the last 3 1/2 years of this seven will be the time of God's judgment upon the ungodly on the earth, and especially at the very end, during the Battle of Armageddon—and following this battle, during the time of darkness, earthquakes, great hailstones, and fire from Heaven. Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Peter 3:10-12.

This seventh trumpet will very likely continue to blow—at least in Heaven—for 3 1/2 years. Whether or not the sound of the trumpet will be a literal sound upon earth is not revealed. Those who say that the Rapture of the Church will occur in the middle of the seven years believe the Church will be raptured when this last trumpet begins to blow, or shortly thereafter.

* * *

The mid and post-tribulationists point out that if the last trumpet spoken of in 1 Corinthians is not the seventh and last trumpet of The Revelation, then there must be a trumpet blast which will follow, because it is definitely called "**the last trumpet.**" If there should be a trumpet to follow the seventh trumpet of The Revelation, the only remaining possibility concerning the timing of the Rapture would be its occurrence after the end of the seven years of the tribulation period.

Another Scripture the mid and post-tribulation rapturists use is 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. This is a very strong Scripture in their favor. We refer you to the notes on that Scripture.

As to a possible Rapture of the Church before the Tribulation, proponents support their view with such Scriptures as 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10. Because we know that God has not appointed us to be destroyed by His wrath, but to be saved by means of our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us, so that whether

we are still alert and watchfully living for Him when He comes, or have died in true hope, we will live together with Him forever. Please see the notes on this Scripture, as well.

Returning to v 31 in Matthew 24, people the world over will be included in this great event. Every true child of God who has died since the beginning of time will be resurrected. Every true Christian still living upon the earth will be caught up to be with the Lord. The parable of the good grain and the tares (Matthew 13:30) will thus be fulfilled. The evil will be harvested first (at Armageddon, and in the judgments that follow), and then as described in v 31, the angels will gather the good grain, **God's chosen ones**. Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-40.

* * *

We can hope to be with the Lord during the time of Great Tribulation on earth; in which case we must make sure that we truly love, obey, and serve Him, proving that we are truly born again, and are ready to go to be with Him. On the other hand, we must be ready and willing to suffer and die the martyr's death for the sake of our Lord, even today, if such be His will, and especially if we are to go thru the Tribulation. Also, we dare not believe in a post-tribulation Rapture of Christ's true Church, and use that as an excuse to put off getting right with the Lord until the Tribulation begins, because God's time for you to leave this life may be as soon as *today!*

But after all is said about the possibilities, Christ so plainly said in Matthew 24:29-31 that **immediately after the tribulation of those days there will be a powerful trumpet blast** (the last trumpet), and that it is then that **the angels will gather His chosen ones**.

But the *time* of the Rapture is not the all-important thing—getting right with God and being truly born again is what really matters. So be absolutely sure that you are truly born again. If you need help to find your way to God, be sure to read Appendix 247, page 520, entitled, *The Amazing Story of God*.

202 Matthew 25:1-13

The main lesson of this parable of the **ten girls** is that many people who consider themselves to be Christians, even waiting for the Lord's coming, will not make it. This is sad indeed. No true follower of Jesus will gloat over such tragedy, but will seek

to warn everyone to be most diligent to make your calling and election to salvation and eternal life with God a sure thing! 2 Peter 1:10.

The **lamps** and lights of the **five foolish girls** looked just like those of the **wise girls**. But the **foolish** had not made any provision to hold firm unto the end (Matthew 24:13), no matter how long or fierce the temptations to live to please ones' self. "The foolish virgins were like the seed that was sown upon the rock. They heard the word, and at once received it with joy, but they had no root. They were lacking in perseverance, in watchfulness. They did not keep in their minds the thought that, though the bridegroom might come at any moment, still, He might long delay; that there was need for daily preparation, of constant watchfulness for His coming."—*Matthew Henry*.

In our Lord's parable about the seed sown on the rock (Matthew 13:3-23), the seed was readily accepted by the tiny bit of soil on that rock, but the roots of the seed were never allowed to penetrate the stony heart. To produce fruit, the seed of the word of God must be allowed to penetrate deep into the life and soul of a person and take full possession. It is either *all* or *nothing*.

If you are holding back any portion of yourself from the Lord, and are unwilling to be faithful and obedient in everything, you are living in rebellion against Him. You are not really converted. Remember, Adam and Eve were rebellious in only one area of their lives. This does not mean that God demands sinless perfection. But He certainly does demand perfect intent.

* * *

Jesus ends this parable with another warning to **watch**. That word *watch* (*gregoreite* in the Greek) means to *not go to sleep, to keep awake*. We must keep awake to everything that would divert our attention away from the Lord and away from the prize. Life everlasting can only be claimed as we are found to be truly in Christ—all the way. Life eternal with our Lord will be so glorious, so wonderful, and so everlasting that no suffering or pain or waiting can be counted too high a price to pay. Remaining faithful to the end is an absolute imperative. Matthew 10:22; 24:13.

If you have not already done so, promise the Lord this very moment, from the very depths of your being, to be His totally, in sickness and in health, thru all temptations, rejections, or whatever, until you finally stand in His glorious presence. Don't allow any teaching or preaching of *easy*

believism rob you of eternal life. Jesus' warning about false teachers is very applicable today. **Both will fall into a pit**—both the teacher and the one who accepts his message. Matthew 15:14.

203 Matthew 25:14-30

God has entrusted to every one of us certain talents. They consist of abilities, opportunities, money, and whatever other blessings we have or will have in life.

In God's wisdom, and for His own good reasons and purposes, He has given many talents to some, and few talents to others. The person with only one talent is not to be jealous of the person with many. And the one with many talents is not to look down on the person with only one talent.

The person with many talents will have much more for which he will be held accountable to God at The Judgment than the person with only one talent. There will be the temptation to use one's many talents for personal gain, instead of for the glory of God and for the blessing of our fellowmen. Those with the five and the two talents in this parable would surely have been punished comparably to the unfaithful servant with the one talent, if they had invested and used their talents selfishly, or had hidden them in fear. Revelation 21:8.

But, oh, the joy there will be for all who have invested their time and talents wisely and faithfully for the glory of God. One may rightfully ask, "With the end results promised, are you working now as one ought to work, when such ultragreat rewards are obtainable?"

* * *

Each person has at least one talent. If you are a one-talent person, you may be tempted to believe that your little help is not important. But in the first place, what you make of what God has given you is very important to Him. And according to Christ's teaching here, it's very important to your own future as to what you do with whatever you are and have.

A person with lesser abilities and opportunities will never know what an impact he can make for God in this world unless he diligently uses the little he now has. God may be giving you a more difficult test with your one talent than those who have many. Don't fail the test, or as surely as you now live, you will receive the judgment Christ warns of here. But if you are faithful to the end, in

serving to the extent of your abilities and opportunities, you will receive a reward similar to those who have faithfully served with many talents.

Don't rely on what you've done in the past. Christ says we must be faithful to the end.

The unfaithful servant is seen in the many who want and expect to go to Heaven, but they will not go out of their way to serve Christ. If it's easy and pleasant, O.K. But they love their ease and their freedom to do just what they want to do, without concern about the great needs everywhere that could use their involvement.

According to this teaching by Christ, don't count on Heaven if you are living at ease and are unfaithful to your responsibilities and opportunities.

* * *

Does this mean you gain Heaven by good works? No. But from the beginning God demanded obedience. And when man sinned by disobeying God, He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for your sins and mine. Now you can be forgiven, because of what Christ has done for you. But the New Testament teaches thruout that after being forgiven you are now to become obedient—not only in a few things, but in everything!

In regard to the necessity of obedience to Christ if you are to be saved, look up and read Acts 5:32; Romans 2:6-9; 6:16; 10:9-10; Hebrews 5:9.

Again, **Be most diligent to make your calling and election to salvation and eternal life with God a sure thing!** 2 Peter 1:10.

The whole world is in rebellion against God, and therefore lost! They need to know what you know about Christ and His teachings, and about salvation thru Him! According to Matthew 28:18-20, you and I are responsible before God to tell them. Use your talents fully in doing so! And don't stop until your last day on earth! A Christian must never retire from talking to others about their eternal destination. Romans 10:9-10.

The unfaithful servant was called **wicked and lazy**. To be lazy, and little concerned about warning the lost, is wickedness. And such wickedness will be severely judged by God, into outer darkness. The man's excuse was, **I was afraid**. Is that also your excuse for not witnessing? That was the excuse the Israelites used for not obeying God's orders to march in and possess the promised land. And look what happened to them. Numbers 13 and 14. God gives the same warning to cowards today. Revelation 21:8.

Wickedness does not consist of only the wrong you may do. Negative evil—failing or refusing to do what Christ has commanded you to do—is just as sinful. As we see here, it will be judged just as severely. Your reward will be great if you are faithful to the end—but your punishment will be horrendous if you are lazy and disobedient.

You may think that God's demands are too great, that He's expecting too much. No, He's only demanding right living and right use of what He's given you. And He's promised to always be with you, to forgive, and to help you live and serve as He demands. You are not on your own. God is always with you to help. See Philippians 2:12-13 and the note there. If you sincerely ask for God's help, you can't fail. But you must ask in all sincerity. God bless you! We'll be looking for you in Heaven. Bring many with you!

204 Matthew 25:31-46

A great judgment is pictured in these verses, with Jesus Christ seated as Judge. Many have believed this picture to be of the great and final judgment of the wicked. However, since this judgment will take place **when the Son of Man comes in His glory**, it cannot be the final judgment of the wicked. Rather, it is the judgment of all persons still alive on the earth at the time of Christ's return. The final judgment of the wicked is to take place at the end of the first thousand years of Christ's reign on earth—the Millennium. Read Revelation 20.

All of God's people who have died will be resurrected to meet Christ in the air **when He returns**, together with those of His who are still alive on the earth. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. These will live in the Heavenly Jerusalem. Revelation 21:9-27; 22:1-5. So no Christian or Old Testament saint will be included in this judgment, as they will already be with Christ.

As far as the wicked dead are concerned, **The rest of the dead did not come back to life again until the end of the thousand years.** Revelation 20:5. It is safe to conclude, then, that sinners who had died before Christ returns will not be included in the judgment described in this Scripture. The final judgment of the wicked dead will come one thousand years later. Revelation 20:11-15.

It appears quite definitely that the purpose of the judgment mentioned in these verses is to determine who among those still alive on the earth after the Tribulation, and after Christ's true follow-

ers have been transported to Heaven, are worthy to become subjects in Christ's great new Kingdom on earth. Although **all nations** will be gathered before the Lord for this judgment, individual persons will be judged on an individual basis. God does not cast entire nations into Hell. He saves the righteous among them.

* * *

What criterion will the Lord use at this judgment to judge individuals? The apparent basis will be as to how each one has treated the Lord's **brothers and sisters** during the time of the Great Tribulation. And who are the Lord's **brothers and sisters**? No doubt they will include the Jews and Christians who will go thru the Great Tribulation.

Even if the Rapture of the Church should take place before the Great Tribulation, there will still be persons converted to Christ during the time of the Tribulation. So it appears that the basis for the Lord's judgment upon these people will be based upon their treatment of the Jews and Christians during that last terrible time of testing.

The Lord does not promise Heaven to these friends of the Jews and Christians on the basis of their friendship. Only as these individuals are converted to Christ as Lord and Savior during the Millennium is it probable that eternal life will be theirs. Jesus' words to them are, **Come, you who are now so accepted and blessed by My Father, and inherit the Kingdom that was prepared for you before the world was created.**

* * *

God's Kingdom on earth will not be populated, as we have mentioned, by those who are with the Lord in the Heavenly Jerusalem. But the earth will be repopulated by those who had been good to God's people, and who had not taken the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16-18; 14:9-11) during the time of the reign of the Satan-inspired man, the Antichrist.

The individuals sent from the Lord's presence at this time **into everlasting fire** will be those who had mistreated the Jews and Christians during the time of the Great Tribulation, or had refused to help them. They will be the people who had cooperated with Antichrist and had received his mark on their hand or forehead.

As the Scriptures warn, no one who receives this mark and cooperates with Antichrist will have any part in God's Kingdom. Revelation 14:9-11

states, And another angel, a third one, followed them, loudly shouting, 'Here's what will happen to anyone who worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on his hand or forehead: He will be included among those who will drink of the wine of God's furious anger, which has been poured out full strength into the cup of His boiling fury. And he will be tormented with fire and burning sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment will rise up forever and ever. Day after endless day and night after endless night they will have no rest. This awful judgment will fall upon all who worship the beast and his image, and upon all who receive his mark or his name.'

* * *

It will be difficult, if not next to impossible, to buy or sell thru ordinary channels during part or all of the Tribulation period without the mark of the beast. But to accept that mark will ultimately result in judgment and Hell. The reign of Antichrist, **the beast**, will be anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Jew, and anti-Christian. And God warns that anyone who has any part with the Antichrist—accepting his mark or number in their forehead or in their right hand for the necessary and legitimate purposes of doing business, or even of sustaining life—will lose his soul. See also Daniel 7:9-10; Malachi 3:1-5; Mark 6:11; Jude 3-4, 13-15.

The **eternal life** received by those who are declared **righteous** at this judgment will no doubt be eternal life on the earth, but not in the Heavenly Jerusalem. Revelation 21:9-27; 22:1-5. At least, this is the immediate promise Christ will give them.

205 Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-15

Consider what the Lord is saying here in the parable about the farmer sowing seed. The one sowing seed is any minister, Bible teacher, or anyone else telling one or more people the Great News God has for them.

Those receiving the message along the hard pathway are those who hear the message, but their hard hearts won't allow the message to change them. They try as quickly as possible to forget it, especially if they were convicted by it. Some of these folks even attend church regularly. They attend mainly for social reasons, or to ease their conscience. They have little interest in the truth. They think only of their own selfish plans and

desires.

Such hearts need to be plowed deeply by uncompromising preaching, backed by much prayer by preacher and people. There needs to be a breaking up and crushing of the heart in order to get the seed in where it can grow. If those with hard hearts have any concern at all for their future in Heaven or Hell, they also need to pray.

The writer of these notes is experienced in this area. I was a hypocrite. I was an active church member, and listened to the message preached every week. But nothing changed. I really didn't have desire to change, although I knew I should. Finally, after many years, I prayed, "Lord, I know what I should do, but I'm not willing. I seem to be helpless. But I'm willing for You to make me willing." God answered my prayer. It cost me plenty to be crushed, but the blessed assurance I now have in Christ is worth it all.

* * *

Those who receive the seed in the thin soil on the rock are those who joyfully accept the message, but can't take the heat when persecution comes. They are more concerned about keeping their old friends who are on their way to Hell, and more concerned about pleasing neighbors and family members than in pleasing the Lord. They want Heaven, but not if it's going to cost them very much.

Some of this is due to faulty preaching and teaching. Jesus always let His hearers know that it would cost them everything to follow Him and gain eternal life. Innumerable preachers and teachers today are preaching an easy way to Heaven. The way is not easy; it's hard! Matthew 7:13-14. But every step of the difficult way will be abundantly worth it when we get where we are going, instead of where they are going.

* * *

Those who receive the message among thorns are those who agree with the message. The Greek word for *hear* in this instance has been translated **continue to listen**, because it's in the present active, denoting continuous present action.

These are people who agree with the message, are baptized, become church members, and even serve the Lord. But they are slaves to their daily cares, and are cumbered with desire for wealth and for all in this life that will satisfy their carnal appetites.

The work they do for the Lord is done mainly to ease their conscience. They would rather spend their time “in a more profitable and enjoyable way.” So the work they do for God is not from the heart and is not very effective. They don’t produce a crop.

Give heed to Christ’s warning to such people in John 15:1-6. Christ demands our all, nothing less. You cannot be only half converted and be converted. You may object and say that that’s not the way Rev. or Dr. So and So preaches and teaches. But it is the way Christ and His apostles taught! Check it out. Read the Book for yourself and let God show you what the truth is.

* * *

Don’t let the cares of this world and the desire for things and experiences bog you down and bring upon you the judgment received by those in John 15:1-6.

Be one of those in Mark 4:20. The Greek word for *bear* in this verse is also translated **continue to listen**, because it’s also in the present active, indicating continuous present action. But it’s also in the indicative mood, which is the mood of certainty. These folks have a positive attitude about the message of the Lord. They really believe it, and live it.

They put obedience to God ahead of all else. And they are constantly searching His word so they may obey and serve Him better. Anything that hinders or keeps them from being their best for the Lord is put out of their lives, or they turn it completely over to the Lord, trusting Him to make it a blessing instead of a hindrance. They are living for God, and for eternal treasures. They are thoroughly enjoying the present, in spite of the difficulties, as they serve the Lord in whatever occupation they are in. But their sights are on the eternal future!

No wonder God is blessing, and they are producing a great harvest. Join these dedicated ones with all your heart! Fearful warnings from Christ and His apostles hang over all others! Not on just some of the others, but on *all* the others!

206 Mark 8:34

Notice that Christ is speaking here to the whole crowd, not just to the twelve men He had called to be His special followers during His life on earth. Also notice that in verses 36 and 37 He indicates very strongly that what He has to say here

has to do with the matter of life or death! And it’s a matter of either *eternal* life or *eternal* death!

He’s telling us here what it really means to be a Christian. He’s letting His hearers know what it means to be truly born again. He’s emphasizing the fact that their minds must be completely changed from thinking of ways and means to please themselves, to being wholly concerned with pleasing Him and telling as many in the world as possible the Great News about the Savior. v 35.

We should consider the words of our Lord here to be of more than ordinary importance, because it’s very evident that He laid great stress upon what He was saying. If we know that there is anything without which we cannot be true followers of Christ, it certainly ought to be of great concern to us, because the very life and salvation of our souls depend upon complying with what Christ says here. Let each of us then take earnest heed to what Christ is saying. Let us be deeply concerned about that which He declares is necessary to prove our claim that we are His followers.

* * *

That which got us into trouble with God in the first place was our stubborn insistence on having our own way instead of obeying our Father. Thru the suffering and death Jesus Christ suffered for us, God has made the way possible for Him to forgive our sins. But in order for Him to be doing the right thing when forgiving us, we must firmly decide to no longer live this life in the way we please, but in the way God desires that we live it!

Many are interested in receiving forgiveness thru Christ until they realize it will cost them their own will, and that they must now live to please God. These people appear willing to worship God, to study the Scriptures, to join in prayer; and they’ll do many things (just like Herod, Mark 6:20) which would make one believe that they have an earnestness and zeal in the cause of Christ; but they draw back when they are called to the difficult exercise of self-denial.

People are willing and ready to exercise self-denial when it comes to something in which their heart is set. For example, look at the man whose ambition it is to prosper in business. What a life of self-denial he is willing to lead. And when working toward a good education, people are willing to exercise much self-denial in order to gain that education, which will benefit them for only a few brief years in this life. If you can exercise self-denial on other occasions and for other purposes,

but feel it too bothersome when called on to do so to please Christ, what does that say about you? It says that your heart is not really with Christ. It says that you are not truly born again.

We must make up our minds to give ourselves wholly to God and to our Savior, Jesus Christ. Christ has plainly said that He will disown those who claim to be His, but are lukewarm in their interest and willingness to go all out for Him. See Revelation 3:1-5, 14-16.

Whenever self-denial is spoken of, there naturally arises in the mind a hatred for it because of the difficulty of self-denial and the pain one experiences in putting it into practice. But let's not give way to this hatred, when we see how our Lord emphasizes the necessity of self-denial, and that it is so absolutely necessary!

One must agree that self-denial is indeed difficult—very difficult. But let's remember that we are not left to face this difficulty alone in our own feeble strength. No, God will give us His Holy Spirit if we ask Him (Luke 11:13), and with His divine cooperation we will be able to do what otherwise would be not only difficult, but impossible. Let's also remember this, *the pain of self-denial is very temporary, but the advantages that flow from it are everlasting!*

Concerning God being always with you to help you live to please Him, see Philippians 2:13 and Appendix 218, page 482.

207 Mark 8:35

At times Christ and His apostles made general statements about believing in Christ for salvation, such as John 3:16. At other times they made specific statements, stating what it really means to believe in Christ for salvation. This is one of those specific statements.

To believe in Christ means to turn from our selfishness and sin and fully obey Him, and to be deeply concerned for all others who need to do likewise! That's what Christ is saying here.

He is telling us that we must die to every evil and selfish desire, and live only to obey Him, in all things! This includes living for the purpose of telling everyone the Great News—reaching as many as you possibly can reach by every means possible, with God's help.

If you need to know and obey the Great News (Romans 2:8; 6:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 5:9) in order to gain eternal life, so does everyone else! They need to know what you know. And they need to know the whole truth, not a watered-down

version! Christ has rewards for His faithful servants, but fiery judgment for His servants who prove unfaithful. Jesus gives very clear promises and warnings of this in Matthew 24:45-51 and 25:14-30.

The same applies to us that applied to Ezekiel, when God told him, **Son of man, I have appointed you to be a watchman for the people of Israel. So listen carefully to what I say, and warn them from Me. When I say to the wicked, "You will surely die!" but you don't give him any warning, you don't speak out to warn him about the results of the sinful way in which he is living, in order to save his life, that sinful man will die in his sins; but I will hold you responsible for the death of his soul!**

However, if you do warn that wicked person, and he still doesn't turn from his sinning, and refuses to repent, he will die as a sinner, but you have saved yourself from being judged as worthless. Ezekiel 3:17-19. See 1 Corinthians 9:27 and the note.

* * *

The death warned of above is the second death, the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15; 21:7-8. And the life referred to is eternal life.

God would be unrighteous if He allowed into His Heaven those who are selfish, inconsiderate of others, and afraid of what others will say or do if they speak to them about their sin and the Savior. God warns that the cowardly and fearful will not be in His Heaven. He lists them with all other sinners who will not make it. Revelation 21:8.

If you truly love God and love others you will want to warn everyone about the consequences of their sinning, and about the Savior. If you have been negligent in doing so, repent, and begin right now to speak out for Him—for His glory and for the salvation of the lost. Psalm 26:2.

Christ was so concerned about our lost condition that He left all He had in Heaven, in order to save us. He now states that if we are really His followers, we will do the same. We will make it our main purpose in life to obey Him, and to give of our time, our strength, and our everything to save those who are lost!

This may involve some drastic change of present or future plans, whether you are young or old. Begin right where you are. Reach out to those nearest you, and then to those farther out. Begin in your present position, whether in school, at work, in a business or profession, or wherever. And do begin at home, and determine most earnestly and seriously to begin at once!

Be sure to consider Romans 10:9-10 in this regard. This Scripture is just as important for your salvation as John 3:16!

208 Mark 8:36-37

It is no crime to be happy in this present life. The crime is either in seeking happiness from wrong sources or being so intensely interested in earthly joys that one forgets the great Source from whom these blessings come to us.

If we become so interested in earthly pursuits that we pursue them from wrong motives, or by wrong means, or with such feverish anxiety that they become the main objects for which we live, then we are seeking to gain the things of this world to the injury of our eternal soul. And to lose the soul is not, as some believe, annihilation. The loss of the soul will be to endure an awful existence in Hell without God!

Just suppose that you reached your highest ambitions for life—you gained possessions, popularity, all the thrills and excitements that the flesh and mind can absorb, even power over millions of people. You gained absolutely everything in this world. It all belongs to you and you can have any part of it at any time in any measure. Just what would you really have?

After all, even if you could buy a thousand or a million suits or dresses, you could wear only one at a time. You could eat only one meal at a time, or gratify yourself in any other way one thrill at a time. So even if you had gained the whole world you wouldn't be able to satisfy yourself with very much. And even if you gained the whole world it wouldn't last very long, because these bodies of ours grow old very quickly. And eternity is forever. In reality, all of your gain would be very shallow satisfaction.

Even your most cherished possessions will soon go to others. No matter what you now own, it will someday soon belong to someone else!

* * *

Besides, where is the rich person who is perfectly satisfied with his wealth, and feels that he has all he needs to make him happy? Every rich person is investigating ways by which he can gain just a little bit more. The same is true of the one who lives to satisfy the various passions of the body. The satisfying never brings true or lasting satisfaction. Only Heaven will bring perfect fulfillment!

If you miss Heaven, you have missed everything!

Most folks aren't concerned about gaining the whole world; they are willing to sell their souls for very little. Just what are you willing to sell your soul for? Just what is it that you are willing to accept in exchange for *your* soul?

* * *

Think of how foolish it is, really, to sell out so cheaply, when by giving your life to Jesus now, and living for Him now, you can have the assurance thru His promises that you will have wealth and riches and pleasures forever in Heaven! You may lose your wealth here—even your health, your friends, and everything else you have on earth, but if, thru the witness of the Holy Spirit with your spirit, you have the assurance that you are truly born again and that eternal life waits for you ahead in the glories of God's Heaven, you're still rich beyond imagination.

* * *

If the world is gained, nothing of any real or lasting value is gained; if the soul is lost, everything is lost! The person who is mainly concerned with fulfillment in this present life asks the question, "Which is the most pleasant and the easiest thing to do?" while the true Christian asks, "Which is the right thing to do?" and will choose that, no matter what the cost. The man of the world looks at death as a loss, while the true Christian looks at death as gain. See Philippians 1:21.

Our lives reach far beyond the things now seen. Are you preparing to really live in the future, or merely exist in constant, irreversible regret? You can change your destination now, but not after it's too late. Choose real life, no matter what it may cost you! Live your life for Jesus, and for others, so you may also lead many of these others to real and eternal life!

209 Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26

"The meaning of this verse is that whoever shall refuse, either thru pride or because of sin, to acknowledge to others that Christ is his Lord (Romans 10:9-10) and Savior, and to then truly serve Him here, shall be excluded from His Kingdom hereafter.

"When Christ comes again He will come in most awesome grandeur; not as the babe in Beth-

lehem, not as the man of Nazareth, but as the Son of God in majesty and great power and glory! Those who will not acknowledge Him here in this life must be rejected by Him for the next life; those who will not serve Him on earth will not enjoy His blessings in Heaven.”—*Barnes’ Notes*.

Confessing or denying Christ does not only mean to do so with words, but also by the way we live and the purpose for which we live. Nevertheless, our words are very important. You can see the importance of them in Romans 10:9-10. Acknowledging your allegiance to Christ, and being acknowledged by Him to the Father, is the same as work-days and pay-day. If, in act and word, we acknowledge Him here to others, we will be welcomed Home to Heaven by Him.

* * *

Those who willingly and gladly follow Jesus when the road is smooth and easy, but leave Him when it gets rugged and hard (Matthew 13:5-6, 20-21), will have much to fear at the coming of Christ. Those who inwardly believe His teaching, but because of fear of ridicule from unbelievers are afraid to confess it, also have much to fear. This is also true concerning those who are faithful in attending the various services of the church, but refuse to take responsible duties that they should assume in Christ’s service. People of this character, and all who resemble them, are false Christians.

Nothing less than a sincere, constant, and total obedience to the moral law which Jesus came to fulfill will be accepted from His followers. And no pretenses, excuses, and glossing over will be of any value if this essential and absolutely necessary condition is not complied with.

It is easy enough to confess Christ before those in your own church and among your Christian friends, but do you confess Him among those who despise and hate Him? Are you willing to stand up for what Christ taught among those who despise His teachings, and by your very life testify for Him?

This warning from Christ includes all who merely profess to know Him, whatever their position or circumstance may be. And it adds to the disgrace of being ashamed of Christ when the shame is clearly visible in the presence of those who are low and worthless in their morals.

Consider the contrast between the low and contemptible people in whose presence many “believers” are ashamed of Christ here on earth,

and then the magnificent assembly in whose presence Christ will be ashamed of them hereafter.

* * *

Why should we ever be ashamed of Jesus? That we can ever be justified in such shame is, of course, impossible.

Those who have been unfaithful will be ashamed, and the others exalted, in the day of judgment. Then He who knows us altogether will separate us, according to His unerring judgment of our characters. All will be resurrected, **some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.**

See Hebrews 3:6-19 and the notes there.

210 Luke 12:16-21

Consider these facts concerning this rich farmer: This man was not a vile sinner. It is simply that his body and soul had both become the slaves of his wealth. Being utterly and hopelessly selfish, he forgot both God and others. His only concern now was about himself.

God doesn’t desire that anyone should lose his riches, but that he should transfer as much as possible to eternal investments. A true Christian does this by giving to the needs of God’s church, by helping those who are less fortunate, and by helping to finance the publishing of the message of life, both at home and abroad. The greater proportion of one’s time and finances that one is able to invest in this way, the greater will be his treasure in Heaven. See Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 16:9.

We must all realize how very brief this life is, and how uncertain it is. Any one of us may be gone before another day dawns. Therefore, our greatest concern should not be that we have plenty so that we may enjoy life, but that we are obeying God and are putting His concerns first.

* * *

Even if this was a young farmer, and he was able to retire at the age of 30, he had no assurance that he had a long life ahead of him in which to enjoy his wealth. Proverbs 27:1 states, **Don’t brag about what you’ll do tomorrow. God may have other plans for you.**

This man was already rich, and he could have done so much good with the extra harvest he had. He could have been a blessing to many, while at the same time laying up treasure for himself in

Heaven.

God says that people like this man are fools. A wise man is farsighted. He looks into the future, and prepares for it. If we have any sense at all, we will realize that we have absolutely no definite future promised here. We can live only a day at a time. But we are promised a future forever with God if we have accepted His forgiveness of our sins thru Jesus Christ, if we prove by our lives that we have truly repented of our sins, and, if we are living now for the purpose of pleasing and obeying Him. The only future we can be sure of is that which is beyond this life.

We have two choices: We can choose to live for ourselves, to gratify our flesh, and to forget about the needs of others and about really obeying God, with the result that at the Judgment we will be sent far from God into an awful Hell; or we can be farsighted and live to please God, by using our time and strength to help others, and to share the Great News of God's love and salvation with a lost world. Then we can look joyfully forward to a future that is everlasting, and wonderful beyond words. "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose."—*Jim Elliot*.

* * *

We cannot take the things of this earth with us, but we can send on ahead our time and strength and the wealth we have. Jesus commanded that we lay up treasures in Heaven. Matthew 6:19-21. It's the only sensible way to live. The present life is too brief and too uncertain, while the eternity God has promised those who love Him is altogether certain, and will never end.

Consider these facts also: Many times we hear the question, "How much is he worth?" Truly, the man is worth only as much as he has laid up in Heaven, because he will soon lose everything else. He will soon have to leave it all behind, to others. If a millionaire or billionaire is actually a selfish, worthless character, he dies a pauper.

There is nothing wrong with preparing for old age, but while doing so, remember the present and eternal needs of others as well. There are so many who need all that you can be to them, and great will be your rewards in Heaven.

One man was heard to say that he was now 40 years of age, and had lived half of his life. But how does he know? Maybe he has now lived all of his life. The good we plan to do we better do now. We have no promise of another tomorrow.

Consider how much the rich man in this

parable lost. He comes before the Judge with a lost name, because God calls him **You fool**; with a lost soul, because it is taken away from him by force; with a lost world, because he has to leave that behind him; and with a lost Heaven, because he hasn't made any provision for his future there. He has no treasure there. And from all indications his heart has not been there. **For where your investments are, that's where your heart will be also.** Matthew 6:21. **Because it's when you are sincerely believing with your heart that you gain right standing with God.** Romans 10:9-10.

The truly wise man is rich toward God. His purpose in life is to please and obey God, and to lay up treasure in Heaven, so he is rich indeed. By being rich toward God, he becomes rich forever!

211 Acts 20:20-21

Paul tells here how he had been totally honest with the people. He was never fearful to tell them the full truth, and then leave the consequences with God.

His message was always the same, that they must repent and turn from their sinning, and trust in the Savior whom God had sent. Both of these teachings must be followed, or there is no salvation. There must be both a turning from all sin, and a trusting in the only Savior. See also Acts 26:19-20.

Many times we hear the statement: "There is only one thing necessary to obtain everlasting life, and that is to trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior." That is wrong, wrong, wrong, because it is misleading! It implies that all one has to do is to believe *the fact* that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins, and that if we trust Him as our Savior we have eternal life. But the Bible plainly teaches that the only kind of belief that saves is heart-belief. It's not only belief in facts. See Romans 10:10. This is not speaking of your heart of flesh, but the very heart center of your being. We sometimes speak of an aching heart, an anxious heart, a black heart, a broken heart, a childlike heart. *Rodale's Word Finder* lists some 400 such adjectives that are used when describing the heart of the soul.

It is true that Jesus Christ is the only Savior. He is the only One by whom we can obtain God's forgiveness and eternal life. A theological term used in regard to our obtaining this forgiveness is the word *justification*. To be justified means to be absolved of guilt.

But besides being absolved of guilt thru Jesus

Christ, we also must be *regenerated*. Jesus called this being “born again.” It means to be made new. To be made new means that we not only trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins, but that we surrender our will to Him, to obey God, and live to please Him. That’s what being born again and being regenerated is all about.

But still this is all of God. God has provided justification thru Jesus Christ, and He is also the One who provides the regeneration. We are informed in the Scriptures that we are born again by the Holy Spirit and by the word of God. That means that the Holy Spirit uses God’s word to convict and convince us that we are sinners and that we are in dire need of the forgiveness God offers us thru Jesus Christ, and that we must now turn from our disobedience to become obedient children of God. If you are trusting Christ as your Savior, but have not made Him your Lord, you are still in rebellion against God, and are unsaved. God will not grant you justification in your rebellious state. Romans 8:13-14.

* * *

As Paul states here, he had been preaching that a person must come to God with a repentant heart and with faith in Jesus Christ. Both are necessary. You cannot get to Heaven merely by now obeying God, and neither can you get there merely by believing in Jesus Christ as your Savior. You must both *repent* and *trust*. For further teaching on this fact see Luke 24:47; Galatians 6:8; 1 Timothy 6:18,19; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:2; Revelation 16:15.

If you are concerned about where you really stand in your relationship to God, turn to Appendix 247, page 520, and read *The Amazing Story of God*, and there make a full surrender of your life to your Lord and Savior. Then you can have the assurance that all is well, and that you have truly been born again.

may receive God’s forgiveness and gain eternal life with Him.

A fisherman tells about when he was fishing on a slow-moving river where there was danger a little farther downstream because of several low falls which could be very hazardous if one became so interested in fishing that one’s boat drifted over those falls. One day as he was fishing above those falls, he heard loud shouts, and upon looking downstream he saw a man in a small boat about to go over the falls. His boat did plunge over and capsize, with the man struggling in the water to keep afloat. This was a favorite fishing place, and many men were standing on each side of the river fishing, and many of them were no doubt thinking, “There’s a man in the water. He might drown.” But only one man did anything about it. He plunged into the river and dragged the man ashore, and then went out again and pulled his boat in.

* * *

Are you guilty of looking at your neighbors and others, wherever you may be, and thinking, “There is someone who is no doubt lost. He will go to Hell unless he hears the Great News about Jesus and His salvation”? But you do nothing about the situation. Or are you plunging in, realizing that you may be misunderstood and persecuted in various ways for doing so, but reaching out nevertheless to those lost persons with the message of salvation thru Jesus?

Second: We must bring the message to the lost, because Jesus has commanded that we do so! Mark 16:15; 8:34-35. And Hebrews 5:9 informs us, **Jesus is the source of salvation and eternal life for all who make it their practice to obey Him.** Are we obeying Him when we refuse to make it our practice to talk to others about Him, when He has commanded that we do so? Therefore, we must open our mouth and speak to a lost world!

* * *

212 Romans 10:9-10

Before considering *how* we may witness for Christ, let us consider *the absolute necessity and importance* of doing so:

First: Those who do not have God’s forgiveness are lost, and face an awful judgment! That’s why Christ came to this earth and lived and suffered and died for us, that He might be the sacrifice to God for our sins. It is absolutely necessary that the world be given this message, so that they

Now for some brief thoughts on how to witness for Christ:

The most difficult part about talking to others about Christ is knowing how to begin the conversation. One of the easiest ways to begin your witness for Christ is to simply ask one of the questions listed in the Matthew 28:18-20 note, on page 70. You can ask these questions of anyone, at any time, anywhere. By the answers you receive you

will know quite well where that person stands spiritually. In answer to the question, "Are you planning on making it to Heaven?" most folks answer, "Well, I surely hope so." No matter what their response is, next ask, "Do you know how to get to Heaven for sure?" To this, many will respond with the one-word question, "How?" They are wide open! So tell them how in the best way you know.

Then encourage them to purchase a modern speech translation of the Bible or New Testament, because for a first reading it is best that they read a modern version. The more understandable we can make the truth, the better.

And do encourage them to pray and ask God to help them understand what they read.

Also, encourage them to read the New Testament first, beginning with the Gospel of Luke. Tell them they can read the first two Gospels later on, but it's best to begin with the Gospel of Luke. For a non-Christian or new Christian to read all four Gospels in succession, it gets a bit heavy. But if they will begin with the Gospel of Luke, they can then read the Gospel of John next, which is different, so they won't have the repetition.

Even if you get no further than to challenge them to read thru the New Testament, you will have planted a seed that most folks will never forget. Hopefully, sometime in their life they will desire to know the truth, and will remember your words and read God's word.

Another good way to witness is to give your own testimony. Somewhere in the conversation you can say something like, "Let me tell you what happened to me..."

* * *

You will miss many opportunities to witness unless you make up your mind to witness to everyone. We even need to witness to people who claim to be Christians. Ask them if they are born again and are obeying the Lord. Ask them if they are obeying the Lord by witnessing to others. Ask them how many they are bringing with them to Heaven. Many people claiming to be Christians are not born again. 2 Corinthians 5:17. And Christ stated that only those who are born again will enter Heaven. Impress upon them that fact. Then in your own words you can tell them how to be born again by giving them the message you will find in Appendix 247, page 520, entitled *The Amazing Story of God*. Tell the story in your own words. And don't fail to warn them about the Judgment, and Hell. They all need to be reminded

that the alternative to Heaven is Hell.

One way to keep yourself alert to opportunities to witness is to think of witnessing every time the phone rings. The person calling may need some spiritual help or challenge, even though a Christian. And if it turns out to be a wrong number, here is your great opportunity. Simply acknowledge the fact that they have reached a wrong number, but then quickly, before they can hang up, say, "But you were supposed to call here." Follow that with, "I have a message for you." Then you can ask them, "Are you planning on making it to Heaven?" or some such question.

Depending on how the conversation goes, you can then encourage them to read thru the New Testament, guaranteeing them that before they finish, they will know how to get to Heaven for sure. Even if they don't stay on the line very long, you will have at least planted a seed.

* * *

And whenever the door bell rings, take it as an opportunity to say a word for the Lord. When you go shopping, go for a walk, or wherever, look for opportunities to witness to someone. There are opportunities all over the place.

When on vacation you will find many opportunities to witness. Especially you will have an opportunity if someone asks directions to someplace. After answering their question, whether you can direct them or not, ask them if they know how to get to Heaven. Our main purpose in life should be to make this brief time on earth really count for the Lord in the lives of others, and for the glory of God.

What would happen if everyone who claims to be a Christian was really obeying Romans 10:9-10 and was witnessing for the Lord at every opportunity? There would be a great spiritual awakening! God no doubt wants to start with you in your area.

And don't ever be fearful about speaking to others about the Lord, because it is *they* who become fearful as soon as you open your mouth and begin to talk about Him. This is especially true if you are praying about your witnessing. The Spirit of God will bring conviction upon them the moment you begin to speak. We truly believe that in these last days the Lord is going to so challenge His people to witness for Him that they will be as awesome as an army with banners.

Jesus died for us in order that our sins might be forgiven. Then He cleanses us daily by His

word, so that He might present to Himself a glorious Church, one having no stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, being pure and undefiled. Ephesians 5:27. From all that that Scripture tells us, this is the kind of glorious Church the Lord will have on earth during the end-time days. In these last days **those who know their God will be strong, and carry out great exploits.** Daniel 11:32.

Begin now, today, to talk to others about the Lord! Your exploits for the Lord may have a small beginning, but there's no telling how greatly God will use you later on if you are faithful.

* * *

Here are some statements from others regarding these all-important verses:

"Faith that gets no further than the head will not save. . . . There is a faith which accepts all that needs to be believed, and yet is not saving faith. The requirement is heart faith. Today we are developing heads and minimizing hearts. . . . The light of moral knowledge can play around the head while the heart is untouched; and where hearts are unaffected there can be no true moral reformation...If the heart were full of Christ, would the mouth be full of things of the world? . . . Both the head and the heart, the body and the soul, must move onward to the accomplishment of the perfected salvation."—*The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*.

* * *

"The risen Savior must be confessed when found. Faith in a risen Savior who is waiting to be found by us must prove its genuineness by the confession of His *name*. It's when we take the Lord's side deliberately that we have tested the reality of our faith. There is a cowardly tendency to believe, but not confess; to get the benefits of salvation without running a single risk for our Savior. But such a selfish, easy-going faith is mere delusion. Whoever really believes in Jesus will not be ashamed to talk about Him to others."—*Pulpit Commentary*

* * *

"Two things are required as conditions of salvation:—1) *Confessing the Lord Jesus*—openly professing our relationship to Him and our dependence upon Him as our Lord and Savior...taking a stand for Him no matter where or what the situation. Our Lord Jesus lays a great stress upon this confessing of Him before men. See Matthew 10:32-33. . . .

"2) *Believing in the heart that God raised Jesus from the dead.* The profession of faith with the mouth, if there be not the power of it in the heart, is but a mockery. . . . And concerning faith: It is with the heart that men must believe, which implies more than an acceptance with the understanding, and takes in the consent of the will, an inward, hearty, sincere, and strong consent. It is not believing (not to be reckoned as so) if it is not with the heart. . . .

"So we have here a brief summary of the terms of salvation, and they are very reasonable; in short they are this, that we must devote, dedicate, and give up, to God, our souls and our bodies—our souls in believing with the heart, and our bodies in confessing with the mouth. This do, and thou shalt live."—*Matthew Henry*

See also Matthew 7:6; 28:18-20 notes and Appendix 226, page 486.

213 ¹ Corinthians 3:8-17; 2 Corinthians 5:10

Perhaps you have never stood on trial before, but at the end of this life you will. It is something that God tells us will positively happen to everyone, and it is something that must happen, because God would be neglectful if He did not demand obedience and diligence in His service.

There must be a day of accounting. This is why it is absolutely necessary to live in obedience to God. We are responsible moral agents, and we will be held accountable for our every act, word, and thought—for every action and every failure to act.

We will all be there. No one will be absent. No one will escape this judgment. The apostle Paul and those who worked with Him were very concerned about facing God in the judgment. 1 Corinthians 9:27. And every day we are brought that much closer to that great confrontation with God.

* * *

We will be judged publicly, where everyone will hear and know how we lived and served.

It is God who has appointed Christ to be the Judge. John 5:25-29; Acts 10:42; 17:31. Will the believers then be justified by their faith in Christ? Yes, if their faith has been accompanied by good works. "Faith without proper action is dead." James 2:26.

* * *

We will be judged in accordance with what we have done. There will be rewards for those who have been faithful in obedience to Christ, and punishment for those who have been disobedient. There will be degrees of reward and of punishment. Some will be **saved, but only as one barely escaping thru the flames**; others will have **an abundant entrance**; some will receive great punishment, while others will receive lesser punishment. The punishments decreed will not be a matter of probation. We are living in the probationary time now. The punishments and rewards to be given at the Judgment Seat of Christ are eternal judgments and rewards.

We can be sure of this, that all of Christ's decisions about punishments or rewards will be in absolute fairness. **Be most diligent to make your calling and election to salvation and eternal life with God a sure thing!** 2 Peter 1:10. Let's not quibble about the order of events and judgments of the last day, or about exactly what will happen at each judgment. The awesome fact to consider is that we shall stand before God for judgment!

214 2 Corinthians 5:18

We are ambassadors of God (vss 19-20 and 6:1) as we share His truths (His words) by witnessing, preaching, and teaching. Results are forthcoming as God's Spirit blesses the words in answer to fervent prayer. It is in this way that sinners are born again by God's Spirit by means of God's word. For that reason the Bible teaches that we are born again by the Spirit of God and by the word of God. John 3:5-8; 1 Peter 1:23.

215 Ephesians 1:5

Some use the excuse that they are incapable of living as God would have them live, so they refuse to accept Christ as Lord and Savior. But when you consider all that God's love has compelled Him to do for you to bring you to Himself to be His child and share His glory, your heart should burst with gratitude and love for Him. And that love for God will be one of the great incentives to help you to live a holy and blameless life.

Also, consider a little child as he learns to walk. He stumbles and falls many times before he's finally able to walk with confidence. Even after we learn to walk, we sometimes stumble and fall. But we don't just lie there. We get right up

and continue on toward where we were going. The same is true in living the Christian life. Don't be surprised if you fall flat on your face. If that happens, most earnestly ask God's forgiveness and get up and go again! Determine, with God's help, to do much better from then on.

God has promised you His help thru His Spirit, so there's no need to fail, unless you love your sin more than you want Heaven and God's promised blessings in this life for obeying and trusting Him.

Remember, the alternative is Hell, with its awful and endless consequences. Choose Life! Turn around, and begin walking for God, with His help. See Philippians 2:12-13. God has already done so much for you, and He will do much more, but it is your responsibility to exercise your will and turn from your sin and go God's way. The alternative to Heaven is unthinkable.

216 Philippians 1:21

Paul didn't mean that death itself is gain. The life that follows death is gain. After death, he would be free from all the evils of sin, all temptations to sin, all physical and mental pain and suffering, all enemies, conflicts, and cares of life.

But his main gain would be to see and be with God forever, to gain possession of his full inheritance in Christ, to be reunited with loved ones and friends who had gone on before, to experience life on a vastly fuller and higher plane. Because **No eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and no man has even imagined the amazing and wonderful things that God has prepared for those who love Him.** 1 Corinthians 2:9. But only those who are trusting in God's mercy thru Christ and are truly living for Him will experience happy dying, with assurance of experiencing future happy, everlasting living.

217 Philippians 2:12

What is this all about? Aren't we saved by God's forgiveness of our sins because Jesus died on the cross to save us? Yes, there is no other way to receive God's forgiveness. Jesus did all that was necessary to enable God to forgive our sins.

But let's go back to the beginning of the story. From the very beginning of the Bible, God reveals that He made mankind just like Himself, to be His children. As children we are responsible to obey our Father. But every last one of us has become a rebel. We have all gone our own way. Isaiah 53:6;

Romans 3:23. And the sentence God has pronounced against rebellion is death—spiritual death—an existence in an awful Hell, separated from God.

But God's love found a way to forgive us, thru Christ. Romans 6:23. However, God makes it clear thruout the Bible that there must be a change of heart and a return to obedience to Him if He is to forgive. And there must be a continued, honest effort to obey, as indicated here. Our part in our ultimate salvation is to obey God, and to be extremely concerned about doing so, **in fear and trembling.**

* * *

Jesus called the determination to turn from our sin to a determination to live to obey God being **born again.** John 3:1-21. And Paul tells us here and elsewhere that this born-again experience must continue if we are to be ultimately saved. We are to continue to work at obeying God. And the part our obedience plays in our salvation is just as important as obtaining God's forgiveness thru Christ. Romans 2:8; Hebrews 5:9.

But even in obeying God we need His continual help to do so. And He has promised to help us. See Philippians 2:13 and Appendix 218, page 482. Also, we are born again by the Spirit of God using God's message to convict and convert us. John 1:13; 3:8; 1 Peter 1:23. So God is actively involved in our new birth from the very beginning, and continually thruout life.

Jesus said we must be born again or we won't even see Heaven. John 3:7. And one cannot be born again and practice selective obedience. In other words, to be born again means to be changed into a person living an altogether new life (2 Corinthians 5:17), living to please God. And if you are picking and choosing which of God's commands you are willing to obey, and disregarding the others, you are in deep trouble! The ungodly do that much. This was what Adam and Eve wanted to do. They believed in God and worshiped Him. They didn't want to disregard God's orders, except in regard to that one little ol' fruit tree. Genesis 2:15 to 3:19.

If this is your practice, then you certainly do need to fear and tremble! But *do* something about it. Give God all of your heart, no matter what it costs. Obey Him regarding everything! The dividends will be eternal life and sharing in the glory of God.

* * *

We must do our part in our salvation because God *commands* that we do, both here and in many other places in the Bible. Matthew 7:13-14. There's nothing we can do to be justified (declared guiltless) by God. Only faith in what Jesus has done for us on the cross can do that. The work is already done, by Christ. But we must also be regenerated, born again. And while it is also God who regenerates us, as we see in the next verse, He will not force His will on us. We must earnestly desire to be made new, and then go God's way with all our strength and with all the strength God will give us.

* * *

It is our *duty* to do our part in our own salvation because it is our own personal interest that is at stake. No one else has, or can have, as much interest in our salvation as we have. It is every person's *duty* to be as happy as possible here, and to make whatever preparations are necessary to assure eternal happiness in the future world. No man has a *right* to throw away either his present life or his soul. If it is a man's duty to try to save his life when in danger of drowning, it is no less his duty to do everything necessary to save his soul when in danger of Hell.

If your soul is lost, all is lost! And who can value what you will have lost, and what you could have gained? Your soul is the eternal part of you, made in the image of God. From the beginning of your creation, from the moment of conception, your soul will always exist somewhere; because being in the image of God you are now as eternal as He is.

But it is your choice as to where you will spend eternity. Earnestly determine (with God's help) to persevere in obedience to Him to the end. And do begin at once!

Do as Peter challenged, **Be most diligent to make your calling and election to salvation and eternal life with God a sure thing!** 2 Peter 1:10. If both Paul and Peter were this concerned about making sure of our salvation, we should be too.

Don't take only our word for what we've pointed out here; if you have any doubts, do as the Bereans did (Acts 17:11) and search the Scriptures daily to see if this is actually what the Bible teaches.

We cannot overemphasize your need of spending time with God daily in prayer and in

reading His word. His word is your spiritual food, and you will die spiritually without this fellowship with God! Just as you take time to eat, you *must* take time to be with God. All of your future depends upon it.

218 Philippians 2:13

Some believe this verse teaches that God does all the work necessary to cause us to obey Him. They believe we should not interfere, but we should allow God to do His work thru us. But Paul does not say that God works *thru* us. He says God works *in* us to get *us* to decide to do what pleases Him, and He also works *in* us to get *us* to do it. But *we* are the ones who must agree with God to do it, and *we* are the ones who must take the action. God merely influences us, He doesn't force us.

If God were responsible for all you did or didn't do, then you wouldn't need to **fear and tremble** if you didn't do it. It would be God's responsibility, not yours.

But what a joy to know that God is interested enough in us to persuade and urge us to make the right decision, and that He then continues to persuade us to now *do* it. But the decision is our decision. We can make the right decision or refuse to make it. The action is ours, even though God is urging us to do it. So we are the ones who are responsible if we don't do the good we should do after all the help we have received from God.

So God doesn't *desire and determine* for us, but He works in us *to get us to desire and determine*, and to then *do it*.

The decisions and actions necessary for our ultimate salvation are of such a nature that we *need* God's help. How thankful we should be that God so loves us that *He gives us all the help we really need* to make the right decisions and take the right actions. See also John 15:1-5; Romans 7:24-25; 8:1-14,26,37; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Jude 1c.

219 Philippians 3:9-14

These verses are prophetic in nature. They concern our **being included among those who will be raised from among the dead**. The apostle Paul demonstrates his assurance that he will attain to this resurrection and to the glory that God promises, but not by *his own righteousness*. He does not expect to receive pardon for his sins by means of any good works that he has done or can do. He explains that he will have part in the first resur-

rection only because of the righteousness which is credited to him *because of his faith in what Christ suffered for him*. He will attain because of his trust in Christ, because of Christ's death for him on the cross.

The word *righteous* means, *to be innocent, holy*. The word *holy* means *to be pure and blameless*. So the understanding of the word *righteousness* in Scripture ordinarily pertains to *a life that is pure and blameless in the eyes of God*.

* * *

It should also be explained here that the believer never receives Christ's righteousness for his salvation. Righteousness is a state or condition of being. It cannot therefore be passed from one person to another. But one person can affect another person in such a way that the state or condition of the second person is changed.

Our state and condition *of being sinners*, as well as our standing as condemned sinners, is changed by repentance toward God and faith in Christ—from a condemned person to a forgiven person—from an impure person to one who is now pure and blameless in the eyes of God. But how is this change actually carried out? If Christ's righteous life could be merely transferred to us, it would mean that we would not need to live righteous lives ourselves, even after conversion. And this is what some teach and believe, because they do not understand what righteousness really is, that it cannot be imparted from one to another. And they do not understand the difference between the meanings of the words *impute* (credited) and *impart*.

* * *

What is meant by God imputing righteousness to us, is that He *reckons, considers, or regards us as righteous*—as pure and blameless as a result of His forgiving us because of the suffering and death Christ suffered for us. When God imputes righteousness to us, it means He erases the charge of sin against us. The record page of our life thereby becomes pure white—and the result we call righteousness—not because of any work that we could do, nor because Christ's righteousness was imparted to us, but because thru repentance and faith, the record of our sins was removed. The result is a clean, white record.

The word *impute* also has the meaning of *something being set to the account of another*.

That which God sets to our account is a clean record, as the result of our sins being forgiven thru Christ. No, Christ did not live our lives for us so that we would not need to live righteously. No Scripture teaches that. No Scripture teaches that Christ's righteousness is *imparted* to us. The Scriptures teach that righteousness is *imputed* (or credited) to the believer. Romans 4:1-24. And remember there is a great difference between the two words *impute* and *impart*.

* * *

Here's an illustration that may be helpful. Suppose you have a glass of water that is filled with black impurities. But a red-colored chemical is given you, which, when dropped in the water causes every impurity to evaporate, and you have a glass of perfectly pure water. This is the way we receive righteousness thru Christ. When we repent of our sins and believe in the blood of Christ to atone (make amends) for our sins (Revelation 7:13-17), they are forgiven, and the result is a pure soul in the eyes of God. No good works of ours can bring about our justification and purification. It is only by means of the shed blood of Christ. When we accept the shed blood of Christ for the forgiveness of our sin, the record of our life is purified and cleansed, and in the eyes of God we are righteous.

So, righteousness comes to us because of the death Christ died for us, but it is not the righteousness *of Christ*. It is not Christ's life of righteousness which saves us. It is the blood He shed on the cross, which represents His suffering and dying for us, which atones for our sin. It is true that it was necessary that He be altogether righteous in order to be our Savior, but it is *His death* which atones for sin—*not His life*.

* * *

So Christ did not do everything for us. And following the initial cleansing from sin thru Jesus our Savior, God expects us to now live lives (take proper actions, James 2:14-26) that are pleasing to Him, which will be lives that are righteous. But if we sin in an unguarded moment, we are to immediately go to Christ again and ask forgiveness. 1 John 1:8 to 2:5; Proverbs 28:13.

Always remember, two kinds of righteousness are needed to gain eternal life—imputed righteousness and personal righteousness.

220 Philippians 3:10

The greatest proofs of Christ's resurrection are the testimonies of His followers who saw Him die, buried Him, and three days later saw Him alive again. Jesus had foretold His death, and that He would rise again from the dead three days later.

After witnessing that resurrection, His followers went thruout the then-known world and testified everywhere of what had happened. They were even willing to die for what they absolutely knew to be the truth. The hope that His resurrection gave them was of such magnitude that they were willing to suffer and die for the truth. The resurrection meant everything to them, and they knew it could mean the same to all others. Romans 10:9-10.

There is no one truth that has greater power over us Christians than the truth that Christ has risen from the dead. His resurrection confirms the truth of the Christian religion; it makes it certain that there is a future existence. That God raised Jesus from the dead is an assurance that He can and will raise us as well. And that's what Christ has promised He will do. John 5:25-29; 11:25-26; 14:2-3.

The hope of the resurrection should so inspire us that we gladly endure suffering and trials for His sake, because we know that we will be raised as He was. Why should we fear death if we will rise to live again in such glorified form? How unimportant the things of this life appear when compared with the glory that shall be ours! See Romans 8:18; 1 Corinthians 15:43; Colossians 3:4; Hebrews 2:10; 1 Peter 5:10.

221 Philippians 3:18-19

These people call themselves Christians. They are not enemies of the cross on which Christ died, and they want Heaven and all the other benefits Christ purchased for sinners on the cross. But they are enemies of the other cross that Jesus talked about. He taught that there is a cross for every one of us—a cross that calls us all to die to selfish living. See Matthew 10:38-39; 16:24-26 and the notes.

The cross that Christ says we *must* take up is not sickness, suffering, trials, disappointments, or adversity of any other kind. Christ doesn't ask us to take up such things. A cross is an instrument of death! Christ calls *all* of His followers to death—to willingly die to all selfish desire and ambition, and to all sin, and to work for the advancement of

His Kingdom and glory, and for our future glory. Not all of us are to be foreign missionaries or preachers, but we are all to faithfully and diligently serve Him right where we are.

* * *

Are you one of those of whom Paul is speaking about here? Are you genuine or counterfeit? He is speaking about people who claim to be converted to Christ, but who in reality are not. If they ever were, they are not now.

Where is your heart? Are you deeply in love with the One who died to save you? Are you often thinking of, and rejoicing over, the promised eternal future with God? Do you spend time each day reading and studying Heaven's instruction book, the Bible? Do you visit often with the Lord in prayer? Do you tell others about Him?

Or do you live mainly to satisfy the cravings of your body and mind? Are your plans mainly centered around success now, pleasures, creature comforts, popularity, honor, and a comfortable retirement? Is there little concern to serve God, especially if it will take time and effort? You had better read what Jesus says in Mark 4:18-19 and John 15:1-6.

Are you seldom if ever at prayer meeting, or in Sunday School? Past years don't count for the present. We must **remain faithful!** Matthew 10:22; Colossians 1:23. Is your heart so full of your own interests that you don't really enjoy talking with anyone about the Lord? What are you *really doing* to get the message of Christ to others?

* * *

There are certain animals that inhabit the coral reefs. As long as they keep the upward passage to the surface clear, they are safe, but, if they neglect to do so, the animal soon finds the coral has filled the passage and it is enclosed in a living tomb! Is your passage upward now closed because of the cares and things of this world? There's nothing wrong with things, as long as we use them as God intended, and in the proportion God intended. But while doing so we must not neglect God at all, or any of His commands.

There's much concern about converting the world, but the main need is to convert those already in the church who are lost!

Remember, there's no such thing as a nominal Christian. A nominal Christian is not a Christian at all. Ask Paul. A Christian is one who is

trusting Christ for forgiveness of his sins, and has turned (been converted) from living to please himself to pleasing and obeying God. He is both justified and truly regenerated (born again). A so-called nominal Christian is not living to please God, and is therefore not converted. He is lost, as Paul has just declared.

* * *

Don't judge yourself by others, but by what God says! Even if most "Christians" you know are on the broad road that leads to destruction, you surely shouldn't be satisfied to follow them there.

Allow God to make of you a genuine follower of Jesus. Then, and then only, can you have the sure hope of eternal life. Read James 4:4-10. Ask God to forgive you, and begin to really live for Him **NOW**.

222 Philippians 4:17

How much would you give to the Lord's work if you were assured you would continue to receive 20 percent interest in cash each year from your total past giving? How many people would you tell about the Lord if you were offered one ounce of gold for every person to whom you witnessed, 10 ounces for every person you earnestly tried to win to the Lord, and 20 ounces for every person who was gloriously converted to the Lord as a result of your witnessing?

Would you work harder for earthly pay than for rewards in Heaven, for treasure of infinite eternal value that will pay eternal dividends?

We have an enemy—Satan—who is doing his dead-level-best to keep people from being converted to Christ. And if they are converted, Satan does his dead-level-best to keep them from being effective in winning others. You must arm properly, and prepare for combat! See Ephesians 6:10-20.

223 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2

It was **not needful** for Paul to write to the church at Thessalonica **about the period of time, or date**, because they had already received all that information they needed.

The Day of the Lord does not refer to a 24-hour period, but rather to the time of the end when the Lord will begin to judge the earth. **The Day of the Lord** will climax when Christ returns in power and glory to take His rightful place as King of kings and Lord of lords over all the earth. It is the day

of His wrath on His enemies and the deliverance of His people.

This period of **The Day of the Lord** will be the last 3 1/2 years of the age, ending with the Battle of Armageddon and the following period of darkness, great earthquakes, hail, fire, etc. Revelation 6:12-17. It will come as a **snare** (Luke 21:35) and **like a thief in the night** upon the ungodly people of the earth. True Christians, however, have plenty of light and information on this subject in the Bible. There is no need to be in darkness about the approximate time of this judgment (v 4), especially as the time draws near. There are countless warning signals at the time of this writing.

224 1 Thessalonians 5:9

This is one of the Scriptures used by those who believe in a pretribulation Rapture, as an argument that Christ will come for His own before the Great Tribulation. **God has not appointed us to be destroyed by His wrath.** This is indication enough, they claim, that God will not leave His people on earth when He pours out His *wrath* during the Great Tribulation.

Those who believe in Christ's coming for His own in the middle of the seven-year Tribulation claim that the *wrath* of God will not be poured out upon the earth until the last 3 1/2 years of that period, which is true.

Those who believe in the Lord's return for His own immediately after the end of the Tribulation claim that the *wrath* here is judgment in Hell—that it does not refer to the Tribulation at all. They also point out that God is able to protect His own even thru a time when He is pouring out His wrath upon the earth. They point to the three Hebrews who were thrown into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:1-30) as an example of how God is able to protect His own in any situation.

* * *

Actually, each of these interpretations is probably correct in most details. On the one hand, God's wrath is reserved for the ungodly. And God's wrath will be poured out upon the earth in these last days during the last 3 1/2 years of the Great Tribulation. God will pour His wrath upon the ungodly on earth during the blowing of the seventh trumpet and the pouring out of the seven vials. Revelation 15:1,5 to 19:21.

* * *

On the other hand, the ungodly will certainly have an appointment with God to receive His **wrath** in Hell. The **salvation** of this reference does not necessarily indicate a deliverance from tribulation, but a salvation from judgment in Hell. It was for **this salvation** that Christ died for us.

The previous verse, v 8, appears to support that Paul is speaking about the salvation of the soul. He talks about **faith, hope, and love**—with the final reference to **the sure hope of salvation**.

In v 10 Paul refers to Christ's death for our salvation, with the encouragement **that whether we are still living for Him when He comes, or have died**, even as a result of persecution by Antichrist (Daniel 7:20-22), we have the wonderful assurance that **we will live together with Him** forever. So there is really nothing for the Christian to fear. We will finally be with the Lord forever, no matter what happens. But there is really no mention of a Rapture in this verse.

* * *

George Ladd, former professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, in his book, *The Blessed Hope*, so rightly states in regard to this Scripture:

"Since the Great Tribulation is to consist in part in the outpouring of God's wrath upon decadent and sinful society (Revelation 16:1), and since God has not appointed His people to experience wrath, must we not conclude that the Church is to be removed before God's wrath is poured out upon the earth?

"We hasten here to agree that the Church, which Christ has redeemed by His precious blood, will never experience the wrath of God. If the question of the Rapture and the Tribulation is to be settled on this issue alone, the only alternative is a pre-tribulation Rapture, for the Church will never suffer God's wrath.

"However, this admission does not lead to pre-tribulationism, for the verse in question says nothing about either the Rapture or the Tribulation. All it asserts is that the Church will not fall under God's wrath. The wrath in question may not refer to the Tribulation at all, but to God's wrath in the final judgment. Romans 2:5. However, if it does include the Great Tribulation, the verse neither asserts nor suggests that the Church will be removed from the world; it is only promised deliverance.

"The Israelites were in Egypt during the visitation of the plagues upon the Egyptians but they were sheltered from the worst of these plagues

which fell on the Egyptians. In a similar way it is possible that the Church may find herself on earth during the period of the Tribulation but will by divine protection be sheltered from the sufferings entailed by the outpouring of bowls of wrath, and thus be delivered from the wrath to come. *1 Thessalonians 5:9 says nothing about the Rapture.* That it does is an unjustified inference. It says only that the Church will be delivered from wrath. How the deliverance is to be effected is not suggested. If the Church is on earth during the Great Tribulation but is divinely sheltered from wrath, this verse is fulfilled. This is all it asserts.”

225 2 Timothy 4:2

Paul’s charge to Timothy was that he preach God’s message. In connection with this charge, permit the insertion of an article which appeared in one of the issues of *Christian Victory* magazine. The article was headlined, “Positivism, Another Ism?” It read as follows:

“A very subtle ‘ism’ has crept into the thinking of many sincere believers today—‘positivism’. This philosophy creates a trend toward a more ‘positive’ approach to the Great News, rejecting any of the so-called ‘negative’ aspects. The dangers of ‘positivism’ are, notably, two:

“1. It eventually leads to the preaching of love, minus the preaching of judgment. Heaven is OK, but hush hush about Hell. Both are scriptural! 1 John 4:8; Hebrews 12:29.

“2. It produces an unhealthy ‘passive’ spirit within the child of God. To be sure, we must submit to God and not resist the work of the Spirit, but in some other areas it is a sin to remain silent, to say and do nothing. Consider conscientiously, three basic negative injunctions given to the believer:

- a. RESIST the devil. James 4:7
- b. REPROVE...those evil deeds of darkness. Ephesians 5:11
- c. REBUKE...those who will not turn from their sinning. 2 Timothy 4:2-3

Often God tells His people ‘You shall NOT,’ as well as ‘You shall.’ We must warn against the poison as well as point out the good food.”

226 2 Timothy 4:2

When telling others about salvation and eternal life thru Jesus Christ you don’t need to wait for a so-called opening or opportunity. Make the opening! You can do that by asking a person at

any time (even going up to him or her without introduction) and asking such a question as, “Say, are you planning on being there?” or “Are you planning on making it to Heaven?” or “Are you ready for Heaven?” or “Do you know how to get to Heaven, for sure?” or “Have you heard the Great News?”

You’ll get all kinds of reactions. That makes it interesting. One person said, “I have my own religion,” to which the witness asked, “And what religion is that?” The answer was, “I was brought up a Presbyterian.”

The witness then said, “But I take it that you’re not a born-again Presbyterian. Am I right?” The answer was a reluctant, “Yes, that’s right.” He was then told that Jesus said that a person won’t even see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again.

* * *

And the best way to present The Amazing Story of God (meaning, God’s plan of salvation) is to begin with the positive. Tell them about what God plans for His children, and many will want to be included in those great plans.

Explain that God made us just like Himself, to be His children. Tell what His plans are for His children. **We will one day be truly like Him.** Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2. **We will reign with Him.** 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:9-10; 20:6; 22:5. Many other things can be mentioned about God’s plans for His children. 1 Corinthians 2:9.

Then tell them how man fell, and how we have all become rebels against our Father. Then warn of God’s dreadful judgment of the sinner. Make the person realize how totally lost he really is, and the consequences.

Then bring the glorious news of Christ coming to be our Savior. Teach Christ as Savior, but also that there must be repentance, making Christ the Lord of their life. Romans 10:9-10. Preach it! Everywhere and to everyone!

* * *

A Personal Testimony

One of the greatest ways in modern times to witness for the Lord is by telephone. There are several ways to use the telephone in this regard. This writer has at various times gone down a certain section in the telephone book and dialed the numbers. Upon reaching the party dialed, the conversation might go something like this:

"Hello?"

"Sir, I have a very important question I would like to ask you."

"And who are you?"

"I'm a very concerned person, with a very important question." (And you might want to give them your name at this point. Or you might give it in your first statement.) "I don't represent any business or organization in this call. This is a personal call."

"What's your question?"

"Are you planning on making it to Heaven?"

One of the usual responses is, "Well, I surely hope so."

"But you certainly know that you'll never get to Heaven by merely hoping so."

"Yes, I know that."

Then we have gone from there to giving a witness about the Lord, following the pattern as much as possible in Appendix 247, page 520. Don't memorize it. Make the presentation casual. Even if you don't get very far with the person, you have at least planted a seed. If at all possible try to encourage the listener to read the New Testament. Promise him that he will know how to get to Heaven for sure if he will read thru the New Testament. Tell him the answer is there. You may not have the opportunity to explain the whole plan of salvation to him, but if you can get him to reading the word of God he will find the way.

You will of course get all kinds of responses to your call. That makes it interesting. The more you witness the easier it will be to respond.

* * *

Another way to use the telephone is to take advantage of all the people who try to sell you anything and everything by phone, and those who call to ask for donations for one charity or another, and those who call for political purposes, etc. Here you have the world coming to your door. Here's one experience of how this writer took advantage of witnessing at such a time:

A very cheerful person responded when I answered the phone, and it turned out that he wanted me to refinance our home. After politely convincing him that I was not interested, I immediately said, before he could hang up, "But say, I have an important question I'd like to ask you."

"Yes, and what's that?"

"Are you counting on making it to Heaven?"

Well, it turned out that this fellow claimed that any religion was as good as another, and he

had all kinds of arguments. The way I handled this person was to simply say, "Listen, Heaven is real—but so is Hell! Are you taking your family with you to where you are going?"

I could tell that this remark really jolted him, and when he said, "Well, I don't think I'm able to decide what will happen to anyone else," I responded with, "Listen, everything you say and do in your home or among your friends and relatives, and your very attitude, is influencing them. You are influencing them for either good or bad, toward Heaven or Hell, every time you are with them."

After some further conversation he said, "Well, I guess I really should look into this matter a little further." I then encouraged him to read the New Testament and find out what God had to say to him.

You will find that people are really concerned about their own family—not only their immediate family but the families of their brothers, sisters, cousins, etc. When they stop to realize that their actions and words are indeed influencing their family, they can become quite concerned.

So include the telephone in your witnessing. And every time someone comes to the door at your home, here is another opportunity to witness for the Lord.

* * *

Why did Jesus come to earth to suffer and die for us? He did so because He knew God must judge us for our sins, and that the judgment would be an *awful* Hell. He now commands us to be saviors of everyone that we ourselves can reach. Yes, with our prayers and finances we must support those who are serving the Lord full-time, but we must also use every strength we have if we are to reach everyone—and one great strength with which we are all gifted is our tongue. Use it to the glory of God!

A model to follow for your witnessing is found in Appendix 247, *The Amazing Story of God*. But do tell it in your own words. See also Matthew 7:6; 28:18-20 and Romans 10:9-10 and the notes after those Scriptures, and Appendix 212 for additional suggestions about witnessing to others.

226A 2 Timothy 4:3-4

How can you tell if you are in a dead or compromising church? Is there plenty of activity but very few, if any, being truly born again? Are there

few, if any, baptisms? Is there seldom, if ever, any challenge to read your Bible daily, to pray about every situation, to witness to others about Christ at every opportunity? What are you yourself doing about these most important matters?

If you, yourself, are not reading the Bible daily and spending time in prayer, how can you tell whether the preacher is preaching the truth or not? Every Christian should become a fervent student of the word of God! In challenging others to read the Bible we usually say:

“If you haven’t read the Bible thru, your education has been sadly neglected. As you no doubt know, the Bible is in two major parts—the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament takes up the first 3/4 of the Bible and the New Testament the last 1/4. I suggest that you read the New Testament first. That begins with the birth of Jesus Christ.

“And in the New Testament the first four books are four different accounts of the life of Christ by four men who were there. It’s great that we have those four accounts, but I’ve found from experience that it gets a bit heavy reading all four of them one after the other, because there is a good deal of repetition. I suggest you skip the first two books for your first reading, and begin with the third book, which is Luke. John, the fourth book, is different, so you won’t have the repetition. But you will certainly want to read the first two books (Matthew and Mark) later.

“You should read the New Testament at least twice before you read the Old Testament. And don’t let yourself get bogged down by reading the long lists of names, explanations of sacrifices, offerings, etc. in the Old Testament. Skip over these unless you are making an in-depth study, and get on with the story. God has Great News for you! Read on!”

Use this explanation in challenging others.

* * *

For the sake of yourself, your family, and everyone else in your church, you need to know *definitely* what the Bible teaches so that you can make sure that you, your family, and your friends are receiving the full truth from the pulpit. Your eternal destiny, and the eternal destiny of all others are at stake! When the whole truth is preached in all earnestness there will be converts to Christ, and you will be wanting intensely to see everyone won to Him.

If you find that the preaching in your church is not what it should be, don’t be a gossip and talk

to others about it, but pray earnestly about it and go directly to the pastor and talk to him. That’s the honest and honorable thing to do. Let the pastor know exactly how you feel about his preaching. Let him know that you expect him to preach the truth and the whole truth. By doing this you will be following the Lord’s instructions in Matthew 18:15-17.

* * *

According to those instructions, if the pastor refuses to agree with you, or if there is no change in his preaching, then you should take one or two others with you and visit the pastor again. Hopefully, your pastor will be very concerned about your concern. But if not, you are to take the matter to the whole church.

The cowardly thing to do is to leave the church without taking any action. That would mean that you would leave this man to teach the children, young people, and all others the lies and half-truths that he has taught them in the past. But be much in prayer about this whole matter. You must be sure of God’s leading.

* * *

If you are a pastor, you have a tremendous opportunity and a tremendous responsibility. If you are one of those pastors today who has been explaining away the warnings in God’s word, and skipping over the warnings you don’t dare explain away, you are lying to your congregation. You need to confess this sin to God, and then confess to the church, and ask their forgiveness. God will honor you for doing so, and so will the church.

You may experience strong opposition from some members. But if you are truly God’s messenger you will refuse to preach anything but the truth, and the whole truth, and you will leave the consequences in God’s hands.

* * *

A WARNING: The warning in Revelation 22:18-19 about adding to or taking away from the word of God applies to all His warnings and to every other part of His message. To explain away the warnings of God is to take away from His Word! As God warns in The Revelation, the judgment for doing so is horrendous. We trust that if you are guilty, you will most earnestly repent and become a flaming evangel for the whole truth!

227 Hebrews 2:1-2

This is not a challenge and warning to the unbeliever, who is not converted. Thruout the entire book of Hebrews the writer is directing his remarks to Hebrew Christians. And they apply today to every Christian. This is a warning to Christians about neglecting the salvation God has promised them thru Christ Jesus.

This warning implies that there is indeed great peril, and the implication is that we shall not escape God's judgment if we lightly regard the salvation He has offered, and lightly regard His teachings and commands.

The implication here is that a way of rescue has been provided. But it also implies that some have become so preoccupied with things that have taken their attention away from the Lord. *The greatness of the salvation* also implies the seriousness of the peril of being so neglectful. It is one thing to be neglectful about matters that are relatively unimportant, but it's altogether something else to be neglectful about a salvation that has been promised to save us from a horrendous Hell that we deserve, and to grant us an everlasting life of total fulfillment in God's glorious Kingdom, which we don't deserve.

* * *

It also implies here, and thruout the book, that it is hopeless to look for rescue and escape from Hell by any other means than the great salvation which God offers. How frightfully dangerous it is then to neglect and lightly regard this salvation by allowing ourselves to be so preoccupied with the things of this brief life.

In regard to this, meditate on what Proverbs 4:23 really means when it states, **Be intensely concerned about what it is that absorbs and monopolizes your time and interest, because your life and destiny are determined by what and who you truly love.** 1 John 2:15-17; Mark 8:34-38.

Just as these Hebrew Christians were in danger of complacency and drifting at a time when the material focus of their faith, the Temple in Jerusalem, had been or was about to be destroyed, many professing Christians today are in danger of going back to a selfish, self-centered life of ease and formal religion, with very little real concern about the world about them that is on its way to Hell. God wants your whole heart! He's not satisfied with anything less!

You cannot be half converted. Either you are

truly and altogether converted to the Lord, to obey Him, to love Him, to serve Him, and to look forward to being with Him forever, or else you are satisfied to merely warm a pew in church and obey only the teachings of Christ which suit you. That is neglecting your salvation and the salvation of the souls of others! God will surely severely judge such backsliding!

* * *

We are not warned here about committing great sins. We are not warned about being murderers, adulterers, thieves, atheists, or scoffers of Christ. But the warning is that we **neglect** the wonderful salvation God offers us thru His Son. Mere neglect is enough to ruin anyone in any situation. A man in business doesn't need to commit forgery or robbery to ruin himself. All he has to do is neglect his business and his ruin is certain.

Most of the calamities of life are caused by simple neglect. Neglect the education of your children and they will grow up ignorant. Neglect to discipline them, and they will grow up to be disobedient in all areas of life. Neglect a farm and the weeds and briars will soon take over. Neglect a house and it soon goes to decay. Neglect sowing, and a man will have no harvest. Neglect the reaping, and the harvest will rot in the fields. Neglect a marriage and it will soon fall apart.

* * *

There is nothing in earthly affairs that will not be ruined if it is not diligently attended to. The same is true concerning the soul. Therefore, a Christian must not neglect reading the Bible, daily. He must not neglect spending time with the Lord in meditation and prayer, and he must not neglect to obey the Lord in all things. And be sure not to neglect Romans 10:9-10.

So for that reason, my brothers and sisters, be most diligent to make your calling and election to salvation and eternal life with God a sure thing! Because if you make a practice of doing the things I have just pointed out to you, you will never stumble and fall. By so doing you will guarantee for yourself a glorious welcome, and the gates into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord will be thrown wide open for you to enter. 2 Peter 1:10-11.

228 Hebrews 3:18-19

The whole problem the Israelite people had

in failing to enter the promised land was their unbelief. But they did believe, didn't they? Didn't they believe in the shedding of blood for their salvation? Hadn't they killed the lamb on Passover night in Egypt (Exodus 11-12), and sprinkled the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of their homes, so that the death angel would pass by them?

Yes, everyone who left Egypt had done so. And this blood is a symbol of the blood of Christ that was shed for us. It is necessary to have faith in the fact that the blood of Jesus Christ was shed for our sins. But there is more to belief than believing only in the blood.

The problem with their faith was that they lacked confidence in God, and the lack of confidence in God is the great source of evil thruout the world today. It will exclude countless millions from Heaven, and will be the cause of wretchedness for ages to come for these unnumbered millions.

This is the problem of countless millions who profess to be Christians. They want their faith in the blood of Christ which was shed for their sins to be all that is necessary for their entrance into Heaven. But the problem of our lost confidence in God is when we doubt His promises, doubt His oaths, and doubt that He will really follow thru in His warnings. So many people believe they can sin and get away with it. This was the problem of the children of Israel. They were on their way to the promised land that had been promised them by God. Surely nothing could keep them out of the promised land. But their unbelief did.

* * *

As already stated, one serious mistake that many professing Christians make is that they don't believe Romans 10:9-10 applies to them. God reveals there thru the Apostle Paul that the faith necessary for salvation is heart faith. Unless we obey Romans 10:9-10 and act upon what we claim we believe, we are not truly converted. Read that Scripture again, and the notes.

What would happen if everyone who claimed to be a Christian would really take a stand for Christ, as God demands, and speak out for Him at every opportunity? Millions of those who have not heard would then hear. Things would really begin to happen if all who claim to be Christians really were Christians. What would happen if you did?

The writer here says the same thing in v 6 of this chapter. Read it again. Do we really believe such inspired statements by God?

To be converted we must truly believe God's commandments, and also His warnings about failing to obey those commands, as well as believing His promises.

Some may claim that this is salvation by works. No, this is merely stating the fact that to be converted we must obey God. We are not obeying God if we are still living in rebellion toward Him.

* * *

Even Adam and Eve believed God. But Satan put a doubt in their minds as to whether God would really follow thru in His warning about eating the forbidden fruit. In fact, Satan promised Eve that it would make her wise. It is so easy to rationalize when it comes to allowing some sin, or failing to obey some of Jesus' commands. But God won't accept our rationalizations. He says we must be born again. And that new birth means that we must become new people, people who now obey God and tell the world about Him. Again, seriously consider where you stand in regard to Romans 10:9-10.

* * *

This Scripture also emphasizes the fact that if you realize that you are not truly converted to the Lord, the time to take care of that situation is today! 3:7 to 4:7. Not one of us has any assurance at all that we will be here tomorrow.

Nobody should neglect anything that should be done today. But when it comes to the salvation of one's soul, it is more important than anything else that needs to be taken care of. Take care of it now! What proof do you have that you will be more inclined to take care of this matter tomorrow or at some future date than you are today? What evidence do you have that you will not anger God by again putting it off, and bring condemnation on your soul?

* * *

The greatest device that Satan has against people is to have them put off until tomorrow what they should do today about getting right with God. He doesn't mind at all if you believe about God, as long as you put off until tomorrow the surrender of your heart and soul to your Redeemer. You need this warning for yourself, and you also need to give this warning to others to whom you must speak about their need of the Savior. By putting God off

we are rejecting His love.

Why not make sure today, right now, that you will experience and enjoy eternal happiness. As you make that determination, also *determine that you will never turn back!*

The warning in v 6 includes the fact that we must continue faithful to the end of life. This is not faithfulness only in what we believe in our minds, but what we believe in our hearts and souls, and what we put into practice. Are you truly a practicing Christian? If you are not really a practicing Christian you are not a Christian at all. Take care of this matter now, today, this very hour! Surrender your heart and soul to God and give Him all of your future, for the present life and for all time to come.

Once you have made your total surrender to God, with determination that you will never turn back, you can have the assurance that as you follow thru in this, nothing in life can shake you. Even if you lose all of your friends, you still have a future that is marvelous and wonderful beyond words. Even if you should lose all you possess, you still have God's loving promise of being a joint heir of His with Christ, and of spending eternity with Him. Even if your health fails, you still have the assurance of a new body soon, and life and joy and peace that will never end. We'll be looking for you there! Mark 8:34-38.

229 Hebrews 4:11

We also have a command from God to move forward and take the land. The command of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16 is now our responsibility, and God expects us to use every means and ability we have to warn the lost of the Hell that awaits them and to tell them of the forgiveness and eternal life that God offers them. Yes, you may be contributing your money to witness for the Lord, and you certainly should, but how about your own witness for the Lord? Are you speaking out for Him? Romans 10:9-10.

It was fear that kept the children of Israel from taking the promised land when God commanded them to go forward and possess it. And it is fear that causes many Christians to not witness for the Lord. But what happened to the fearful Israelites who didn't obey the Lord? They never entered the promised land, did they? Does God have a double standard—one for the Israelites of the past and another for us today? Certainly not! God warns that those who are **fearful and cowardly** will be numbered with all the other sinners who

are rejected by Him. Revelation 21:7-8.

That warning in Revelation 21 about cowards is fearful indeed. But we have the same warning in Ezekiel 33:1-9. Would God be righteous in allowing those into Heaven who were glad to accept his invitation but were unwilling to share the invitation with others? We had better take seriously the command God has given us to move forward and possess the territory that Satan now holds.

230 1 Peter 1:3

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the chief doctrine of the Christian faith. If Christ had not risen from the dead, there would be no Christianity. Our faith would be for nothing, and our hope would be an empty hope indeed. The whole message of the Great News would be a farce, and there would be no forgiveness of sin.

The resurrection of Christ is the foundation upon which we base all of our hope in Christ. It's the assurance that we have eternal life, because it removes all fear of death, and assures us of the future blessedness of life with God thruout eternity.

To Peter and the other apostles, the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a regeneration. They became new people! That's one reason why we can say that we are born again by means of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is His resurrection that gives us new life, and new hope, and new assurance that is based on historical fact. The entire Christian Church—east and west, north and south—is founded on that fact.

Remember also that Jesus had foretold His resurrection. This is just another assurance that He is the Son of God, who He claimed to be. He knew why He was here and that He would rise again! It was a confirmation of all that He had declared as truth when He lived. It was a proof of the teaching of the immortality of the soul. And it is a pledge that all who are united to Him will rise up to live again, even as He did.

* * *

Before the resurrection Christ's apostles had strong confidence that He was the Messiah, and that He would free Israel from her enemies. But when they found that He had actually died upon the cross, and was buried, they appeared to have lost all hope of the great things which they had before believed. But His resurrection revived all

that hope.

The resurrection of Christ was in a real sense the birth of the Church, and Christian baptism without the resurrection would be an empty ceremony. It would have no meaning whatever.

The inheritance which the Christian is promised in Heaven is the ultimate end of our regeneration, and it's the foundation for the hope and joy that the Christian has even in the present life. We are living for today, but much more so for the future.

And the resurrection gives the Christian a hope that's very much alive. We don't have a hope that can perish, like the hopes of this world, but it continues to grow in intensity until it will reach that joy which knows no bounds in Heaven. And even in Heaven there will be, it seems, a continual progress **from one degree of glory to another.** 2 Corinthians 3:18.

231 1 John 2:18; 4:3

The powerful Satan-inspired world ruler of the last days of this age is known by several names in Scripture. They are:

- 1) The little horn. Daniel 7:7-11,15-26; 8:8-26
- 2) The Beast. Daniel 7:11; Revelation 13
- 3) The Assyrian. Isaiah 10:24-25; 14:24-25; 30:30-31; 31:8-9; Micah 5:5-6
- 4) The Antichrist. 1 John 2:18; 4:3
- 5) King of Babylon. Isaiah 14:4; Jeremiah 50:43; 51:31
- 6) The Spoiler. Isaiah 16:4
- 7) The Extortioner. Isaiah 16:4
- 8) King of Fierce Countenance. Daniel 8:23
- 9) The Prince that shall come. Daniel 9:26-27
- 10) The man of sin. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
- 11) The Son of Perdition. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
- 12) That wicked one. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12

In some way or another all of these titles will apply to the Antichrist.

232 Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15

Christ will rule the nations as King of kings and Lord of lords when He returns, and all of His true followers will reign with Him. 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:10; 20:6; 22:5. Two questions have been asked about this reign of Christ together with His followers. The first is:

Just what kind of reign will this be when it is

said that Christ *will shepherd the nations with a scepter of iron*? Actually, this pictures Christ as a shepherd. A shepherd always carried a rod, for guiding and disciplining his sheep. That rod was also for the purpose of striking to kill any wolf that attacked the sheep.

To rule with a scepter of iron, does not mean that Christ will rule with a harsh and tyrannical iron hand, but with power that is firm and invincible. It denotes a government of strength, or one that cannot be successfully opposed, one in which the subjects are effectively disciplined and controlled.

The Lord will show mercy to some, and judgment to others. He will begin by destroying His anti-Christian foes. Revelation 19:15. Then He will reign in love over the rest. He, together with those reigning under Him, will restrain vice by the most strict administration of justice. And those who continue to insist on despising His commands will be broken and destroyed. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 informs us that Christ will rule until He has put all rebellion down. Then He will turn everything back to the Father, who in the first place put all things under Him that He might reign in power.

* * *

The second question asked here is: Just who will Christ and His followers reign over, if all of His enemies are put to death when He returns? But not everyone on earth will be put to death when He returns. Revelation 1:7 tells us who will be on earth and see Him as He returns. See the note there. His avowed enemies will be destroyed at Armageddon and after other judgments. But other millions will remain. These who remain will be the new generation of people on earth. They will be the nucleus for a great repopulation of the earth. It is over these that Christ and His followers will reign.

233 Revelation 13:1; 17:3, 7-17

We must remember that the term, *the beast*, is symbolic of four possible entities. First of all, the term refers to a supernatural angel (i.e., a powerful demon) out of the bottomless pit. Revelation 11:7; 17:8. Second, the term refers to a powerful mortal man, who is called *the beast* (the Antichrist). Daniel 7:7-8,19-27; 8:9,20-25; 9:26-27; 11:36-45; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10; Revelation 13:1-18; 17:3; 19:19-21; 20:10. Third, the term refers to an empire. Revelation 13:1; 17:9-17; Daniel 7:7-

8,19-25. And of course there is a fourth beast, the false prophet. Revelation 13:11-17; 16:13-14.

Keeping these facts in mind will be of great help. They are all actually interrelated—the *false prophet* serving the *man* being empowered by the *angel out of the bottomless pit* to form a great end-time empire.

* * *

The *sea* in Revelation 13:1 is symbolic, and refers to the people of earth. Revelation 17:1,15; Daniel 7:2-3,17. Therefore, this *beast* (the man, Antichrist) will rise out of *the sea* of humanity. The same is true of the *beast* empire. It is actually a series of empires which are the empires or kingdoms that have persecuted Israel, which are Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the coming Revised Rome.

The *seven heads* represent the seven powerful evil spirits that have tried to dominate these seven empires (see 17:8 note, 2nd paragraph). The *ten horns* represent the ten rulers of Revised Rome of these end-time days, who will rise among the nations to their highest power as a united force during the last 3 1/2 years of the age under Antichrist. See Daniel 2:1-49; 7:1-28; 8:1-27; Revelation 17:7-17.

Antichrist is not one of the seven heads or ten horns. He, as *the beast*, symbolizes his conquering and uniting the entire part of the world formerly controlled by the seven heads, including the ten modern rulers of Revised Rome. The supernatural angel out of the pit—the evil spirit power behind Antichrist—is evidently the second or fifth head, resurrected back to power (Revelation 11:7; 17:8-11). Be sure to read 2nd paragraph of 17:8 note.

234 Revelation 13:2

John now further describes this end-time empire of Antichrist: His being *like a leopard* refers to the symbol of the Grecian Empire. Daniel 7:6. He will revive the old Grecian Empire. Daniel 8:9,21-24; Revelation 13:1-4,11-14; 17:7-11.

His *feet* being like the feet of a *bear* refers to the symbol of Medo-Persia. Daniel 7:5. He will overpower the nations as Medo-Persia overpowered Babylon. The *mouth of a lion* refers to the symbol of the lion of Babylon. Daniel 7:4. The message from his mouth will be the message of blasphemous, God-rejecting Babylon. v 5.

The *dragon* refers to Satan, who will give

Antichrist his *power*, his *throne*, and *great authority* thru Satan's lieutenant, the angel (demon) out of the bottomless pit. Revelation 17:7-8. Antichrist will evidently have no qualms about placing himself under the power and control of Satan.

In connection with the identity of Antichrist and his origin, read Daniel 2:31-45; 7:1-28. There you will see that this *beast*, Antichrist and his empire, will spring to power in the area of the old Roman Empire. But then, Daniel 8 further pinpoints his origin to the Greek Empire portion of the old Roman Empire. And in many places in Scripture he is called the Assyrian (Isaiah 10:24-27), so it seems quite possible that he will begin his rise to power in Syria, which was a part of the old Greek Empire. See Daniel 7:7-8,24.

235 Revelation 13:3

We are told here that *one* of the *heads* of the seven-headed beast, which had been *mortally wounded*, had come alive again. In other words, one of the evil spirit powers behind an empire of the past will be restored to power. This almost surely refers to the spirit power which controlled the Assyrian Empire in the past, because we noted earlier that the Antichrist will come to power in new Assyria.

We are witnessing here the rebirth of the Assyrian Empire, so it is almost certain that this is the spirit power referred to here as being the *head* that had received the *mortal wound* but was restored. So it is this *head*, the spirit power behind the second great empire that persecuted Israel, that will very likely be restored to power again thru Antichrist and thru the power given Him by Satan, the dragon. See notes on Revelation 17:9-11.

The *Revised* Roman Empire will be formed before Antichrist comes to power, but it is not a *revived* Roman Empire, because ten rulers will rule over ten separate states. Antichrist will have nothing to do with the rise of these ten states. His rise to power will occur after the ten united states and their ten leaders appear on the scene in the approximate geographical area of the old Roman Empire. Daniel 7:7-8.

But Antichrist will be one ruler over the entire area formerly known as the Assyrian Empire. He will bring this empire back to life, and then very likely greatly expand it. Daniel 7:7-8,24 and Revelation 17:12-13 indicate that, after restoring the old Assyrian Empire, Antichrist will conquer three of the ten rulers of the Revised Roman Empire.

The remaining seven rulers will then acknowledge defeat and ask him to take over their kingdoms as well. They will then rule under him. 17:12-13.

The whole world will be amazed at what this man, the Antichrist, will have been able to accomplish. They will be amazed to see the former empire of Assyria, and then of Greece, resurrected, and amazed at the power of the Antichrist.

236 Revelation 13:11-18

Antichrist will have a co-worker. He is called *the false prophet* in Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10. This man will have the appearance of a *lamb*, seeming very gentle and trustworthy. His words and message, however, will be those of Satan, because he will speak *like a dragon*. His teaching will be false, against God. Just as Antichrist will be empowered by Satan (vss 1-9; Daniel 8:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-9), *the false prophet* will also be empowered by him to perform miracles.

In a sense, this *beast* will be the publicity agent for Antichrist. He will be Antichrist's spokesman, and will call on the world to worship this great one who has resurrected the former Assyrian Empire, and then the former Greek Empire, and now rules all that was included in the old Roman Empire as well.

Thru the power of Satan this second beast will *perform great miracles*. As one of his spectacular feats, he will *make fire come down out of Heaven to earth while people are watching*. No doubt he will do many other things not mentioned here. He will be the spiritual leader, Antichrist's high priest, claiming great things for Antichrist and strongly calling the world to honor him with full devotion.

Multitudes of those who are not Christians will be fooled by this false prophet. Having refused the truth from God, God will offer them "strong delusion" (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12) and cause them to believe a lie.

* * *

The false prophet will cause the *inhabitants of the earth to erect an image of the beast who had been fatally wounded by the sword, but was now alive*. v 14. It appears that this image will be made to honor the resurrected Empire of Assyria, or Greece, as well as the Antichrist who restored it. It may even be an image to honor the *beast* empire rather than an image of the *beast* man.

This false prophet will be able either to simu-

late life in the image (thru computers?), or thru the power of Satan to actually produce life in it. In some manner, this image of the beast will be able to *speak*. *Everyone who refuses to worship the image will be killed*. No doubt many Christians will be martyred for their refusal to worship this image. But their resurrection will be glorious.

This false prophet will cause everyone under the power of Antichrist to receive a mark *on their right hand or on their forehead*. But again, the word *all* is not to be taken in the absolute sense, because there will be many who will refuse to receive it because of the warning in Revelation 14:9-11. This mark will be necessary to either *buy or sell*. People will need either the *mark of the beast, his name, or the number that signifies his name* to do business. We do not know what his mark will be. Nor do we know his name. The number of his name, however, is clearly stated.

The number will be 666. Many Greek and Hebrew names have a numerical value of 666. The idea is that in the Greek and Hebrew alphabets there is not a separate system of numbers, as in the English. The letters of these alphabets also stand for numbers.

The letters in the name of the future Antichrist will very likely have a numerical value of 666. We cannot know now what his mark or name will be, but we can all know what the numerical value of his name will very likely be, because it is stated to be 666.

* * *

Let us take a closer look at v 18. The word *wisdom* is from the Greek word *σοφία*, and refers to the *intellect*, i.e., the *mind*. The word *calculate* is from the Greek word *τσαφιδζο*, meaning to *compute*, to *use pebbles* in counting. In other words, the reference is to very simple calculation. The word *number* is from the Greek word *αριθμος*, meaning a number (as reckoned up). This is the Greek word from which we get the word arithmetic.

A good modern translation of this verse in paraphrase would be, "Here's all the wisdom you will need. Let the one who is able to use his mind and understanding, calculate and determine by simple arithmetic who the beast is. Because you will be able to determine who this man is by simple computation. The numerical value of the letters of his name will be 666."

As stated earlier, several names have the numerical value of 666, so the simple fact that a

man's name has this numerical value will be of no significance unless other factors concerning him bear out that he is truly the Antichrist. So in these days of the end any man having a name with this numerical value will bear close watching. It may even be that Antichrist will arbitrarily choose 666 as his number, but the numerical value of his name will also likely total this number.

237 Revelation 14:1-5

We read of the 144,000 in Revelation 7:1-8. Their ministry having been completed, they are now seen with the Lord in Heaven. We are not told when their ascension to Heaven takes place. The time factor in this event is not revealed anywhere in Scripture.

There are some students of Scripture who believe that these 144,000 are a different group than the 144,000 of 7:1-8. Their belief is that these are the male children in Israel who were killed by Herod at the birth of Christ. They point out that the 144,000 of these verses are persons *who had not defiled themselves with women, so they are virgins*.

This group is also said to be *the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb*. The argument is that the male children slain at the birth of Christ were truly *the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb*. People believing this also point to the statement that *they had never lied or spoken hypocritically, so they stand before the throne of God blameless*. They argue that such a statement could only be made of infants.

* * *

The answers to such questions when they arise may never be revealed until Jesus comes. The Jewish population in Israel would have had to have been very large at the birth of Christ if 144,000 male babies under the age of two were slain. It's possible, of course, that the soldiers of Herod slew many children who were older than two years, to make sure they got the One they were after. The statement in verse one that these 144,000 had their Heavenly Father's *name written in their foreheads* should almost settle the argument. The same statement is made concerning the 144,000 in 7:1-8. But then, the same could be true of others.

We can be glad that a right belief regarding all the facts and truths concerning the 144,000 is not important to the salvation of our souls. But

when we arrive in Heaven it will be interesting to get some of these answers.

238 Revelation 16:15

We are told in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 and 2 Peter 3:10 that the Lord will come *as a thief in the night*. His coming will be a real surprise. The world will not be expecting Him. In spite of all the warnings and judgments that God will pour upon the earth, most people will retain their hard hearts, refusing either to believe or repent.

By this time God will have sent His messengers thruout the entire earth (either by world-wide TV coverage, Revelation 14:6-11, or by literal angels) proclaiming the message of salvation and warning the earth of impending destruction. Some people will no doubt heed the message and be converted. The great majority, however, even as today, will refuse to yield their hearts to Christ as Lord. And when the armies of Antichrist gather at Armageddon with all their armored might, Christ will crush them so suddenly that the world will wonder what happened. Revelation 19:11-21.

Immediately following Armageddon, God will continue His judgments upon the world with great earthquakes, hail, fire and other devastation. vss 18-21; Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12-17.

* * *

Thru it all, there is a *blessing* pronounced upon those on earth who continue to stay awake to how they live, and yearn for the Lord's coming, always preparing their hearts for Him. Notice that the blessing is pronounced only upon those who are watching how they live. The same is true today. At this hour the Lord is calling many from the earth thru death. Even now, only those who have prepared themselves as God requires, go to be with Him. Matthew 24:42-51.

239 Revelation 16:20

No doubt the *islands* will disappear because there will be no more *oceans* (21:1), due to the fact that the waters of the ocean will again return to the sky to form the protective canopy over the earth (Isaiah 4:6), which fell as rain during the time of the Great Flood. This canopy must be restored to the Heavens to protect the earth from the sun, which will be seven times brighter following Christ's return than it is today. Isaiah 30:26.

When only rivers and lakes remain upon the

earth there will be very few islands, except in some of the larger lakes. Again, when a word such as *every* is used, it is not always to be applied in the absolute sense. But so few islands will remain when compared with the number now in existence that it will be as though there were none left.

And the *mountains* will disappear because the earthquakes will level them. Some of the mountainous areas will probably become plains while others will be reduced to habitable rolling hills. And it's conceivable that the Lord may leave just a few of the rugged mountains for climbers and for their beauty.

240 Revelation 16:21

The falling stars of 6:13 and Matthew 24:29 will very likely be great showers of large and very large meteorites striking the earth with most devastating blows.

To finish off the devastation, God will send great hailstones from the heavens. Large hailstones the size of potatoes, weighing 1 1/2 to 2 pounds, have been known to cause dreadful destruction of property and vegetation. In this instance, these great hailstones will each weigh over 100 pounds. They would hit the earth with tremendous force, smashing everything that remained following the earthquake, etc.

Evidently there will be different reactions on the part of people to these great judgments of God. Some will *curse and revile God* for this great destruction of life and property. In Revelation 6:12-17 we find that people will seek to *hide themselves in caves and among the rocks of the mountains*. They will call out to the mountains and to the rocks, *Fall on us and hide us from the eyes of the One who sits on the throne and from the terrible anger of the Lamb! Because the terrible Day of Their anger has come, and who will be able to escape Their judgment?* There seems to be some indication of remorse and penitence on the part of these people. See Revelation 11:19 and Isaiah 2:17-21.

To get a more detailed description of the conditions of the earth during this period of terrible judgment from God, read chapters 24-27 of Isaiah. The events of those chapters are yet unfulfilled, and await their fulfillment in the day of God's soon-coming judgment.

241 Revelation 17:9-11

These verses present a fuller understanding

of the meaning of this beast with the seven heads and ten horns. We are told that *the seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits*. Earlier (v 1), the woman was described as *sitting on many bodies of water*. The many bodies of water represented people and nations. v 15.

This vile woman of Babylonian religious origin (v 5) has lorded it over the common people and also over the heads of state (v 18) since the days of the Egyptian Empire, and possibly earlier. And she will do it again—undoubtedly with greater intensity.

The *seven mountains* refer to seven kingdoms. The *seven kings* of v 10 refer to the seven spirit (evil spirit) rulers of these seven kingdoms. All of these empires of the past had several human kings in succession, but only one evil spirit king seeking to control each empire. These seven kingdoms are the seven great kingdoms that have been guilty of persecuting Israel, whether past, present, or future.

As previously stated, the six great kingdoms of the past that have persecuted the nation of Israel in notable fashion have been Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The seventh kingdom to persecute Israel will be the future confederacy of the ten nations of Revised Rome. The rulers of the ten nations of this future confederacy are characterized by the ten horns of the beast, while the seven heads represent the seven kingdoms of the past and future.

* * *

The *five spirit rulers that have fallen* (v 10), when John received this revelation, were the spirit rulers of the first five kingdoms mentioned above. *The one in power at the present time*, the one in power at the time God gave the revelation (A.D. 90), was the spirit controlling Rome. The ruler that *hasn't yet come on the scene* will be the spirit behind the confederacy of the ten kingdoms forming Revised Rome. This spirit ruler, *when it does come, must remain for only a short while*. In other words, this confederacy will last for only a brief period of time. Just how brief that period will be we are not told. These ten rulers of Revised Rome will no doubt rise to power with the aid of religious Babylon, as it appears that they will be controlled by her. v 3.

After the ten horns (ten rulers) are fully established, a ruler will rise up among them in the area of the former Grecian Empire portion of the old Roman Empire. He is called "the little horn"

(the Antichrist). Read Daniel 8:1-25. When Alexander the Great died, his kingdom was divided among his four strongest generals. The four divisions were Greece, Turkey, Babylonia, and Egypt. According to Daniel 8:9, it is out of one of these four areas that the Antichrist, *the little horn*, will arise.

Antichrist will likely rise to power in the area of former Assyria, since he is called the Assyrian in Scripture more times than by any other name. Old Assyria took in the area which is now northern Iraq and eastern Syria, before its expansion into an empire. Undoubtedly there will be a realignment of nations in that area, and there will again be a country called Assyria before Antichrist appears. On the other hand, he may even be the force that will form the nation of new Assyria as he comes to power.

* * *

According to Daniel 8:23, Antichrist will appear on the scene when the nations are in such turmoil and trouble as they have never been in before, because of unprecedented evil. Daniel also indicates here that he will be a most powerful personality. Rotherham translates this *a king of mighty presence*. His eyes will powerfully captivate and command respect and confidence. When this world is in hopeless confusion the inhabitants will be relieved to have such a mighty one come forth with the answers. Only those who know God's prophecies will recognize him as the end-time, powerful emissary of Satan.

Leaders of the nations today are looking for just such a man to take complete world control. They say that only an extremely wise, talented, and powerful personality as world ruler can save the world from all the dangers that are threatening.

Antichrist is called the *little horn*, because he will have a small, almost unnoticed beginning. He will come from the area of the former Roman Empire. But he will come out of the portion of that Empire which was part of the former Empire of Greece. *Four kings* were prophesied to *stand up* in the place of Alexander the Great when he died, but they would *not have his power*. Daniel 8:18-22. History reveals that this prophecy was fulfilled to the letter.

The words *the latter time of their kingdom* (Daniel 8:23), however, refer primarily to the Greek Kingdom (or Empire) at the end of the age, *when the transgressors are come to the full*, when moral decay has become full blown. This is just

one reason why we believe Antichrist will resurrect the old Empire of Greece by conquering Greece before he attacks the rest of the ten-nation confederacy of Europe. It's conceivable that, starting with the nation of Assyria as his base, he will conquer the surrounding nations until he has reformed the Grecian Empire. He will certainly need to build up substantial military strength somewhere before he is able to *subdue* three of the future ten rulers of Europe. Daniel 7:7-8, 23-24.

* * *

Daniel 8:9 tells us that *the little horn became extremely powerful as he moved toward the south, the east, and toward the glorious land (Israel)*. The first big step, then, in his rise to power, will be his conquering of all the area of the old Grecian Empire. Possibly Greece could first become a part of Revised Rome. In that case, when Antichrist conquers Greece he will be taking his first step in conquering the ten nations of Revised Rome.

There will also be an eighth world kingdom (v 11) over which this spirit power, thru the Antichrist, will rule. This will be the combined kingdoms of the revived Assyrian and Grecian Empires and Revised Rome. As spirit ruler over the eighth great world kingdom, he will empower the Antichrist, the ten rulers, and others, for only a few brief years, after which *he will be driven away into a continual state of being destroyed*.

242 Revelation 20:7-10

Toward the end of the first 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth, Satan will be released from his prison to *deceive the nations*. v 8. The word *deceive* is translated from the Greek word *πλανησαι*, and means *to cause to roam from safety, truth, or virtue; to cause to go astray*. Satan will no doubt be allowed to take his great host of fallen angels with him on his tours of the earth, tempting those who have been living under the blessing of the Lord's reign. Some will have enjoyed the benefits of that reign for the full 1,000 years.

Even at that, there will be many, *as vast in numbers as the numberless sands on the seashore*, who will be chafing under the restraint of the Lord's blessed rule. Wanting to satisfy the lusts of the flesh, they will fall for Satan's enticements to "march on Jerusalem and dethrone the king there."

It's almost inconceivable to realize that in spite of all the light and knowledge these people will have about Christ and His goodness, they will still be determined to have their own way. But this was also true of the angels in Heaven who fell, when Lucifer (now Satan) led them to rebel against God. God will now use Satan to test the inhabitants of the new earth to determine whether their affections are really with the Lord, or not.

* * *

This vast army of rebels will converge on Jerusalem from all over the earth. But this time when they are ready for the attack, no doubt before they are able to cause any damage, *fire will come down from God out of Heaven and destroy them*. This will not be the last of them, however, because they will be resurrected with all other rebels of all time for judgment. vs 11-15.

Following this judgment, Satan, and possibly all of the fallen host of angels with him, will be *thrown into the lake of fire, a lake of flaming sulphur*. The *beast and the false prophet* were thrown into this *lake of fire* 1,000 years earlier, at the end of the tribulation period on earth. And they will still be there. To be *thrown into the lake of fire* will not mean that one is suddenly consumed to exist no more. The last part of this verse states that those in the lake of fire *will be tormented day and night forever and ever*.

243 Revelation 20:12

Just what are *the books* mentioned here? God of course does not need books as we know them, but there are records of all lives. Each one's memory will be a book. God's memory is a book. And read John 12:44-49 in connection with *the books* there. In that reference Jesus is telling the people that He did not come to earth to judge, but that they did have a Judge, and that Judge would be the words that He was speaking.

Yes, we will all be judged by what we have done with God's word. Have we believed and obeyed it? Or have we ignored much of it? It's all in the record. And God will compare the record in His memory and ours with the record of the books of His word.

Therefore, those who have believed and obeyed God's message will be in His presence by this time, but those who have ignored and disobeyed will now be standing before Him for judgment. And they will be judged according to their deeds in life and according to what they have done with what God revealed to them was His will for them. We are saved by God's grace, but character at last (according to the things they had done) is the test, even as the fruit is the test of the tree.

244 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THINGS TO COME

First there came an ominous rumbling, then a most violent shaking. It seemed that the whole building they were in was being literally torn apart. The floor buckled, and parts of it hit the ceiling, crushing several people in the process. There were loud screams from the dying and wounded, then more violent shaking and pounding, and the literal throwing of buildings into the air. "Earthquake!" some screamed.

But what a feeble statement, because what they were experiencing was in fact the greatest of all earthquakes, the one which had long been prophesied would happen at the end of the age. Just days before, the great world dictator had gathered his forces from every nation under his control, and had marched on Israel against those who had dared to challenge his supremacy. But amaz-

ingly, fire from the heavens had destroyed his armies and innumerable millions had died.

* * *

Christians had often warned about the Battle of Armageddon and the greatest of all earthquakes that would follow. Now it was causing unprecedented destruction and havoc everywhere.

Yes, all that God has prophesied will definitely happen. The end of this age is fast approaching, when **the nations on earth will be utterly perplexed and panic-stricken** (Luke 21:25) at all that will be happening as the end approaches.

The Bible predicts that there will be ever-increasing rebellion against God and against moral restraint in the last days. 2 Timothy 3:1-5;

4:3-4. The Lord says thru the prophet Daniel (Daniel 8:23) that the Antichrist, the great opposer of God in the final days, will come to power **when those in rebellion against God have become rotten to the core**, when sin is rampant, when rebellion against God and right living has not only become fully ripe, but also totally rotten.

We see this rebellion increasing today in frightful ways. There have been other times of gross sin in history, but never when the other prophecies for the end were also in the process of being fulfilled so perfectly. The end is indeed fast approaching.

We are told that in the end time the Holy Spirit will step aside (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8) and allow sin to take its natural course without His restraining influence, thereby allowing sin to become fully ripe. With moral decay rampant today it seems certain that He has already stepped aside.

People all over the world will be madly drunk on their success in breaking the restraints of all moral codes. Antichrist will come to power when sin is worse than the world has ever seen (Daniel 8:23), but evidently it will even worsen under his influence. Daniel 11:36-39.

The Bible reveals (Revelation 9:21) that mankind will be guilty of four major sins in the last days:

- * murder
- * drugs and experimentation in the occult
- * sexual immoralities
- * large-scale thievery

The pressure to indulge in sin will be intense for everyone on earth, Christian and non-Christian alike. Some Christians, beguiled by seducing spirits, will depart from their faith in Christ. Even some who are the most knowledgeable in the things of God will fall. Daniel 11:35.

A significant event in this end-time period will be the rebuilding of the old city of Babylon. Some ask, "How can that be? Bible prophecy states that Babylon will never be rebuilt." True! Babylon will never be rebuilt *after it is burned*. But it has never yet been burned, at least not since the prophecy of its destruction was made. The Bible reveals some very interesting facts concerning new Babylon. For one thing, it will be the capital city of the Antichrist. The country of Iraq is, even at the time of this writing, rebuilding Babylon.

* * *

Egypt will have further reverses, evidently resulting from engagements in war with Israel.

Egypt should have learned her lesson by now, but according to prophecy Egypt will lose the Nile River (Isaiah 11:15; 19:5-10), and will have civil war and continual turmoil. The Nile River will dry up, evidently as a result of a change in the course of the river.

Russia, Turkey, Iran, Poland, Germany, Libya, and Ethiopia, together with other nations, will unite to invade Israel. Ezekiel 38 and 39. But with God's help Israel will thoroughly defeat these nations, who will very likely then become third-rate powers.

The Bible indicates that the USA and her allies will not interfere with this invasion. They will complain and protest loudly (Ezekiel 38:13), but they won't lift a finger to stop Russia and her allies. No reason for this noninterference is given. But the northern powers will definitely meet a powerful Force in Israel: God promises that He Himself will be there to meet them, with a great judgment. Ezekiel 38:16-23.

Following this debacle of nations in Israel, a great spiritual awakening will erupt thruout the whole earth. See Revelation 14:14-16, and the note there, and Joel 2:28-32 notes. Mankind will be given this last wonderful opportunity to get right with God before judgment strikes. Joel 2:28-32.

* * *

Another significant event of these last days will be the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. We know this will happen because prophecy states that Antichrist will conquer Israel and will sit in the Temple in Jerusalem as god. Also, sacrifices will be offered in front of this Temple after the order of the Old Testament, but Antichrist will cause these sacrifices to cease. All of this implies that the Temple will have been rebuilt.

The outstanding characteristic of this final period will be **perilous times**—perils from nature, as God unlooses His vengeance upon the rebellious people of this planet, perils from Satan, and perils from fallen man. 2 Timothy 3:1-5. All kinds of problems will be building up and exploding.

There will be great, great persecution of Christians thruout the world (Matthew 24:7-13) during the last years of this age. There have already been more martyrs of the Christian faith since 1917 than in all the previous years of the Christian era. And the end is just beginning. The Christian Church was born in blood, and it will be glorified in blood as it leaves this earth.

During these end-time days, a 10-nation federation will be formed in Europe. Prophecy indicates that this federation will be formed within the approximate area of the old Roman Empire. Daniel 7:7-8,19-20,23-24.

* * *

It's at this time that the Antichrist will rise to power in the Middle East. He will have an insignificant beginning (Daniel 8:9-12), evidently living and basing his influence in Syria (or Assyria) since the Bible many times refers to him as The Assyrian. Isaiah 10:24; 14:24-25; 30:30-31; 31:8-9; Micah 5:5-6. Evidently he will reconstruct the old Assyrian Empire, and then reconstruct the former Grecian Empire, putting it all together again. Daniel 7:7-8; 8:8-9,21-24; Zechariah 9:13.

After accomplishing that miracle and gaining power over the territory which reaches from the borders of India on the east to the southern border of Egypt in the southwest, and west as far as to include Greece, he will then come against the 10-nation federation in Europe. After he conquers three of these nations, the other seven will surrender to him. The Antichrist will then control everything from the western shores of Europe to the borders of India. Daniel 7:7-8; Rev. 17:12-13.

Unfortunately, Antichrist will not be satisfied with this great accomplishment, but he will go forth **conquering, with determination to conquer the whole world.** Revelation 6:2.

* * *

Sometime during this period, Antichrist will make a 7-year treaty with many nations, including Israel. He may even pose as Israel's great protector, because the Bible states that Israel will honor and accept him. The Jews rejected Christ, who came in the name of the Father, saying that He came from Heaven to represent Him, and was sent by Him. But when the Jews refused to receive Him, Christ prophesied that while they refused Him they would at a later date accept someone else who would claim to represent only himself. So we know that Israel will honor and accept the Antichrist, even entering into a treaty with him.

* * *

During his reign Antichrist will demand that everyone receive his mark on their forehead or on their right hand (Revelation 13:16-18) in order to

buy or sell. This mark will be either the Antichrist's name, his symbol, or his number. We don't know his name or his symbol, but we are given his number: 666.

But all who accept the **mark of the beast**, as Scripture calls it, will damn their souls. This warning, plain in Scripture (Revelation 14:9-11), *needs to be sounded loud and clear.* It will be far better to suffer a thousand deaths than to receive the temporary benefits of this mark, and be damned to Hell! (This number, or mark, however, is not to be confused with present-day commercial numberings which have no religious significance.)

* * *

During this period, a great religious monstrosity (Revelation 17:1-7,15-18) will reassert itself and become a political power. The Bible gives this monster the mysterious name of ***MYSTERIOUS BABYLON, THE GREAT MOTHER OF WHORES AND ALL KINDS OF PERVERSIONS AND CORRUPTIONS TAKING PLACE ON THE EARTH.*** Seemingly, this woman is symbolic of a great world church.

There is a powerful movement underway among decadent Protestant denominations to unite all Christian churches and denominations into one great union, that would be tolerant of all ideas and faiths. This great body will then find solid acceptance and union with the major heathen religions of the world. This is exactly what these religious bodies have been working toward for years.

This great world church will then evidently ask Israel for the privilege (Zechariah 5:5-11) of setting up its world headquarters in or near Jerusalem. Israel will refuse. As an alternative, the world church will make the same proposal to new Babylon, and will be accepted there. They might even call their headquarters the City of God, located within new Babylon, as a separate entity within the city limits, or just beyond.

* * *

We are told that the rulers of that time, the ten rulers of Europe, and possibly the Antichrist and others, will use this world church to gain world power. It is evident even now that those who advocate one-world government are those most interested in forming the world church. But when the world rulers have used the world church as a springboard to power and no longer need her, they

will turn on her and burn her headquarters city (Revelation 17:16), destroying and dissolving her completely as a recognized body.

* * *

Simultaneously, the Lord will send two prophets to Israel. In just 11 verses in the Bible (Revelation 11:3-13), we are given a marvelous glimpse of these two prophets who will come to warn Israel of her ways and of the judgment to come. These prophets will be so empowered by God that they will be able to stop rain from falling and do as many wonders as necessary to prove their God-given authority.

Anyone who tries to kill them will be killed himself by fire coming from the prophets' mouths. When their witness is finished, however, God will allow the Antichrist to kill them. He and the Israelis will refuse to bury their bodies, leaving them in the streets of Jerusalem where they fell, for the whole world to view, evidently by television.

The animosity and conviction generated all over the world by these prophets will be so great that people will celebrate their deaths with parties and great jubilation. But after lying dead in the streets three days, the two prophets will rise up with new life and ascend to Heaven in the sight of all. There will be some world-wide shock waves as a result of this.

* * *

Soon after the prophets' resurrection, Antichrist will traitorously break his treaty with Israel. In the middle of the 7-year period of the treaty, he will bring his armies into Israel, possibly on the pretext of protecting it.

In the books of Daniel and The Revelation we have numbers given which enable us to calculate the exact time when Antichrist will attack Israel. It's not exactly in the middle of the seven years, but nearly so. From these numbers we can calculate the time when Antichrist will enter Jerusalem with his armies, and how soon he will attack the Jews after entering the city. We are also given numbers which indicate how long his army will remain in Israel. See Appendix 245, page 505.

When Antichrist turns on the Jews, his first step will be to blow up the altar of sacrifice located in front of their Temple. The Hebrew text is clear on this in Daniel 8:11-14. It is possible that he will use dynamite or something similar to blow the altar out of the way. Then he will replace it

with his own image, and order that it be worshipped.

* * *

Christ spoke of this time when He warned, **When you see [by television?] the abominable thing that has caused so much devastation, standing now in the Temple area**, (in other words, when that despicable thing, that idol, is standing where the altar should be), then, **flee out of Jerusalem as fast as you can go**. See Matthew 24:15-28.

In Zechariah 14 God says, **Flee thru the valley of the mountains**, because here's what will happen: When Antichrist sets up his image in the Temple area, Christ Himself will make a move to fight for Israel. He will literally descend from Heaven, His feet just touching the top of the Mount of Olives. The instant He does so the mountain will split down the middle, making two mountains and a valley thru which the Jews can escape.

The Lord instructs those living in Jerusalem, "When you see that abominable thing standing where it should not be, flee thru the valley of the mountains. Get out of Jerusalem as fast as you can go." And He provides the way of escape. To those in other parts of Israel He says, "Flee to the mountains."

There will be need for immediate flight. In fact, the Lord instructs the Jews not to take time even to go to some other part of the house to rescue valuables. And those in the fields are not to return to the house before leaving. This of course would include those working elsewhere. All are to flee into the mountains or thru the new valley immediately. It will be absolutely necessary for each family member living in Israel at the time of these events to understand all of the instructions well.

Only those who pay strict and immediate heed to this warning will escape, because immediately after Antichrist desecrates the Temple he will turn on the Jews and slaughter them. He will direct his armies against them all over Israel.

* * *

In mad pursuit of the Jews, Antichrist will send part of his armies thru the new valley in the Mount of Olives in an attempt to overtake those who are escaping. When a large portion of his forces are in that valley, the Lord will close up the mountain and bury them (Revelation 12:13-17), just as he buried the armies of Pharaoh of Egypt in

the Red Sea. Exodus 14:1-31.

Losing his armies in the Mount of Olives will so enrage the Antichrist that he will turn on all remaining Jews who believe in Christ, and slay them. In fact, so great will be his wrath that two-thirds of all Jews in Israel will be killed. While a great part of Antichrist's army will perish in the Mount of Olives, he will undoubtedly have thousands left in Jerusalem and in other parts of Israel to do his evil work.

While two-thirds of the Jews will be killed, of the other one-third, some will escape, and many will be taken into slavery. Those enslaved will be taken to Babylon, Egypt, and elsewhere. God instructs the Jews that as they are being driven out of Israel (evidently on foot, to be herded as slaves to Babylon), they are to put up markers along the way to enable them to return. Jeremiah 31:21. Such instructions couldn't possibly have applied to the 70-year exile of Israel in Babylon in the 6th century B.C. Any signs so placed would have deteriorated in that period. This future enslavement of the Jews will last only 3 1/2 years, after which they will be liberated—by the Lord.

* * *

Great tribulation will be the lot of the Jews (Jeremiah 30:6-7) and of every true Christian at this time. Daniel 7:20-22,25; Revelation 13:7. Antichrist will pour vengeance upon God's people everywhere. Even within the nations in which he yields no power, many will no doubt worship him and obey his instructions.

During these same brief years, horrendous judgments from God will be unleashed upon the ungodly. In The Revelation we read of seven trumpet judgments, to be followed by seven vial judgments. The seven vial judgments are to be poured out on the kingdom of the Antichrist. Their effects may be world-wide in scope as well, but they will be especially concentrated on the area under Antichrist's control.

* * *

What will the Jews do—those in slavery and those who have fled into the mountains and wilderness? There will no doubt be some among them who will pray most earnestly and effectively for deliverance, and God will answer their prayers! He will raise up 15 outstanding Jews, evidently Jews in free nations—seven religious leaders and eight business, political, or military leaders—to

organize the opposition against the Antichrist. We know the exact number of men. The Old Testament prophecies are very clear on the subject. See Micah 5:5-6.

It's these Jews who will instigate the war against Antichrist. Isaiah 52:1-12; 41:14-16; Micah 4:11-13. But how can they ever expect to overcome him when he's controlling *the whole world*? He will actually control the then-known world, the world of Bible times, around the Mediterranean Sea, and all of the area known at that time. But there will be vast portions of the modern-day world he will not control.

This war council of 15 Jews will mobilize the armies of four great world powers—four great nations or empires (Jeremiah 50:9; Zechariah 1:18-21)—who will go against the Antichrist. Their first target will be his capital city of Babylon.

* * *

As these great powers prepare to move on Babylon to destroy it, God will warn the Jews enslaved there to flee the city. Isaiah 48:20; 49:9; 52:11-12; Jeremiah 50:8-9; 51:6,45-46; Zechariah 2:6-7. But how can slaves leave the place in which they are enslaved? With God, of course, all things are possible, and we are told exactly how He plans to save them.

He will whisper a word to the earth and actually cause it to leave its orbit. The prophecy states that earth will run around in space like a deer that's being chased, and it will wander about like a sheep that has no shepherd. Isaiah 13:13-14. See also Luke 21:26 and the note.

What would your reaction be? How do you suppose people would react today if the earth went out of orbit? It would scare the very life out of most people, wouldn't it? The Scriptures state that in those days **Many will die of heart failure because of fear, resulting from the frightful things that are happening to the earth.** Luke 21:25-26. When this earth goes on its erratic ride thru the heavens without a driver, it will bring terrifying panic to all—except to those who are ready to meet God.

* * *

People in the city of Babylon will be so frightened, shaken, and confused over the results of the earth's tangent that they won't even think of their slaves, the Jews. God says to His captive, praying people, **You won't need to sneak out of Babylon fearfully, nor take hasty flight. Walk out with your heads**

high, and even ask the citizens of Babylon as to the best route to Israel. Then the Lord promises, I'll even be your rear guard. They won't come after you after you've left, because I'm going to keep them back there. Isaiah 52:11-12; Jeremiah 50:4-5.

We are told that Babylon will be the greatest and richest city on earth at the time of Antichrist's reign. People from around the world will go there to make their fortunes. But at this ominous turn of events, when the earth leaves its orbit, these foreigners will also flee and return to their own lands. Jeremiah 50:16; 51:9; Isaiah 47:15. They evidently will have heard this prophecy of the chaos that will occur just before Babylon and the surrounding area is overthrown and burned. Not all of the foreigners will leave, of course, because many will have their business, investments, and families there. And many will value these more than their lives.

The armies of the four major attacking powers, together with many others (Jeremiah 50:9,41), will surge into Babylon in a sudden and fierce attack. They will first slaughter the citizens, both in the city and in the countryside. Jeremiah 50:14-15,29-30,42; 51:49; Revelation 18:6-7.

Then the soldiers of these armies will rob Babylon of everything of value: gold, silver—anything, everywhere—on the dead, in their homes, in their banks, storehouses—everything, everywhere. Finally the victors will burn the place down. Babylon will be slaughtered, plundered, and burned, in that order. See Isaiah 47; Jeremiah 50 and 51; Revelation 18.

* * *

Interestingly, the Bible tells more about the Battle of Babylon than about the Battle of Armageddon. Most of the above Scriptures have to do with modern Babylon rather than ancient Babylon.

During these events, the Jews will be triumphantly marching on their way to Jerusalem, and, according to Scripture (Isaiah 48:20-21; 49:9-11) God will provide food, water, and smooth roads for them in those deserts. He will see that their every need is provided as they travel home. The former slaves will arrive in Jerusalem praising God and shouting loudly enough for all the world to hear. Most likely all of the world *will hear*, and *see*, too, by television. What a tremendous event for the world to witness.

Next, God's liberating armies, after plundering and burning Babylon, will go from Babylon to

Israel and will turn on Antichrist's occupying forces in Jerusalem. The four powers, together with growing Israeli forces, will liberate Israel. The Jews will mobilize, organize, and take part in these final and most memorable of battles. Zechariah 14:14; 9:13 (or vs 12-16); 10:3-6.

This series of conflicts will end in the Battle of Armageddon. The Bible even tells us its timing in relation to other events. The Battle of Armageddon will take place 4 1/2 months after the Battle of Babylon. (140 days. See Chart on page 511.)

* * *

What will be the reason for the **Battle of Armageddon**? What will cause it? Look at it from Antichrist's standpoint. His capital city has been wiped out, and with it he has lost all the Middle East. Thus threatened, he will no doubt mobilize all of his remaining armies thruout Europe, Africa, and elsewhere for the purpose of liquidating these invaders.

His plan will call for nothing less than total annihilation of his enemies. At the same time, the liberating armies will call for further reinforcements from their nations, and from many other nations as well. Many powers near and far will join the four great liberating powers in this last great battle. Joel 3:1-2,9-14; Revelation 16:13-14.

* * *

It's an interesting chain of events: We are told that Antichrist's armies will mobilize in the Valley of Megiddo; then he will evidently come down with one of his armies and go right into the heart of Israel; he gets to within a mile of Jerusalem, on a hill called Nob, where he's able to look over to Jerusalem. Here, we're told, he will raise his fist and threaten the Jews and boast of what he will do on the morrow. He will likely do this for the benefit of television, for all the world to hear and see. Isaiah 10:20-34, esp. v 32.

But early the next morning—we believe it will be early, so God can make a full day's production of this tremendous event—Christ will appear in the heavens! The invading Antichrist army will be no match for the Messiah—the Great Liberator—and Antichrist will go down in ignominious defeat. Revelation 19:19-21.

Immediately after the battle, the Jews will take the spoil from the bodies slain by the Lord. Zechariah 14:14. They will gather all the gold, silver, and other valuables they want. Even the lame,

we are told, will gather their share. The Jews, together with the liberating armies, will enrich themselves from these fallen bodies. Then, the vultures will devour the corpses. Revelation 19:17-21.

The next event will be a great judgment from God, which many have called the *end of the world*. Isaiah 2:10-21; Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12-17; 16:16-21. First, great darkness will cover all the earth. Then earthquakes such as mankind have never experienced will shake this earth to its very foundations. The shakings will be so severe and extended that they will level every mountain.

Following this, great numbers of large meteorites will crash into the earth, causing horrendous destruction.

* * *

The oceans will disappear. Revelation 21:1. A pertinent theory, held by a number of knowledgeable scientists, is that there was at one time a canopy of ice particles high in the sky, causing a hothouse effect of constant, warm temperatures over the whole earth. It appears likely, from various Scriptures, that this canopy will be restored. The disappearance of the oceans could mean that they will literally return to the skies.

Lakes and rivers will still exist on earth, but there will be a vastly greater land area. Almost three-fourths of our world is covered by oceans today. When the waters return to the skies, there will obviously be much more room on earth. The mountains, lowered as plains and rolling hills, can become farmlands. Finally, even the deserts will **blossom in wondrous profusion and beauty**. Isaiah 35:1-2,6-7; 41:18-20; 43:18-20; 51:3. What a paradise this earth will finally become!

* * *

But while earth is being renovated, it will serve as a colossal judgment from God upon selfish, willful, God-rejecting humans. Besides the judgments already mentioned, there will be great thunder and lightning, no doubt with great torrents of rain and floods. Great hail storms will also strike the earth. The average hailstones of these wild storms will weigh over 100 pounds each. Revelation 16:21. Imagine what destruction such hail will cause!

After the earth has been literally shaken to pieces, washed out, and then pummeled with great meteorites and hailstones to crush what little

remains, the Lord will send a grand finale of fire. He will burn the very bits and pieces of people's finest dreams until all lie in ashes at their feet. 2 Peter 3:5-14.

* * *

The question often arises: "What will happen to the Christians on earth during this time?" Some believe that the Christians will have been taken by God from the earth before the 7-year tribulation even begins. But we believe that the Scriptures clearly teach that the Christian will be here to the very end; at least until just before God pours out His wrath upon mankind shortly after Armageddon. Matthew 24:29-31.

Our belief before making this intense study was that all Christians would be taken by the Lord from the earth before the Great Tribulation, or at least before the last half of it. But we find that the Scriptures are very clear that the Rapture of God's people from the earth will occur *after* the Great Tribulation. See Matthew 24:30-31 notes and Appendix 201, page 467.

* * *

We do hope no one will dismiss us just because of disagreeing with us regarding *the time* of the Rapture of the Church. This is one point where we would like to be wrong. We have no desire to live thru a time of great tribulation. But the blessed hope of Christians is that Christ has promised He will take us to be with Himself, forever. The time when He takes us is not all that important. Our main concern must be that we are *ready to go* when He calls, either by death or in the Rapture.

Three books regarding the Rapture are recommended reading: *The Blessed Hope*, by George Ladd, published by Eerdmans; *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, by Alexander Reese, published by Grand Rapids International Publications; and *The Church and the Tribulation*, by Robert H. Gundry, published by Zondervan.

Following the Rapture, a great marriage will take place in Heaven. Revelation 19:6-9. The Bridegroom is none other than the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The Bride will be those of earth who **have made themselves ready**.

Two judgments will also take place at this time—the judgment for rewards, for all true followers of the Lord, and the judgment of the nations. At the judgment of the nations (Matthew

25:31-46), determination will be made concerning those still living upon the earth. Some will be privileged to enter the Kingdom Age, to repopulate the earth, and some will not. Christ will ask one great question of those who appear before Him at the judgment of the nations: "How did you treat My people, the Christians and the Jews, during the awful time of tribulation? Did you help them or did you ignore their needs, or even help the Antichrist in his persecution of My people?" The Lord will simply say, "Whatever you have done to these, My brothers and sisters, you have done to Me." And they will be judged accordingly. See Matthew 25:31-46.

Later there will be another judgment—the judgment of all who ignored God and His will for them, and who lived to please themselves instead of God. They will be resurrected from death and

Hell for this judgment. Revelation 20:11-15. There will be degrees of anguish and suffering in Hell and in the lake of fire, just as there will be degrees of reward in Heaven for those who sought earnestly to please God. It is our earnest hope that you will surrender in obedience to God and received His forgiveness thru Christ—and everlasting Life.

Following His return to earth, Christ will set up His eternal Kingdom, the Kingdom of God on earth. Christ will then in truth be King of kings and Lord of lords.

This is a bare outline of a few of the outstanding happenings prophesied in the Bible for the end time. As you read and earnestly study God's word, you will discover much, much more.

245 GOD'S PROPHESED TIMETABLE FOR THE END

Note the charts on pages 509, 510 and 511.

Then read the explanations here.

When will the end of the age occur? This is a question many have asked. When Christ was on earth He told His followers that no one but the Father knew the day nor the hour when He would return to set up His Kingdom on earth. However, in the prophetic books of Daniel and The Revelation we are given numbers which pinpoint the end of the age, when computed from certain end-time events, as you will see on our chart on p 511.

Again however, this means that we still cannot start the countdown until these certain end-time events occur. This still will not give us the day and the hour of Christ's return, only the approximate time.

All of the time periods given in Daniel and The Revelation have to do with the last 3 1/2 years of the age. So today we cannot give even the approximate time of Christ's return, because we do not know as yet when those last 3 1/2 years will begin. But as the end approaches we will be able to begin to calculate. Notice the record we have of this in Daniel 12:4-9:

⁴"But as for you, Daniel, seal up the meaning of the interpretation of the vision that was given you, and seal up the understanding of the book until the time of the end, when many will run to and fro in it, and the understanding of it will be increased."

⁵Then as I looked, I saw two others standing by the river. One was on my side, and the other on the far

side.

⁶One of them asked the man dressed in linen, who was now above the waters of the river, "How long will it be until these amazing events come to an end?"

⁷The man dressed in linen who was above the waters of the river then raised both hands toward the heavens, and I heard him swear by Him who lives forever, and say, "It will last for a year, plus two years, plus half a year. And as soon as they have shattered the power of the holy people, all these things will come to an end."

⁸I heard all this, but I didn't understand. So I said, "Sir, what will be the outcome of all this?"

⁹"Go your way, Daniel," he replied, "because the meaning of all this has been closed up and sealed until the time of the end."

Certain periods of time concerning the end of the age were given here to Daniel, but notice that Daniel was told (v 4), **Daniel, seal up ... the understanding of the book.** Then notice in v 8 that Daniel becomes rather excited and concerned about the periods of time given him in this revelation, and he asks for a clarification. But again he is told that the meaning of all this has been closed up and sealed until the time of the end. That tells us that these secrets *will be unsealed and revealed* to God's people in the time of the end.

One indication that we are now living in the time of the end is that God is now revealing to His

people what He meant by all these numbers in Daniel and The Revelation, as you will see as we progress in this Appendix, and as you study the charts and Scriptures on pages 509, 510 and 511. This is certainly one strong indication that we are living in the days of the end, because Daniel was very definitely told that this information would not be available until the end time. In fact, it is only very recently that God has chosen to reveal how these numbers all fit together.

For many centuries a goodly number of God's ministers have tried to decipher and understand the figures God gave Daniel, many of them even admitting that the end of the age was still in the distant future from their time, but still trying to determine what the figures referred to. If they had only listened to what God told Daniel they would have realized that the meanings of these numbers would not be unsealed and made understandable **until the time of the end.**

Now, in this day, when we see the Jews back in Israel as a nation, and God's prophecies being fulfilled all around us, we know we are living in the time of the end, and we can rightfully expect God to reveal the meaning of His message in the 12th chapter of Daniel.

* * *

Notice also, in v 4, what Daniel was told about *how* these secrets will be revealed. They will be revealed because many will **run to and fro** (in Daniel), **and the understanding of it will be increased.** Many have taught that this points to a time when many will travel extensively, and a time when knowledge will be greatly increased, both of which are certainly true of our day.

Never before has there been such great increase in travel as there has been in the last few years. And knowledge is increasing today as never before. All previous scientific knowledge doubled from 1940 to 1950, in just 10 years! In 1980 scientific knowledge was said to be *tripling* every five years! At this writing scientific knowledge is shooting up like a rocket taking off into space!

* * *

But most Bible students believe this has an entirely different reference. The word *run* here is translated from the Hebrew word *shuwt*, pronounced *shoot*, and it means *to push forth* as in a search. This Hebrew word appears six times in the Old Testament, and in every case it refers to active

searching. The word appears in 2 Chronicles 16:9; Jeremiah 5:1; 49:3; Daniel 12:4; Amos 8:12; and Zechariah 4:10. Even in Jeremiah 49:3, where the meaning is not as obvious, it refers to a scurrying about in search of a hiding place. William Biedewolf, in *THE SECOND COMING BIBLE*, published by Baker Book House, states in regard to these words in Daniel:

"The word *run* means to run about in order to search out and investigate. It cannot therefore mean mere increase of travel. It might mean travel for a purpose, the result of which is the increase of knowledge, but infers rather the meaning of to and fro in the sense of searching, scrutinizing the prophecy, as a result of which, *knowledge* of it will be *increased.*" This has certainly been true of the prophetic Scriptures in these days. Never before has there been such an intensive search as to the meaning of God's prophetic word.

In Daniel 12:7 we have the time of the Great Tribulation in years. The same time is referred to in v 2 of the following Scripture, although here it is given in months:

¹Then I was given a reed that looked like a measuring rod. And the angel, still standing there, said, "Go now, and measure the Temple of God and the altar and the people worshiping there.

²But don't include the court outside the Temple. Don't measure it because the Gentiles already have access to that area. But the time is coming when the Gentiles will trample thruout the entire holy city for 42 months. —Revelation 11:1-2

The measuring here is for the purpose of chastisement, not for building. Israel will be measured and found far short of measuring up to God's will. The court refers to the court of the Gentiles in the Temple area. It is not to be measured and given over to them, because it is already open to them. Gentiles have always been privileged to enter that particular court of the Temple.

The implication here is that the rest of the Temple, and all Jerusalem, will also be taken over by the Gentiles under the direction of Antichrist. He and his armies will trample thruout the streets of Jerusalem for 42 months (3 1/2 years). Prophetic months are always of 30 days duration, and 360 days to the year. That would mean 1,260 days. Keep that number in mind as we continue.

¹³Then I heard two angels talking to each other. Then one of them asked the other, "How long will these things that were seen in the vision continue? How long will their rebellion continue to cause the desolation and elimination of the daily sacrifices? And how long will God's congregation and the Temple con-

tinue to be given over to this evil one to be trampled underfoot?"

¹⁴ The second angel then said to me, "This condition will continue for 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the Temple will be properly restored." —Daniel 8:13-14

In Revelation 11, we are given the duration of time the armies of Antichrist will walk the streets of Jerusalem. In the above Scripture in Daniel we are given the number of days from the time the altar of sacrifice is destroyed by Antichrist (Daniel 8:11-12; 9:27; 12:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; Matthew 24:15-21), until he is overpowered and the sacrifice reinstituted.

But first, a brief word study of the Hebrew, in order to understand the figure of **2,300 evenings and mornings**. In v 14 we have two Hebrew words for the one word translated *days* in many translations. They are *ereb* and *boger*.

Ereb means *dusk, day, evening, night*.

Boger means *dawn, break of day, morning*.

The correct translation, then, should be, **This condition will continue for 2,300 evenings and mornings**, as we have it. See v 26 for confirmation of this, which refers back to vs 13-14. Evidently it is the evening and morning sacrifices which are referred to. Literally, that would mean 1,150 evening and 1,150 morning sacrifices. In other words—1,150 24-hour days.

This is the only place in Scripture where these two Hebrew words are used to denote a 24-hour day. Now keep that figure of 1,150 also in mind while we look at still another figure in Daniel.

¹¹ "And from the time that the daily sacrifices are abolished and the abominable thing that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.—Daniel 12:11

The figure **1,290 days** is the number of days that will pass from the time Antichrist blows up the altar of sacrifice until the Battle of Armageddon. The Hebrew word *yowm*, meaning *a 24-hour day*, is used for *days* here. In the next v, Daniel 12:12, we read:

Blessed is the one who patiently keeps waiting until the 1,335th day arrives.

This is 45 days more than the number stated in v 11. We believe these 45 days are the days spoken of by Christ in Matthew 24:29-30, during which God will renovate the earth and pour out His judgment upon it in fire, earthquakes, darkness, etc. (Revelation 6:12-17; 16:17-21), between the Battle of Armageddon and the return of our Lord in power and glory to establish His Kingdom upon the earth. The charts and Scriptures on

pages 509, 510 and 511 will provide a clearer picture of the *day* periods in Daniel, which are explained as simply as possible in the following paragraphs:

The 1,290 days of Daniel 12:11 will evidently end at the Battle of Armageddon, when Antichrist is defeated. The desecration of the altar of sacrifice and the setting up of the image of the Beast will therefore have taken place 1,290 days previous to the Battle of Armageddon.

Daniel 8:11-14, however, presented the fact that after Antichrist removes the altar of sacrifice and sets up his own image, the image will remain in that place for only 1,150 **evening and morning** days. That is 140 days less than the 1,290 days of 12:11. So evidently Jerusalem will somehow be liberated from Antichrist and his forces 140 days before the Battle of Armageddon.

But if, according to Revelation 11:1-2, the armies of the Antichrist are to **trample** the streets of Jerusalem for 42 months, or 1,260 days, how is it possible to account for the 110 days' difference between that figure and the 1,150 days during which the image of the Beast stands in the place of the altar of sacrifice? The armies will be in Jerusalem during the 1,150 days that Antichrist's image is standing, but what about the other 110 days?

A likely answer is that Antichrist and his forces will take Jerusalem 110 days before they blow up the altar of sacrifice and erect their image of the Beast. It's even possible that they will enter Israel peaceably under some pretext, 110 days before they blow up the altar. This is an even more likely answer. So they will actually **trample** the streets of Jerusalem 110 days before they blow up the altar, whether in peace or otherwise, plus the 1,150 days the altar is desecrated by the image of the Antichrist, making a total of 1,260 days.

Another interesting Scripture to look at here is Revelation 12:6.

⁶ **The woman then fled into the wilderness, where God has prepared a place for her, and where she will be taken care of for 1,260 days.**

The woman here is the remnant of the people of Israel who have fled into the country of Jordan. Matthew 24:15-22; Luke 17:26-37; Zechariah 14:1-7. We are informed that God will take care of the Israelis there for 1,260 days. And that feeding will begin the day, or the day after, Antichrist desecrates the Temple in Israel.

But previously we were told (Daniel 12:11) that there would be 1,290 days from the desecration of the Temple until Armageddon. Therefore,

evidently the Lord will stop feeding the Jews in the wilderness 30 days before the Battle of Armageddon.

We can see the reason for this as we consider that even after Jerusalem is freed from Antichrist, the Jews will be waging war on the surrounding nations. And possibly some time will pass before it would be advisable for the Jews in the wilderness to return to their land. Evidently they will return 30 days before the Battle of Armageddon. Or it could be that 30 days before Armageddon, the Jewish liberating armies will begin airlifting food supplies to the Jews in the wilderness.

It would certainly seem advisable that they stay in the wilderness for the extra 30 days, until after Armageddon, and until after the 45 days of judgment that follow Armageddon.

Also notice that we are informed in Daniel 9:27 that Antichrist will break his treaty **in the middle of the 7-year agreement**. In other words, he will break his treaty after 3 1/2 years. But from the other figures we have been given, we discover that the treaty will actually be broken 30 days before the middle of the 7 years, and not exactly in the middle. There is no direct statement to this effect, but we discover this when we make our deductions regarding these other figures. See charts on pages 509, and 511.

* * *

The long horizontal broken and solid line at the top of the chart on pages 510, and 511 represents the 7-year treaty of Antichrist with many nations. Daniel 9:27.

The solid vertical line, extending upward, represents the time when Antichrist will desecrate the Temple and persecute the Jews. This will occur 30 days before the actual middle of the 7-year treaty. Notice that the armies of Antichrist will enter Jerusalem 110 days before the abomination takes place.

The broken vertical line to the left represents the exact middle of the seven years.

The second horizontal line represents the 1,290 days from the time the Temple is desecrated until the Battle of Armageddon. Daniel 12:8-11. From the Battle of Armageddon until the return of Christ in power and glory, there will be 45 days. Daniel 12:12.

The third horizontal line represents the 1,150 days from the time the Temple is desecrated until it is recaptured by the Jews. Daniel 8:11-14; Micah 5:5-6. There will then be 140 days from the

time Jerusalem is reclaimed until the Battle of Armageddon. These 140 days will be the period of time when Antichrist will be calling all nations under his power to join him in an attack in Israel against the many nations that joined in defeating him in the Middle East, even totally destroying rebuilt Babylon.

The fourth horizontal line points out the fact that for Antichrist and his armies to **tread** the streets of Jerusalem for 1,260 days it will be necessary for them to arrive in Jerusalem 110 days before the Temple is desecrated. Their time of *treading* the streets of Jerusalem (Revelation 11:1-2) will end when Jerusalem is reclaimed by the Jews and their allies.

The fifth horizontal line represents the period of time the Jews will be fed by the Lord in the wilderness following the desecration of the Temple. Revelation 12:6. If they stay in the wilderness for 1,260 days there will be just 30 days remaining until the Battle of Armageddon.

* * *

What will happen after the Battle of Armageddon? Well, the Lord Jesus has told us clearly what to expect. In Matthew 24:29-31 He gave His followers the following information:

²⁹“Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. The stars will fall from the heavens (see Appendix 240 note, page 496), and the natural forces controlling the planets will be shaken.

³⁰Then the sign that will herald the coming of the Son of Man will appear in the sky! When that happens, all the people in the world will mourn. Because then they will see the Son of Man whom they had spurned, coming on the clouds in the sky, with a most majestic display of power and great glory.

³¹And accompanied with the sound of a mighty trumpet blast I will send out My angels to gather My chosen ones together from the four corners of the earth, from the extremity of one horizon to the extremity of the other.”

The apostle Paul was also given information about this same event, as he states in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17:

—Continued on page 512 ➞

—Continued from page 508

¹⁵I can tell you exactly what the Lord has said about this: When the Lord returns, those of us who are still alive will clearly not rise up to meet Him ahead of those who are asleep in death.

The following computations will help--

Daniel 12:8-12

1290 — There will be 1290 days from the **abomination of desolation** (when Antichrist betrays and turns against Israel and sets up His image in Jerusalem, to be worshiped) to the **Battle of Armageddon**. 1290 days is $3\frac{1}{2}$ prophetic years*, plus 30 days ($360 \times 3\frac{1}{2} + 30 = 1290$) where 360 days is one prophetic year (see below).

1290 —days

-1260 —middle of 7 years ($3\frac{1}{2} \times 360 = 1260$) days

30 —days more than $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. This means that while the **abomination** will occur in the middle of the week (of 7 years) Daniel 9:27, it will actually occur 30 days before the exact middle of that 7 years. See chart on p 511.

Daniel 12:11-12

1335 —days

-1290

45 —days from the Battle of Armageddon to the return of Christ to reign **with power and great glory**. Matthew 24:30.

Daniel 8:11-14

1260 —days, or 42 months, from Revelation 11:1-2; Daniel 12:4-7.

-1150 —from Daniel 8:13-14 -- the number of days Antichrist's idol (image) desecrates the holy place.

110 —the number of days the armies of Antichrist will be in Jerusalem before they desecrate the altar of sacrifice.

1290 —days, from Daniel 12:11 above

-1150 —days, from Daniel 8:13-14

140 —the number of days Israel will enjoy freedom again, before Armageddon. This freedom will result from Antichrist's armies being defeated at Babylon and the Middle East (Jeremiah 50 and 51, most of which is yet future) by great armies of the world being raised up against him by 15 outstanding Jews located outside Israel. Micah 5:5-6; Jeremiah 50:9. During these 140 days Antichrist and his remaining armies in Europe and elsewhere, as well as the armies of his enemies worldwide, will no doubt be preparing feverishly for the showdown back in Israel at Armageddon. Revelation 16:13-16.

1290 —days from desecration of the altar to Armageddon --Daniel 12:11.

-1260 —days the remnant of Israel will be fed in the wilderness

--Revelation 12:6.

30 —days remaining before the **Battle of Armageddon**.

***Prophetic Year:** One theory regarding the prophetic year is that before the flood (Genesis 6:1 to 8:22) there was a protective (from the sun) canopy of ice particles high above the earth, accounting for the long lives lived then. God brought about the flood, they say, by causing the planet Mars to make a close flyby of the earth, and the gravity from Mars broke up the canopy and brought it down as rain. This grav-

ity also slowed the journey of the earth around the sun from 360 to 365 days.

Supporting evidence is that the ancients knew Mars had two moons before modern astronomy discovered them. The original 360 days may also account for the 360 degrees in a circle. So that's why, they say, God still speaks of 360 days in a year.

²⁷ This prince will then arrogantly and ruthlessly dictate the terms of a firm seven-year agreement with many nations. But in the middle of the seven years he will put an end to the sacrifice and grain offerings in Israel. Following this abominable act he will fly on wings as an abominable desolator, and cause devastation and desolation to the very end. Then that which has been decreed will be poured out upon this vile desolator. —Daniel 9:27

⁸ I heard all this, but I didn't understand. So I said, "Sir, what will be the outcome of all these things?"

⁹ "Go your way, Daniel," he replied, "because the meaning of all this has been closed up and sealed until the time of the end.

¹⁰ "Many will be made clean, pure, and refined by these trials, but the wicked will continue on in their wicked living. And none of the wicked will understand what's really going on, and that the end is fast approaching. But the wise will understand.

¹¹ "And from the time that the daily sacrifices are abolished and the abominable thing that causes desolation is set up to be worshiped, there will be 1,290 days.

¹² "Blessed are those who patiently keep waiting until the 1,335th day arrives." —Daniel 12:8-12

¹¹ Yes, he magnified himself, even claiming to be as great as the Prince of the throngs in Heaven. He blew up the holy altar where the daily sacrifices were being made to God and then ordered that the Temple be torn down.

¹² It's because of the Jews' rebellion against the Lord that the masses in Israel will be given over to the horn, along with power to stop the daily sacrifices. He will throw truth to the ground, and prosper in everything he does.

¹³ Then I heard two angels talking to each other. One of them asked the other, "How long will these things continue that were seen in the vision? How long will their rebellion continue to cause the desolation and elimination of the daily sacrifices? And how long will God's congregation and the Temple continue to be given over to this evil one to be trampled underfoot?"

¹⁴ The second angel then said to me, "This condition will continue for 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the Temple will be properly restored." —(1150 days) Daniel 8:11-14

¹ Then I was given a long stick that looked like a measuring rod. And the angel, still standing there, said, "Go now, and measure the Temple of God and the altar. And count the people worshipping there.

² "But don't include the court outside the Temple area. Don't measure it because the Gentiles already have access to that area. But the time is coming when the Gentiles will trample throughout the entire holy city for 42 months." —Revelation 11:1-2

Beginning of the
Seven-year treaty The woman
then ran into
the wilderness, where God has prepared a place for her,
and where she will be taken care of for 1,260 days. —
Revelation 12:6

²¹ As I was watching, that horn started waging war against those dedicated to God, and he was overpowering them,

²² until our God who has been alive forever, came and pronounced judgment in favor of those dedicated to the Most High God. And the time soon came when God's dedicated ones took over the kingdom...

²⁵ He will speak boastfully against the Most High God and persecute those dedicated to Him, and will try to make alterations in times and in law. Those dedicated to God will be handed over to him for 3 1/2 years. —Daniel 7:21-22,25

²⁴ "He will have great power, but his power will not come from himself. The destruction he will cause will be awesome, and he will succeed in everything he tackles. He will destroy those in positions of power—and those dedicated to God!" —Daniel 8:24

¹ The angel wearing linen clothes then said, "At the time all this happens, Michael, the great prince who stands guard over your people, will rise up. And there will be a time of great trouble, greater trouble than there has ever been since there was a nation. Never before has there been such trouble.

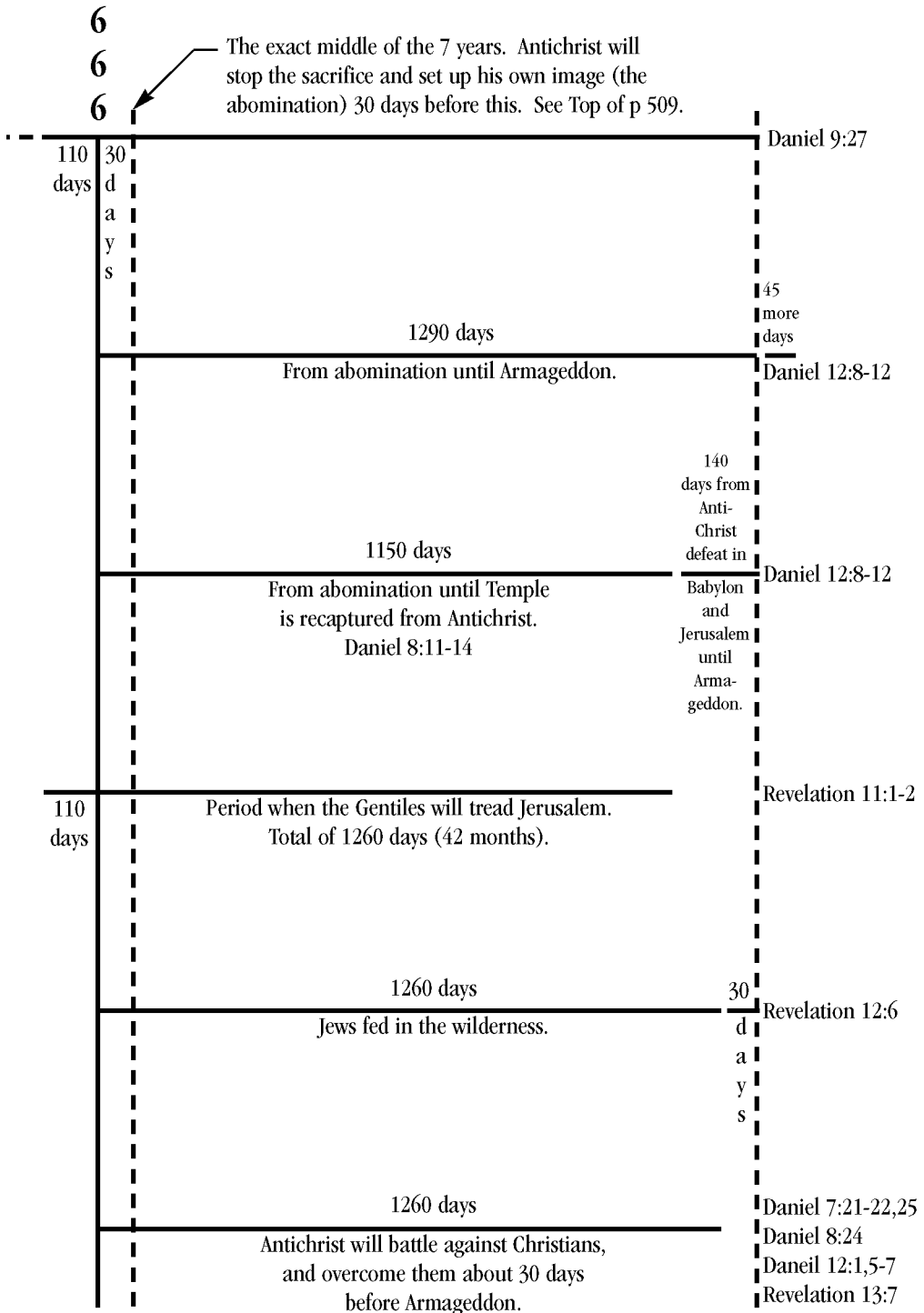
"But that's the time when your people—everyone whose name is found written in The Book—will be saved..."

⁵ Then as I looked, I saw two others standing by the river. One was on my side, and the other on the far side.

⁶ One of them asked the man dressed in linen, who was now above the waters of the river, "How long will it be until these amazing events come to an end?"

⁷ The man dressed in linen who was above the waters of the river raised both hands toward the heavens, and I heard him swear by Him who lives forever, and say, "It will last for a year, plus two years, plus half a year. And as soon as they have shattered the power of the holy people, all these things will come to an end." —Daniel 12:1,5-7

⁷ Still, he was allowed by God to wage war against those on earth who are His people, even to overpower them. And he was given authority over every tribe, language, and nation as well. —Revelation 13:7



¹⁶Because the Lord Himself will come down from Heaven with a powerful shout of command, together with the voice of an archangel and the sounding of the trumpet of God! The dead who belong to Christ will be the first to rise.

¹⁷Then we who are living for the Lord and are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. From that moment on we will always be with the Lord!

What profound words! In the midst of all the darkness over the earth at that time, the Lord will appear in the heavens in all His glory and brilliant majesty. What a great and glorious day that will be for those who belong to Christ when He comes to earth in His great power and splendor to receive His Kingdom!

Notice that both in Christ's words and in the words of the apostle Paul we are told that this gathering of God's people to be with Himself will occur **when the Lord returns** after the Battle of

Armageddon and after the 45 days of judgment on the earth. In 1 Corinthians 15:52 Paul calls this **the sounding of the last trumpet**. Isaiah also speaks of that great trumpet call in Isaiah 27:12-13.

It's possible of course, and very likely, that the Rapture itself will take place just before these terrible final judgments strike the earth. Either the Lord will take us from the earth before that judgment hits, or He will protect us thru that time. Great days are ahead, days in which we have the privilege of serving the Lord, even unto death, if necessary.

Let us be faithful!

246 Just Who Is Jesus Christ?

The above question is one that has greatly concerned the Church of Jesus Christ ever since He walked upon the Earth as one of us. So it will be best for us, first of all, to devote a couple of pages here to the interesting history of what the early Church decided regarding this question, and why they came to the conclusion they did.

The main concern regarding the question actually became prominent when Arius, a Christian minister in Alexandria, Egypt, began teaching that while Jesus, the Son of God, was indeed the Creator of all things, He Himself had been created by the Father. He was strongly opposed by his bishop and by a large council of 100 bishops, and was finally driven from Alexandria in A.D. 321.

However, Arius continued his preaching, going to Antioch and finding support there. The controversy soon involved the entire Church.

Emperor Constantine had, just a few years before this, declared himself to be a Christian, and by A.D. 320 had made Christianity the religion of the Empire, but he himself refused to be baptized. Besides, he still continued to be the Supreme Pontiff of the heathen religion of Rome—the Babylonian cult of Ishtar. This supposedly guaranteed that he would be a Roman god after death. This tells us something of what he really believed.

He finally was baptized, just before he died. He evidently wanted to play it safe, just in case

Christianity was right, and he didn't make it as a Roman god.

And now, besides controlling the heathen religion, he stepped in and called a council of the Church, to resolve the question of just who Jesus Christ is. This council was held at Nicea, Bithynia (now N.W. Turkey, about 100 miles S.E. of present Istanbul) in the year 325.

"Constantine was a political genius. From his comparatively meager understanding of Christianity and his brief contact with it he concluded two things: that Christianity would become the dominant religious system of the world, and that the dying Roman Empire could be saved, or at least prolonged, by a union with this dynamic religion. Constantine wanted Christianity to become the cement of the empire; he wanted religion to act as a unifying factor in the political system...

"He decided that a unifying creed would bring political and religious peace...The statements of Constantine at the Council of Nicea were the determining factors as to what the council should decide. Still, at the same time the decrees of the council were recognized as authoritative Christian pronouncements...

"The very motives of Constantine in adopting Christianity indicate the direction he had already determined were to be taken. He wanted to use Christianity as a political and social factor in

building the state. This meant the use of secular power, as has been seen, in establishing uniformity. Dissent must be stamped out. It meant imperial settlement of doctrinal and ecclesiastical disputes.”—*A Summary of Christian History by Robert A. Baker—Broadman Press*. Thoughtful leaders were very concerned about this new development—and we should be too, even at this late date.

So here is a heathen, claiming to be a Christian but refusing to obey the Lord and be baptized, and also still a very active leader in his heathen religion, now deciding to supervise the decision as to what the Church should believe.

* * *

Over 300 bishops attended this council, and they were all the guests of Constantine. Their travel expenses were paid, and they were all housed and fed at Nicea at the expense of the government. That put them under real obligation to the Emperor. He had bought their votes! And Constantine was the prominent figure at the council.

Besides the 300 bishops, each of them was allowed to bring along two of the ministers under them, as well as three servants. So there were over 1,800 persons assembled there, to be housed and fed by the government.

There were three distinct groups at this council. There were a few who called themselves the Orthodox party. They were in the minority. There were 20 who were staunchly behind Arius. Then there was the majority group, which weren't sure just how they believed regarding the question before them. Some have called them the semi-Arians.

Constantine entered the council at its opening with great pomp and ceremony.

These bishops were very concerned about pleasing this powerful man, because not too long before that, he had been their enemy, persecuting the Church. The Church had never had it so good as they had it now, and they didn't want to lose the advantage. They wanted to be sure they were politically correct in the eyes of Constantine. So Constantine was able to control the council, and to a large degree decide what the decision would be. He constantly took an active part, and exercised a considerable influence. Whenever he chose, he took the floor and spoke to the assembly, giving his views.

Many of the bishops had brought papers along to the council concerning matters which

they wished to be considered, but Constantine tore them up and threw them in the fire. He said there was only one matter with which they were concerned, and that was concerning just who Jesus Christ was. So in truth he dominated the council.

This council was in session for six weeks. The leader of those who opposed Arius was a minister by the name of Athanasius, a member of the orthodox party. He declared that the Son of God had been begotten of the Father, and was of the same essence (the same substance) as the Father, and is therefore as much God as the Father is, and is His equal in every respect, while Arius claimed that the Son of God had been created by the Father.

Athanasius claimed that Arianism proceeded from human reason, and that he approached his conclusion from divine revelation. But neither of them had any support from Scripture, except where Athanasius asserted that the Son was begotten of the Father.

* * *

When the vote was finally taken, everyone voted that the Son of God was begotten of the Father and was of the same essence as the Father, except for Arius and two others. “The only two who sided with Arius were two Egyptian Bishops, Theonias and Secundus, who persistently refused to sign, and were banished with Arius to Illyria. The books of Arius were burned and his followers branded as enemies of Christianity.”—*History of the Christian Church by Philip Schaff—Errdmans Publishing Co.* So the Church at Rome had begun to assert its claim that it has the power and authority to declare what is truth, without support from the Scriptures. And Christians who had been victims of imperial power just a few years before, now used imperial power to persecute one another.

“On the 29th of July, the 20th anniversary of his accession, Constantine gave the members of the council a splendid banquet in his palace. . . . He remunerated the Bishops lavishly, dismissed them with a suitable valedictory, and letters of commendation to the authorities of all the provinces on their homeward way”. —*History of the Christian Church*.

* * *

A good many of those at the Council of Nicea who had voted for the Nicene Creed had done so with reluctance. They were especially opposed to

the decision that Jesus was of the same essence as the Father. The result was that they continued to preach the doctrine of Arius.

When Constantine died his empire was divided among three of his sons. Two of the sons shortly died, and his son Constantius became emperor over the entire Roman Empire. He agreed with the Arians. So Athanasius was now banished, and the Arian message prevailed. This continued until Constantius died in 361.

Following that, there were several emperors in succession, some who favored Arianism and others who favored the decree of the Council of Nicea. But in the year 379 Emperor Theodosius I came to power. He reigned until the year 395, and during his long reign he put all the power of Rome against the teaching of the Arians. From that time on the teaching of the Arians was more or less a thing of the past.

It was claimed that the Arians associated themselves with the secular political power, but Athanasius and his followers certainly used secular political power every chance they got, and it was that power that finally entrenched the teaching that the Son of God is of the same essence as the Father.

So here we actually have the Roman Empire and the Church at Rome telling us how we must believe, instead of going to the inspired word of God to determine what the truth really is. But true Christian policy has always been—in matters of doctrine where the word of God does not speak, we are to be silent. There are many matters about which God has not yet given us clear understanding. But as we shortly search the Scriptures here, we will discover what they actually do teach in regard to the relationship of God the Father to His Son, Jesus.

* * *

In regard to the controversy which brought about the Council of Nicea, both of the sides were wrong. Arius was wrong because no Scripture teaches that the Son of God was created by the Father, and he was wrong in other matters as well. Athanasius was wrong because no Scripture teaches that the Son of God is of the same essence as the Father. The Scriptures are silent in both cases. But what the Scriptures do teach is that Jesus is the Son of God. And if one is a son, the truth implied is that the son has been begotten by a father. And in this case the Son was begotten by God. How God did this we are not told. We are to merely accept

the fact and stop speculating.

Yes, Arius was wrong, but the power of Rome was also wrong. It was the power of Rome and the Roman Church that insisted that we believe that the Son of God is of the same essence as the Father. As already stated, there is no Scripture that teaches this. Likewise, it is the Church of Rome that teaches purgatory. But there is no Scripture that teaches a purgatory. And the same is true of many other teachings of the Roman Church. So let us stop speculating about God and about His Son Jesus Christ, and about other spiritual matters, and accept only what the revealed word of God teaches! Let us now look to the word of God for the answer to our question.

* * *

So Just Who Is Jesus Christ? Let's begin with John 14:28 where Jesus makes the statement, **The Father is greater than I am.** Many believe that Christ was referring only to His time here on earth. But Scriptures thruout the New Testament teach that the Father has always been greater than the Son, and that **Christ belongs to God**, and that **Christ is under the authority of God.** 1 Corinthians 3:23; 11:3.

It had always been obvious to the followers of Christ that the Father was greater than the Son in His human existence. So they understood here that Christ was speaking of the Father being greater than He in His eternal relationship with the Father.

Many use Philipians 2:6 as their proof text that the Son is equal to the Father, where the King James version reads, **Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.** But the Greek word *isos*, translated *equal* there, can also be translated *like*. And really, a better translation here is, **While He is just like God, He didn't consider being like God a highly prized possession that He must tenaciously hang on to for His own good**, as that translation is also in harmony with all other teaching regarding the relationship of the Father and the Son.

Jesus never at any time made any claim to equality with the Father. In John 5:18 the Judeans thought Jesus was claiming equality with God, but Jesus never claimed such. Nor did any of His apostles ever make such a claim for Him.

In fact, in Jesus' prayer in John 17:24, He prayed, **My Father, I want all whom You have given Me to also be with Me where I am so that they may see My glory—the glory which you gave Me. Because You loved Me even before the world was created.** There we

see that Christ's glory, which includes all His power, wisdom, etc. are not of Himself. All His great power and wisdom come from the Father. And it was by this power and wisdom from the Father that the Son (as God) created all things. John 1:2-4; 1 Corinthians 8:16; Ephesians 3:9c; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2.

The same is true of the Son even now. After Jesus had risen from the dead and was again in His glorified state, He said to His followers (Matthew 28:18), **I have been given unlimited power and authority in Heaven and on earth.** Notice again that the power He has even now, is power that's been given Him by the Father.

The Son of God is always dependent upon the Father for all He does, has, and is. See Psalm 2:6-9; 110:1; Matthew 22:44; 28:18; John 5:26; 17:24; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. So the J F B Commentary is incorrect when they state in regard to John 10:34 that "It is never said of Christ that 'The word of the Lord came to Him.'" True, those exact words are never used regarding God's words coming to Christ, but the message Jesus gave was always the message received by Him from the Father. See John 7:16; 8:28,38,40; 12:49; 14:10; 17:7-8 where Jesus says that everything He taught and preached came to Him from the Father.

* * *

That God wants us to know everything we can learn about Jesus Christ and His relationship to the Father is evident where Peter states, **Continue to grow in all there is to know about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** 2 Peter 3:18. God also wants us to learn everything we can about Himself, as Paul states in Colossians 1:10, **We pray...that you will constantly grow in an ever fuller knowledge of God.** And our knowledge of God must include our knowledge of what the true relationship is between the Son of God and God the Father. And the place to look for that knowledge is in the word of God. We must not speculate, as we noted was done in some of the early Church councils, but we must learn what God and His Son say about their relationship with each other.

For instance, as already twice noted, no Scripture teaches that the Father and the Son are of the same essence, as was declared in the creed coming out of the Council of Nicea.

But in spite of the fact that God wants us to know everything possible about Himself, He knows that our knowledge of Him in this life will be very limited. But that will all change in the great eter-

nity that's before us. When praying to the Father, Jesus said in John 17:3, **And this is what eternal life will mean to them: They will come to really know You, the only One who is truly God. And they will also come to really know Jesus Christ, whom you sent to them.** But we are not to wait until then to know God and Jesus Christ to the fullest extent possible.

* * *

One matter about which the Scriptures are very clear is that the Son of God was begotten (born) of the Father. How God did this we are not told, so it is none of our business. We agree with the various Church councils that have stated that the Son of God is begotten of the Father, not made. There are some theologians who agree that the Son of God was begotten of the Father, but they also claim that the Son is self-existent. But He cannot be self-existent if He received His glory, and all that that includes, from the Father. And the Scriptures are clear that He was indeed begotten of the Father.

The Son therefore owes His existence to the will of the Father, if He is begotten of the Father. Everything He has and is He has received from the Father. John 17:24.

In Colossians 1:15 we read, **As we look at Him we see what God is really like, because He is like God in every way, except that God is invisible. He is God's firstborn Son, whom God has placed in authority over all creation.** God is the creator of all things, but He created everything thru His Son. Colossians 1:16 states, **God created all things by Him—everything in the heavens and everything on earth. This includes everything that can be seen and everything that's invisible, such as the spirit world with its kingdoms, powers, rulers, and authorities. God created all things thru His Son and for Him.**

* * *

God is called the Father of Jesus Christ in 2 Corinthians 1:2-3; Ephesians 3:14; Revelation 3:5,21, and elsewhere.

The Father is also called the God and Father of Jesus. 2 Corinthians 11:31; Ephesians 1:3; Colossians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3; Revelation 1:6, and elsewhere.

We can see from these Scriptures that the Father and the Son are two separate persons. They are not one person manifested in different ways, as some believe. They are two separate persons, but one in unity and agreement, in the same way that

Jesus prays to the Father that His followers would be. In John 17:11,21-23 Jesus prayed that His followers would indeed be one.

And we know He did not mean one person, but one in agreement. This is also what is true in regard to the Father and the Son—two different persons in total agreement. Jesus also prayed that we would all be one with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—again, one in agreement. So the oneness is not a one person or entity, but one in unity and agreement.

Many in the Church of Jesus Christ have made the same mistake here that many have made in regard to the statement by Christ when He said at the last supper, **This is my body, and this is my blood.** Those who have taken this literally believe that in partaking of the communion they partake of the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. But if I should show you a picture of my wife, and say, “This is my wife,” you would know very well that that was not my wife. You would know it was merely a picture of my wife. And that’s what the Lord was saying in regard to the bread and wine. And a similar mistake has been made by understanding the word *one* to mean one entity, while the very context shows that the Scriptures mean one in unity and agreement.

The Father, the Son, and all Christians are to be one—one in unity and in agreement. John 14:20-23; 17:11,21-23.

In the introductions of many of the books and letters of the New Testament there is a definite distinction made between God and the Lord Jesus Christ—denoting two distinct persons. James 1:1; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:2; 1 John 1:3; 2 John 3; Jude 1; Revelation 1:1,5-6.

* * *

The Son of God did not come to earth as man of His own volition. He was sent here by the Father. This was the Father’s plan long before the earth was even created. 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8. And surely the One doing the sending is greater than the One being sent. Regarding Christ being sent to earth by the Father, see Matthew 10:40; Mark 9:37; John 4:34; 5:22-23; 12:44; 15:21; 17:3,8,18,23,25; 20:21. And Jesus was God’s Son long before He left Heaven, as is evident from 1 John 4:9-10.

Only the Father knows all things. This is stated very clearly in Revelation 1:1, which states, **This is the record of future events that Jesus Christ revealed.** God gave Jesus this revelation so that He might reveal

to His servants on earth what will happen in the future.... Jesus received this information from the Father! Here again is revealed the fact that the Father is greater than the Son. He always has been greater and He always will be.

Only the Father knows the exact time of Christ’s second coming. Mark 13:32.

* * *

Our Father has exalted our Savior Jesus Christ to sit with Him at His right hand. This surely is further proof that the Father is greater than the Son. The Son did not assume this place as His right as an equal with the Father; it was given Him by the Father. See Ephesians 1:19-23; Philippians 2:5-9.

That Christ is subservient to the Father see Matthew 26:39,42; Luke 10:16; John 5:19-20; 6:38-39; John 10:17-18; 12:44,49; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 15:22-28, etc.

It was the Father who decreed that the angels were to worship the Son and be subject to Him. Hebrews 1:6; 1 Peter 3:22.

Christ is God’s heir. The Father has given all things to His Son, Jesus. And the One doing the giving in this instance is certainly greater than the One receiving. Matthew 11:27; 28:18; John 3:34-35; 13:3.

We are also heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if we are truly surrendered to Him as Lord and trusting Him as our Savior. Romans 8:16-17; Ephesians 1:11-14,17-18; Colossians 3:23-24; Hebrews 2:5-8; 1 Peter 1:3-4, etc.

Christ is now seated at the right hand of God in Heaven. Mark 16:19; Luke 22:69-71; Hebrews 1:3; 1 Peter 3:22, etc.

But Christ did not assume His position at the right hand of God by His own authority and power. As already stated, it was the Father who placed Him there, as we see in Ephesians 1:19-21, which states:

¹⁹ **May you also realize how extremely great God’s power is. He is already using His great power on behalf of those of us who believe in Him,**

²⁰ **in the same powerful way that He worked on behalf of Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him right next to Himself at His right hand in Heaven.**

²¹ **When He placed Him there, He elevated Him to the highest conceivable dignity and honor, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion among both men and angels, and above every title of authority that can be named, not only in the present order of things but also in that which is to come.**

So it was the Father who elevated Him to this position.

* * *

In praying to the Father, Jesus stated that there is only one person who is truly God (John 17:3), and that's the Father. Yes, Jesus is God, but all the power and authority that Jesus the Son of God has was given Him by the Father. All things have come from the Father.

The Apostle Paul states in 1 Corinthians 8:6, **But it has been revealed to us that there is only one God, and that's the Father, who is the Fountain and Source of all things. It is He who has brought us into existence for His own purposes, plans, and pleasure. And there is only one person whom the Father has made Lord and Ruler of all, and that One is Jesus Christ. Thru Him God created all things, and it's also thru Him that we have come into existence!** So although the Son is like the Father, it is the Father who is the one true God.

So as great as Jesus is, He is not the One who is the only true God. That's the Father. But Jesus is the God thru whom our Father created all things, and likewise created us humans. And it was this God, Jesus, who came to earth in human form as our God and Creator to save us. This is not to say that there are many Gods. No, there is only one true God, and that's the Father. But God has caused His Son Jesus and His other children to be like Himself, and for this we should rejoice, knowing that our future with our God and Father will indeed be great. 1 John 3:2. So let us praise Him!

* * *

But it must be remembered and understood that all of this does not mean that the Son is very inferior to the Father. In Colossians 1:19 we read, **Because the Father took delight in having all the fullness that He Himself is to also be present in His Son.** So the Son of God, our Savior Jesus Christ, is indeed great. But even here it is indicated that the Father is the One who gave the Son all the greatness He has.

God even calls those of us whom He has created in His own image and likeness, gods. Psalm 82:6; John 10:34,35. The psalmist in Psalm 8:5, in speaking to God says, **You have made us just a little lower than You Yourself.** Some, following the Septuagint, have translated this *lower than the angels*, but the Hebrew is *Elohim*—God, not angels. That doesn't in any way mean that we are

equal to the Father, but it does mean that He has created us like Himself, to be His children.

And we also have the ability to create. No other creatures on earth are able to create. Yes, birds build nests, and beavers build dams, etc., but they all do so by instinct. No bird ever decided to build a different kind of nest next year. Mankind, however, is able to create by means of thought and plan. The fact that God calls us gods in the Scripture should indeed make us wonder just what God's plans are for His children in His future eternity.

The Father calls the Son God but He never says that the Son is His God. Hebrews 1:8-9. But the Son often calls the Father His God. Matthew 27:46; John 20:17; Ephesians 1:17, etc. Even after Jesus returned to Heaven He called God His Father and His God. Revelation 2:26-27; 3:5,12.

* * *

Jesus is indeed our God, our Creator. Matthew 1:23; 19:17; Luke 1:47; John 1:1; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8-12, etc. But it's only the Father who is called the Most High God, in Luke 1:32,35,76, and in countless other places in Scripture.

* * *

Although God is our Father, Jesus is also called our Father in Isaiah 9:6, because He is our Creator. Here He is called the **everlasting Father**. That does not mean that He is everlasting from eternity past, because this would not be true if He were begotten at some point by the Father, but He is everlasting on into eternity. No doubt His everlasting quality is also by means of the Father.

Only God our Father, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has immortality in and of Himself—not given to Him by another. 1 Timothy 6:16 states, **It is He, God alone, who has immortality, existing in light so utterly brilliant that no man can approach Him. No man has ever seen Him, nor is any man able to see Him. May we all highly honor Him, and acknowledge that by His power God will rule forever. So be it!** And we also have immortality only as we receive it from Him, and of course, we are wholly dependent upon Him for it.

No Scripture that we know of states that the Son of God is eternal from the past. However, the Scripture often quoted at Christmas time, Micah 5:2, states, **But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, even though you are only a small town in the land of Judah, it's out of you that the One will come for Me who is to**

rule in Israel, who has been engaged in outstanding exploits from far back into eternity past. But even here it is not said that the Son is eternal from the past.

* * *

To this writer the relationship between the Father and the Son seems quite clear, but the person of the Holy Spirit is still a mystery. However, notice that Christ promised His followers that He would send the Holy Spirit to them from the Father. John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-16. And when Christ arrived back in Heaven He fulfilled this promise, as Peter states in Acts 2:33, **So, having been exalted and seated at the right hand of God, and having received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father, He has now poured out this which you are both seeing and hearing.** So the Holy Spirit is a person who is able to impart power from Himself to others. We read in John 3:34 that when Christ came to earth the Father gave Him the full power of the Holy Spirit, without measure. So Jesus was able to act in the full power of God even as He was here on earth as man.

Some believe that the Holy Spirit is actually the Father, who imparts His power, His Holy Spirit, to whomever He wills, while others believe that the Holy Spirit is a third person as God. But our study here is concerning the person of Jesus Christ, so we will not seek to plumb the depths of this question here. But the Lord Jesus is still today pouring out God's Holy Spirit upon all who will earnestly ask for this blessing, and refuse to be denied. See Luke 11:5-13.

* * *

As the Son of God, Jesus has been given by the Father all the attributes of God. One of those attributes is omnipresence. He is always present in all places at all times. He especially promises to be present with His followers who are witnessing to others about Him. See Matthew 28:19-20. It is indeed a great assurance to the followers of Christ to know that He is always with us.

And of course every good Bible student knows that after the Son of God was here on earth for 33 years, He was killed by the Romans and the Judeans, but three days later He rose back to life, and 40 days after that He ascended into the heavens as His followers watched. John 17:33-34; 16:28; 17:11,13; Hebrews 1:3; 4:14; 9:24.

* * *

But Jesus Christ is coming back to earth. This time He will return in great glory as King of kings and Lord of lords! Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 1:7. When He returns He will also be the King that Israel has looked for so long. Matthew 2:6; 21:5; 27:11.

* * *

In conclusion, let's look at 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, which reads:

²⁴Then the end will come, when Christ will hand the Kingdom over to God the Father, after He has destroyed every opposing ruler, authority, and power.

²⁵Because God had destined that Christ must reign until He has thoroughly conquered every enemy, and they all lie subdued under His power.

²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed will be death.

²⁷This will fulfill the prophecy that states, "God has put everything under His control and authority." But it is clear that the "everything" does not include God Himself, who is the One who put everything under Christ.

²⁸Because when all things have finally been put under Him, then the Son will turn the Kingdom over to the Father and be under the One who had put all things under Him. He will do this so that in regard to all matters God may become totally and completely everything in the heart of everyone.

* * *

What could be more clear than the statements above, that the Father, the only true God, is greater than the Son.

So really, the Trinity is not the great mystery that we have so often been told that it is. Yes, we all still have many questions, but if we will accept the bible record for what it says, and not add to it or subtract from it, we have quite a clear view given us of the true relationship between the Father and the Son.

So much more could be said in regard to just who Jesus Christ is. But even after considering all that the Scriptures reveal about Him we would still be left with many questions. 1 Corinthians 13:12 is especially applicable here:

At the present time we see God and His truth as though we were looking thru a glass that is extremely blurred. But then we will be face to face with Him. Now I have only partial knowledge, but then I will have complete understanding of the truth, in the same

way that God now knows all about me.

ADDENDUM

After writing the above article we sent copies to several theologians for their evaluation. These men, of course, had all been taught that the Father and the Son are equal. And it's hard to change what's been ingrained into us.

One of these theologians had reservations about even reading the article, but after reading it he agrees with it. Others brought up verses that stated that Jesus was God, as proof that He was equal to the Father. But we had already dealt with those Scriptures in the article. We agree that Jesus is God. But He is not God in the same sense that the Father is God.

One person brought up 1 John 1:1-4 and Philippians 2:6-7, but we had already shown that while Jesus is God, the Father is greater.

1 Corinthians 15:46-47 was also given, but it has nothing to do with our question. It merely states that the second Adam was the Lord from Heaven, but it does not say that it was the Father, because it was the Son who came.

One claimed that Jesus was the *Elohim* and the *Jehovah* of the Old Testament. Yes, He was the God of the people of the Old Testament as well as our God. Those names are words for God. The word *Elohim* was also used to refer to men in authority, in positions of honor among men, such as kings and judges. The original meaning and derivation of the word *Jehovah* are unknown. But while the Son of God is called by these names, as well as the Father, this in no way teaches that they are equal. The New Testament especially gives proof in many places that the Father is greater than the Son.

One person pointed out that in several places in The Revelation it appears that both the Father and the Son state, **I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End**. He claimed that this proved that they were equal. But God was certainly not speaking about His own beginning. The Father had no beginning. He is eternal. What is referred to here is creation. Both Jesus and the Father were involved in the creation of all things, so they could both use the same words in this expression.

Another man believed that the Greek words translated *begotten* in the New Testament could mean an eternal begetting in relation to the Father begetting the Son, and that there was a continual co-mingling of the Spirit of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that this was what was meant by

Christ being begotten by the Father. Well, we have not been able to discover any such meaning in any of the Hebrew or Greek words translated *begotten*. They all mean *to be born of or to give birth to*, etc. It appears to be just another attempt to make the word of God say what one wants it to say. We honestly believe that these people are truly sincere, but sincerely wrong.

Here's part of the report given us by the first theologian we mentioned, who at first had reservations about even reading it. His letter stated:

* * *

"I found your article very stimulating, and in fact, clarifying and faith-building. It does not rob Christ of anything, but puts Him into a sound biblical perspective.

"Our people need to understand the historical background and what actually happened at the Nicea Council, and how that affected the creeds of the Church.

"Let's allow the statements of the gospels to speak for themselves—especially those in John's gospel, the gospel which presents Jesus in his deity. The relationship and the subordination of Jesus to the Father are very clear there.

"...It may be assumed by many Christians that the creeds of the early Christian Church were based totally on Scripture. This is not true. The politicization of the Church and anti-Semitic thinking began to grow rapidly from the time of Constantine.

"The Council of Nicea was notoriously the point when ecclesiastical interpretations superseded biblical considerations. It was also the defining point when anti-Semitism became institutionalized in the ecclesiology of a state church that was fast paganizing at the same time.

"The stifling of the Jewish viewpoint was introduced both subtly and openly. There were 15 Jewish bishops in Jerusalem and Judea, but not one was invited to participate in the Council of Nicea. This breach between Church and Synagogue clearly influenced the accepted beliefs of the Church...The question about Constantine's conversion to Christianity is also a very real one.

"If the Scripture's are left to speak for themselves, there is balance and truth that puts into accurate perspective the relationship of Jesus Christ to God the Father, clearly teaching His subordination to the Father...Many of the statements concerning the relation of Jesus to the Father are found in John's gospel. John presents Jesus in His

divinity, and yet he makes careful distinctions between Jesus and God the Father thruout the Gospel.

"In his book entitled *What the Bible Teaches*, Dr. R.A. Torrey, first president of Moody Bible Institute, and later founder of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, has a chapter in this book entitled *The Subordination of the Son to the Father*. He presents 15 propositions. Here are 8 of them in brief:

1. God the Father is greater than Jesus, the Son. John 14:28.

2. God the Father begat Jesus, the Son. Psalm 2:7; Hebrews 1:4-5; 5:5.

3. Jesus Christ lives because of the Father. John 6:57; Psalm 2:7.

4. The Son can do nothing independently of the Father. John 5:19.

5. Jesus was sent by the Father. John 4:34; 8:29, 42.

6. Jesus received commands from the Father. John 10:18; 12:49; 14:31.

7. Jesus received from the Father all the messages He gave on earth. John 8:28; 12:49-50.

8. Jesus Christ will ultimately deliver up the Kingdom to the Father. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.

"Conclusion: Jesus Christ is, and eternally shall be, subordinate to God the Father. Even the time of His return to earth is known only by the Father. This does not denigrate Jesus, but rather puts Him in correct biblical perspective. He is the

Great Link (Mediator) between God and man...

"It is possible that many Christians may 'hang up' on this presentation because it challenges some ecclesiastical assumptions that are not necessarily based on the most literal interpretation of what the Bible says about Jesus. . . . I think that to let the Bible itself speak concerning Him may be in the final analysis the most satisfactory statement concerning Him. . . . It is appropriate to inquire and to seek to understand the relationship between the Father and the Son, *but not to go beyond what God tells us in His word.*"

* * *

We agree. In this matter, as in all matters, ask the Lord to show you the truth from His word, not from any other source or argument.

247 The Amazing Story of God

There was a time when there was nothing: no trees, no flowers, birds, animals, or even people—nothing. There wasn't even an earth, sun, moon, or stars—nothing—nothing but God!

The first act of God that we know anything about is that He fathered a Son. We are not told how God did this, we are simply told that He has a Son whom He fathered before anything was created.

Why would God want a Son? Well, the best way to answer that is to put ourselves in God's place. We are told in the Scriptures that God made us just like Himself—in His image and likeness, so we should be able to a certain extent be able to think like God and have some of the desires that God has.

Imagine now that you are the Almighty God. There is only you. There is no other God and no other person anywhere. We are told that God has

no needs, but we know from Scripture that He does have desires. And if you were in the position God was before anything was created, you would surely have the desire for someone like yourself with whom you could fellowship. But there was no one like Himself. So God did what He was able to do, He fathered a Son.

But, Why a Son?

Why would God want a Son? Well, in several places the Bible states that *God is love*. The overwhelmingly greatest thing we discover about God as we read the Bible is that He is a God of love. Yes, there are times when God expresses Himself in fierce anger and judgment, but He does so only when it's the right thing to do. Even we do right when we become angry because of some wrong that's being done, and take the necessary steps to correct it.

The fact that God is a God of love is both stated and implied in many places thruout Scripture. And from experience we know that if we have love in our hearts, we need someone to love. And with a heart of love such as God has, His overwhelming desire would be to have an outlet for that love. His very nature would cry out for others like Himself whom He could love and who would love Him in return.

The Son is from eternity the same as the Father. But it's just as difficult for us creatures of time to fully understand eternity as it is for us to really understand God. Maybe this truth has been best stated by the *original* Westminster Confession of Faith which very simply states, "The Son of God was begotten of the Father from eternity."

One of the other confessions of faith says, "He was begotten, not made." We have been created, but the One we speak of here was begotten (born) of the Father. Don't ask how the Father did this. The Bible doesn't reveal how. But it does reveal that God has a begotten Son.

The Nicene Creed states that He was "begotten of His Father before all the worlds."¹

And for God to receive love in the measure that He could give, He needed someone who was like Himself, who could love Him with the same measure that He could love. So God gave His Son all the glory, power, authority, and capabilities that He Himself has.² The Son of God is just like the Father. He has the same capacity for love, the same wisdom, the same power, etc. So the Son is also God.³

Still, there is only one Supreme God, which is the Father.⁴ And because the Son always does what pleases the Father, they are one God in agreement and unity. There is no clashing of personalities between the Father and the Son. The Son never has tried and never will try to overthrow the Father and take the Father's place. For Him to do so would be as foolish as the fabled farmer who killed his goose that laid the golden eggs in order to get all the golden eggs at once. All the power and glory the Son has, or ever has had or will have, He receives from the Father. Without the Father the Son would be nothing.⁵

It was sometime after the Son received His power and glory from the Father that creation was begun. And everything God created He created thru His Son.⁶ His Son did all the actual creating of all things everywhere. Nothing that has been created has been created by anyone except by the Son. Just as good human fathers rejoice in what

their sons can do, evidently God receives the same satisfaction in seeing what His Son can do.

God's Many Sons

But God's love is so great that He wants to love and be loved by many sons and daughters. So in the very first chapter of the Bible you will find that God made mankind just like Himself, to be His children. He created man **in His own image and likeness**. We're not merely a superior species of the animal world; we are made in the image of God, to be His children!

All of His previous creation was in preparation for His children. Even the angels were created mainly to minister and care for those who will be God's heirs.

So your real Father is God! He's the One who made you. Your mother didn't make you. She doesn't know how to make babies. All she did was receive from your father a sperm cell that God had made, which connected with an egg within her that God had also made. Psalm 39:13-18 tells what happened next:

¹³ **It was You, O God, who made all the intricate, inner parts of my body and put me together in my mother's womb.**

¹⁴ **I praise and revere You because I am wholly overcome with awe as I consider how wonderfully You have made me. What You have done is truly wonderful—and how well I know it.**

¹⁵ **Not a single thing about me was unknown to You as I was being skillfully formed in utter seclusion, in a place as dark as the deepest part of the earth.**

¹⁶ **Your eyes even saw all the atoms and molecules You would bring together to form the various parts of my body. You also had a blueprint of how my body would be constructed, and a history, pre-written, of everything I would ever do, before I had lived a single day.**

¹⁷ **I'm amazed at how much thought You have put into forming my body, and the interest and concern You have about my entire life—thoughts innumerable.**

¹⁸ **If they could be counted, they would outnumber all the grains of sand on all the seashores. And whenever I wake up, You are still with me!**

And God's purpose from the beginning was that His children would not only be like Him, but also that they would be with Him and share His glory. This is still God's plan. God isn't finished with us yet in bringing us to our ultimate likeness to Himself. For just a few Scriptures regarding our future glory, be sure to look up and read Romans

5:2; 8:18; 1 Corinthians 15:43; Hebrews 2:10; 1 Peter 5:1; 1 John 3:2.

The Rebellion

However, God's first created children took things into their own hands and decided to please themselves instead of obeying their Father. And every last one of us has done the same thing. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.⁷ God warned His children that if they disobeyed Him they would die. And this happened, and is continuing to happen. But this dying is not only physical death, but spiritual death.⁸ Being created in the image of God we are eternal spirits, just as God is. We will always be somewhere. But those who continue in their rebellion toward their Heavenly Father will be separated from God in an awful state of punishment for untold ages to come.

God is loving and kind, but He can't let us into Heaven for only those reasons. It would be impossible for God to simply say, "Well, we'll just forget about all the times you've ignored and disobeyed Me and lived to please yourself instead of Me. I forgive you."

If God's nature was such that His great love was greater than His wisdom and righteousness, and we could gain His forgiveness whenever we chose, His entire Kingdom would fall. Because then we could know that we could always do just as we pleased, ask His forgiveness whenever we needed His pardon, and then continue in our rebellion, because we could always be forgiven. But God's love is so great that He earnestly wants to forgive, and He devised a way to do so in wisdom and righteousness.

God's Plan—A Savior

The way our Father made it possible for Himself to offer us forgiveness, in a legal and righteous way, and still preserve His Kingdom, was to first of all choose one man thru whom He would work. And the man He chose was named Abraham. You will read about Abraham at the beginning of the Old Testament part of the Bible. We can only believe that among all who were rebelling against God at that time, God found Abraham to be a man who truly loved Him.

And from Abraham came the nation of Israel. Thru the prophets God told the people of Israel that He would one day send them a great Savior. But the people of Israel were rather confused, because the prophets seemed to speak of two great Saviors, whom they called the Messiah. One Messiah appeared to be a powerful and glorious ruler,

while the other was one who would suffer greatly, and die. The Jews had, and still have, various explanations for all this, but they had very little interest in the suffering Messiah. Their interest was in the one who was prophesied to be their coming King. But the truth was that there was only one Messiah, who was prophesied to come two different times. He would first of all come to be God's Lamb (Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29,36; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 5:6; 12:11), sent by God to be His sacrifice for our sins, who would suffer and die as God's sin offering, which would enable God to forgive the sins of mankind. So He first of all came to be the Savior of Israel and of the whole world. When He comes the second time He will be crowned King of Israel, as well as King of kings and Lord of lords over all the earth.

* * *

The Messiah has already made His first appearance here. We know Him as Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came to earth in human form some 2,000 years ago, born of a virgin, just as prophesied by the prophet Isaiah, in Isaiah 7:14. So the way the Father made it possible for Himself to offer us forgiveness in a legal and righteous way, and still preserve His Kingdom, was to send His incomparable Son, the One who created us—sending Him to earth in human form to become one of us. God's plan of salvation is, of course, not only for Israel but for the whole world.

If someone ridicules you for believing in Jesus Christ, give him this information: Jesus is no mere fictional character; it's a historical fact that He lived in Israel some 2,000 years ago. At thirty years of age He went public about who He was. He claimed to be the Son of God. He said the Father had sent Him to earth in human form on a mission, and with a message for mankind.⁹

He made many other claims about Himself, which only a fool or a con man would make, unless they were true. Some refuse to acknowledge Him as the Son of God and the Savior of the world, but they acknowledge that He was the greatest teacher and the most godly man who ever lived. But you can't have it both ways. Either He was all He claimed to be, or He was the greatest liar, deceiver, or fool that ever walked the face of this earth. But He proved in many amazing ways that He was all He claimed to be!

In the first place, The Father had sent prophets to Israel for over a thousand years telling them that the Christ (the Messiah) was coming.

He even told them where He would be born (in Bethlehem),¹⁰ that He would have no human father, but would be born of a virgin.¹¹ He even told them that later His Father, God, would call Him out of Egypt.¹²

Speaking about Christ, God told the prophet Moses, **I will raise up a prophet like you for Israel from among their own people. I will put My words in His mouth, and He will tell the people everything I command Him to say.** So Moses told the people about Him, and said, **When He comes, you must listen carefully to everything He tells you.** Deuteronomy 18:15-19. You will find the fulfillment in John 12:44-50 and in other statements of Jesus thruout John.¹³

Jesus was born to be King of Israel. You would think that a king would enter the capital city riding triumphantly upon a horse. But Zechariah 9:9 prophesied that the Messiah would humbly enter Jerusalem riding upon a donkey and upon the colt of a donkey. You will find the fulfillment of that reported in Matthew 21:1-7, together with an informative note. There are hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament about His coming, and about what would happen when He came.

Miraculous Proof

His miraculous life was further proof. He healed the sick, the lame, blind, deaf, dumb, and the palsied. He turned water into wine, stopped storms, walked on water, raised the dead, and fed over 5,000 men (besides women and children) with only five small loaves of bread and two small fish. Afterward He had His followers gather up the leftover scraps, and they collected 12 basketsful! That was much more than He had started with.

He was untouchable when a crowd tried to throw Him over a cliff. He even prophesied His own death and how He would die. He prophesied that His own people, the Jews, would turn Him over to the Romans to be crucified (nailed to a cross).

His greatest prophecy, and the fulfillment of it, was that He would rise back to life again three days after He died! His followers saw Him die. They watched as the Roman soldier plunged the spear into His side, resulting in blood and water flowing out. Three days later those same followers saw Him alive, and they later went thruout the then-known world telling the Great News about the Savior, that He had died, had come back to life, and now lives. And that because He lives, we too can now live forever.

He was seen by His followers at various inter-

vals for 40 days after His resurrection. Some 500 of them saw Him at one time. After 40 days He ascended into the heavens as His followers watched. Then two angels appeared and told them, **You men from Galilee, why are you standing here staring into the sky? This Jesus, who has just been taken from you into Heaven, will return in the very same way you watched Him go into Heaven.**

He's coming again—this time as King of kings and Lord of lords! And the prophecy in Zechariah 12:10-14 is that the Jewish nation will look on Me whom they had pierced. The prophet goes on to tell how the Jewish nation will then go into deep mourning as they realize what they had done to their Messiah when they crucified Him.

Possibly the greatest proof that Jesus is indeed the Son of God was the perfect life He lived. Quoting from Isaiah 53:9, the apostle Peter wrote concerning Him, **He never committed a sin. Not even one lie came out of His mouth.**

The apostle John said concerning His sinlessness, **You all know that the Lord Jesus appeared among us to take away our sins. And not even once did He disobey God.** These men could say these things about Him after living with Him constantly for over three years! Christ was the first and only Man who ever lived without sin. He alone lived the only perfect life ever lived.

But He allowed himself to be horribly tortured, and then crucified on a cross by cruel men. He allowed all this so that He, the Son of God, might suffer, shed His blood, and die, because of our sins. He, our Creator, took awful punishment in our place! He is called the Lamb of God, because He was God's offering in sacrifice so that our sins could be forgiven.

A Pardon Offered

Now God is able (in wisdom and righteousness) to offer us forgiveness, if we will accept it on the condition that we turn from our sin to obedience to Him. That's what being born again is all about. You may have heard the Scripture which states, **Because God's love for everyone in the world is so overwhelmingly great, He gave His incomparable Son as His Lamb to be sacrificed to endure extreme suffering and shame, and then die, in order that He might make amends for the sins of all mankind, so that whoever is believing in Him may not perish but have everlasting life.**¹⁴

As we have stated, God has wonderful plans for His children. He doesn't want any of them to be lost. He wants all of them to be saved. But all have freedom of will. We can choose to turn from

our sin and obey God and receive His forgiveness and eternal life, or we can choose to continue to go our own way and suffer the consequences of a horrendous Hell, and after that the Lake of Fire. Revelation 20:11-15.

But there are actually two things that must happen to a person who desires to gain everlasting life. The theologians call those two things *regeneration* and *justification*. The Apostle Paul said they were **repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ**. What did he mean by that?

Well, to repent means to be genuinely sorry for the way you are going, sorry enough to turn right around and get on the right road. For the traveler who discovers he's on the wrong road, the only sensible thing for him to do is to turn right around and find the right road, or he'll never get where he's wanting to go. Repentance toward God means to be genuinely sorry for the selfish and sinful life you are living, sorry enough to, *with God's help*, turn right around and begin living to please and obey God. Jesus called this *being born again*. In John 3:1-7 Jesus said, **You must be born again. In fact, unless you are born again you will never see the Kingdom of Heaven.**

But you are not born again by merely believing in Jesus as your Savior. You are *justified* by your belief in Him. But you are born again, *regenerated*, when you allow God to energize His message to you in the Bible by His Spirit (see John 1:13; 3:1-8; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23, and the notes) convicting you of your sin, convincing you of God's sure and awful judgment upon you because of your sin, and converting you to accept His forgiveness and surrender to His will from this moment on.

Concerning the new birth, Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17, **When anyone enters into a right relationship with Christ, he becomes an altogether new person! His old goals and ambitions and his old way of living are things of the past. Listen! Everything about him or her is now new! The honest aim of a person who is born again is to obey God and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.** Hebrews 5:9 states, **Jesus has become the source of salvation and eternal life for all who make it their practice to obey him.** So a person who is regenerated (born again) is one who has become a new person, one whose sincere aim is to now live to please and obey God.

The second requirement, justification, or, to be justified, means to be absolved of guilt; acquitted. That means you must obtain forgiveness from God for your past sins. And the way God has provided for you to be forgiven is for you to accept the

justification He offers you thru the death Jesus suffered and died on the cross because of your sins. There is nothing you can do about your justification, only to gladly receive it as a most wonderful gift from God.

But always remember that you cannot gain heaven merely by accepting God's forgiveness, because you must also be born again, which means that you must surrender to Jesus Christ as the Lord and Ruler of your life. You must receive Him as both your Lord and your Savior.

A Legitimate Concern

One main concern that keeps many people from accepting God's forgiveness and turning their lives over to Him is that they believe they can't hold out against sin. That's a legitimate concern.

However, Jesus promised those who truly follow Him that He will always be with them to help them. Matthew 28:20. The apostle Paul states in Philippians 2:13, **God is always at work within you, helping you first of all to desire and determine to do what is pleasing to Him, and then helping you to do it.** For some vital comments on that Scripture see Appendix 218, page 482.

The aim of every Christian must be to please God perfectly. But none of us are perfect in this life. There are times when we fail, and we must come to the Lord again and again and ask His forgiveness.

Someone has so rightly said, "The Christian life is a series of new beginnings." The Apostle John wrote a letter to Christians, which is called 1 John in the New Testament, and in vss 8 and 9 of chapter 1 of that letter we read, **"If we say we never sin, we're only fooling ourselves, and there's no truth whatever in our claim. But, if we humbly and sincerely make a practice of confessing our sins to God when we have failed Him, He will be faithful and true to His promise to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all the selfish and immoral things we have done."**

That doesn't mean we have license to sin, no, but that when we do stumble and fall on our face, God is willing to forgive again because of the sacrifice Christ made for our sins.

But let's never forget that our constant, sincere aim, must be perfection. When we fail, our God who loves us so dearly desires to forgive us and help us to get going for Him again. So don't wait until you are able to live a perfect life before turning your life over to God (for none of us are perfect), but accept God's forgiveness now and surrender your life totally to Him. You will then have

the joy in this life of knowing that the Lord is with you, and the assurance that all is well for all eternity. It would be wise for you to turn to 1 John right now and read the first chapter (only ten verses). Also read the brief notes there.

Then consider the following:

Where's the Profit?

One day when Jesus was on earth He said to His followers, **What good would it do you even if you gained all the wealth and power and all the flesh-filling experiences in all the world, but then found yourself barred from Heaven and sent to your judgment in Hell? Or look at it this way: If you suddenly found yourself suffering in Hell, how much would you then be willing to give of yourself to God in order to gain His forgiveness and eternal life?**¹⁵

Think that over for a moment. In Hell you will have no opportunity whatever to be born again spiritually, to be converted from living in sin and living as you please, to living for God. There will be absolutely no hope in Hell. And no exit! Right NOW is the only time you are sure of having in which you can surrender your heart and life to God and begin living in obedience to Him. God isn't asking too much, He's only asking that you accept His forgiveness and give Him your full obedience like any child should obey a father who loves him so dearly.

A wise man once said, "You cannot run a society or cope with its problems if people are not held accountable for what they do." And God cannot run a world if His children are not held accountable for what they do. It's only right that you accept the forgiveness your Father offers you, and then live to please Him.

Most of the people of this world are in sad condition. And the more determined people are to disregard God and go their own way, the worse their condition gets. But God wants to change all that in your life, and give you peace and joy and the sure hope of everlasting life with Him.

He has such wonderful plans for you for all eternity. Will you accept His love and forgiveness before you are forever lost?

A Preview of Hell

To be lost from God, loved ones, and Heaven, will mean to be abandoned in the fearful and awful place of torment that the Bible calls Hell. The Bible so very definitely tells us about the absolute fact of Hell and the horrors of it. Consider just one warning that Jesus gave about Hell in the 16th chapter of Luke, where He told about a

rich man who went to Hell.

From Jesus' own words here we are told that Hell is a place of frightful torment, where those who have ignored God and have refused to obey Him will be everlastingly punished. There is a great gulf fixed between Hell and Heaven, so that no one can go from one place to the other. Once a person is in Hell, there is no escape. Also, it will be impossible to commit suicide in Hell.

We learn that the suffering will be great. It's represented by torment in a flame of fire. It will nevertheless be a dark, obscure, and miserable place, where the wicked will be punished with no glimmer of hope of ever being released.

All indications are that those in Hell will be able to see the joy and glory they could have experienced forever in Heaven. See Revelation 14:10. To see where you could have been will only add to your anguish and despair.

The rich man in Jesus' story in Luke 16 asks that a poor beggar he sees in Heaven be allowed to come and give him at least one drop of cool water, but even that is not possible. There will be no relief whatever, not even for a brief moment. There won't be even a one-minute recess.

And one of the greatest sufferings in Hell will be one's memory. They will all remember when they refused God's forgiveness and the offer of eternal life. And the reason most folks will be in Hell is because they had loved some sin which they were unwilling to give up.

No one plans to go to Hell. Most who are there now planned to get right with God, someday. Maybe tomorrow, or next week, but that tomorrow never came. They always wanted freedom to indulge in their sin a little longer.

As Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ has stated: "There is no sin, no matter how pleasurable—and sin can be pleasurable—that is worth the awful consequences."¹⁶

The Loss Would Be Incalculable!

Also, think of all the joys you will miss if you miss Heaven. There will be perfect love there. No disappointments. There will be perfect fulfillment in Heaven in every way, resulting in perfect joy. In fact, in Psalm 16:11 we are told that in God's presence we will experience **fullness of joy, and pleasures forevermore.**

Are the unfulfilling and unsatisfactory pleasures of this brief and uncertain life, and everything else here that's coming to nothing, worth hanging on to at the expense of losing out on an eternal life in Heaven with your real Father who

loves you so? Don't wait another day, or even another moment, to make sure of being with your real family in Heaven.

* * *

This writer was in the produce department of a supermarket buying groceries when I heard a deep, gruff voice over my right shoulder say, "Well, how's your day been goin'?"

I looked around and found a big, burly-looking policeman, with a second policeman. "Well," I replied, "my day's been going great. How about you, have you been catching a lot of those people who need to be caught?"

He chuckled, and then examined some vegetables. Then he turned to me and said, "How about you, have you been catching anyone lately?"

"How about letting me catch you," I said. "I have a question for you."

"Yeah, whazzat?"

"Are you planning on making it to Heaven?"

He looked stunned, and didn't answer, but then he took a couple steps toward me and most emphatically said, "Listen, I've been to Hell! **And I never want to see that place again! NEVER! EVER!**" He paused a moment, and then said, "Maybe I should look into that other place."

I assured him he'd better, because next time he's pronounced clinically dead, the medics might not be able to resuscitate him. I then got copies of Matthew from *The Last Days Bible* from my car and gave one to each of those men, and they were actually thrilled to receive them. I'm hopefully looking forward to seeing both of these men and their families in Heaven.

Yes, Hell will be an awful, terrifying experience, forever, for those sent there. Do the wise thing, and make certain **right now** that you will never be there, but that you'll arrive safely in Heaven, for sure.

Will you sincerely make the following prayer your prayer?

Dear God, my Father:

I am so grateful, so thankful that you included me when You made Your children for Your joy and glory—made just like You Yourself—in Your image and likeness.¹⁷ Your plans for Your children are so incredibly wonderful, and with all my heart I want to be included.

I am so sorry I have fought You for control of the throne of my life, and have insisted on living my life as I've pleased, instead of living it to please You. I'm

ashamed of too much of what I've done and haven't done. I have been so wrong in going my own way and ignoring You. I've been selfishly concerned about only pleasing myself when I've rebelliously resisted Your leadership.

But I'm coming to You now even though I know I'm not a pretty sight. I am dirty with the impurities of my sin. Thank You for loving me anyway and for sending Jesus to suffer and die in my place as the sin-offering for my sin. I now accept Him into my life, so He can take full control of it as my Lord and my Savior.

Lord Jesus, I welcome You—be born in me right here, right now. You can have all that is left of my life, and I will continually look to You for help and strength to live to please You. I love You for loving me so much. Help me now to love You and others as You have loved me. Amen.

* * *

God's Kingdom has a most wonderful future, and you can be a part of it in a most wonderful way. Don't miss it! The alternative is too awful to even consider as a possibility.

After you have accepted God's gift of Life, find a good church where the pastor and people really love, serve, and obey God. Don't settle for a lukewarm fellowship. You need to be with people who really love God. But don't expect a perfect church. Perfection won't come until we are with the Lord.

When you have found your church fellowship, ask the pastor about being baptized. One of your first acts of obedience to the Lord should be your baptism. In your baptism you let the world and all of Heaven know that you now belong to Jesus. And in your baptism you are testifying that you are burying your old life and rising up to live a new life for Christ and for God, your Father. Romans 6:1-8.

If All Are Lost, All Need to Hear

When you have accepted God's love and forgiveness, tell others how they, too, may be saved. Not everyone will be glad to listen, but some will. And even where you get only a few words in, that may be the very seed that will eventually lead that person to turn from sin, to believe and be saved.

God has made every follower of the Lord Jesus responsible to tell and warn others. If you were lost without the Savior, so are all others, and they need to know what you know in order to be saved. One of the tests of obedience that God gives is stated in the Scripture that says:

If you will speak out and share with others what you know and believe about the Lord Jesus, and if you sincerely believe in your heart that God has indeed raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Because it's when you are sincerely believing with your heart that you gain right standing with God. So when as a result of true heart-belief you make a practice of opening your mouth to talk to others about the Lord, the results will include your own salvation.¹⁸

God bless and use you now for His glory and the salvation of many others.

References for *The Amazing Story of God*:

1. John 1:1-4; 17:5,24; Colossians 1:17.
2. John 17:24; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.
3. John 1:1; Hebrews 1:7-8.
4. John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6.
5. Matthew 28:18; John 14:28; Philippians 2:6; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.
6. John 1:3; Ephesians 3:9c; Colossians 1:15-16; Hebrews 1:1-2.
7. Romans 3:23.
8. Revelation 20:11-15.
9. John 8:23-30; 12:44-50; 20:21.
10. Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1-6.
11. Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25.
12. Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:13-21.
13. John 6:38; 7:14-18, 25-31; 8:13-16.
14. John 3:16.
15. Mark 8:36-37.
16. Galatians 6:7-8.
17. Genesis 1:26; 5:1; Psalm 8:5; Acts 17:28-29.
18. Romans 10:9-10.

What others are saying—

A Christian radio talk show host said: "Since I received a copy of *The Last Days Bible* it has become 'my' Bible. It goes with me everywhere I go. I love it."

* * *

"**The Last Days Bible** is imbued with the Spirit of the last call of the Bible itself in Revelation 22:17—a call to the unsaved during these closing days of grace, and a clear call to believers to a life of holiness and witness.

"While there is no lack of modern versions and paraphrase editions of the Bible today, this one is unique in its call 'beseeching men everywhere to become reconciled to God' thru Jesus Christ by the simple act of true heart-belief and confession with the mouth, as prescribed in Romans 10:9-10. It does not leave the reader in doubt as to what it means to be a 'Christian'. The gospel message is given in clear, clarion tones.

"The footnotes are not only authoritative in nature but are instructive as to what the Bible teaches about end-time events, as well as about many other subjects. Its mainstream evangelical views of end-time events will find broad agreement with those held by most evangelical prophetic scholars today. Also included is prophetic insight never before published. And it is written in plain and easy to understand language.

"This is a most excellent tool for witnessing to the unsaved, and for the instruction and exhortation of believers in these most critical and urgent days of the world's history."

—Amos D. Millard, Biblical Professor Emeritus,
Northwest College, Kirkland, WA

* * *

"A most compelling translation for the end of the age. And a powerful commentary on the absolute need of repentance, obedience, and brokenness, if we are to be born again, and saved."

—Frosty Fowler, talk show host on KGNW, Seattle

— — —

The Last Days Gospel of Matthew was published several months earlier, and here are the

responses from several who read it following its publication:

"I am anxious to see the whole New Testament in this translation. Matthew was so exciting to read, and so understandable."

—D.E., San Antonio, TX

* * *

"EXCELLENT! TRULY, a God breathed work! I am now receiving greater understanding and joy in my Bible reading. I especially appreciate the explanatory notes. They have been of great help to me in the proper understanding of God's Word."

—B.J.B., Manassas, VA

* * *

"So often the wording is fresh and gripping!"

—D.P., Mukilteo, WA

* * *

"We have surely enjoyed reading Matthew from **The Last Days Bible**. It is so easy to understand the way you have translated it. The footnotes and the appendixes explain the truths so well."

—H. and G.D., Mesa, AZ

* * *

"I have only read the first chapter so far, but that was enough to convince me that I want copies for friends and loved ones."

—G.B., Vancouver, WA

* * *

"I love it, and the footnotes are so very helpful."

—Mrs. H.C., Pittsburgh, PA

* * *

"Last night as I was reading Matthew from **The Last Days Bible** I was thinking how much I enjoyed it. Then the question came--Where can I get more? When can we have the entire New Testament?"

—D.S., Dearborn, MI

* * *

Others simply said, "Excellent!" "A wonderful translation!"

— — —

And now you have in your hands the whole **Last Days New Testament**. God Bless you as you read God's message in this vibrant, new translation, and as you share it with others.