THE MEANING OF LIFE

The Covenant Journey from Baptism to the Image and Likeness of God

A Scripture-based narrative

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version (KJV).

CHAPTER ONE

The Question Behind Every Other Question

Why are we here, and what is God making of us?

Every person eventually confronts the same great question: What is the meaning of life? We may first ask it during suffering, in the face of death, while watching a child grow, or in a quiet moment when ordinary success no longer seems sufficient. Scripture answers that question by beginning not with man's ambitions, but with God's intention. Human life is not an accident, a brief spark without purpose, or merely a test of survival. It is the beginning of a deliberate work of creation.

Genesis 1:26-27

> *"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."*

These words supply the foundation for everything that follows. God created man in His image, yet the story of Scripture shows that the work was not complete at the moment Adam drew breath. Humanity was given a beginning, a capacity, and a destination. The physical image points forward to a fuller spiritual likeness, a likeness of character, thought, holiness, judgment, mercy, love, and incorruptible life.

1 John 3:2

> *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."*

The purpose of life, therefore, is transformation. God is forming people who will not merely admire His goodness from a distance, but who will share His likeness. Our present life is the place where that transformation begins. Here we learn the difference between good and evil, experience the consequences of choice, discover our weakness, and come to understand why eternal life can safely be entrusted only to those whose character is made righteous.

The central premise

The meaning of life is to be completely transformed into the spiritual image and likeness of God through Jesus Christ. Baptism begins the covenant life; faithful obedience expresses it; Passover renews our commitment to it; and the resurrection completes it.

CHAPTER TWO

The Divine Likeness Revealed in God's Law

The commandments do not merely regulate conduct; they reveal the character of the Lawgiver.

If humanity is to become like God, we must know what God is like. Scripture reveals Him through His works, His words, His Son, and His law. His laws, statutes, and judgments are not arbitrary restrictions imposed by raw power. They are a written expression of a righteous mind. They show how God loves, how He judges, how He protects life, how He honors truth, and how He orders relationships.

Psalm 19:7-9

> *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."*

A perfect law comes from a perfect God. A pure commandment reflects a pure heart. True and righteous judgments reveal a Judge in whom there is no corruption. For that reason, obedience is not a matter of earning God's favor through human effort. It is the process of learning to agree with God, to value what He values, and to reject what He rejects.

Romans 7:12

> *"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."*

Deuteronomy 6:24-25

> *"And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us."*

God's instruction is "for our good always." It teaches the way of life because it proceeds from the Giver of life. The person who receives that instruction begins to see that the covenant is relational as well as legal. God promises life, mercy, help, forgiveness, and final transformation. The believer promises faith, repentance, loyalty, and obedience. Grace does not erase the purpose of obedience; grace makes continued obedience possible after sin has made us guilty.

Jeremiah 31:33

> *"But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."*

The final goal is not a person who reluctantly obeys an external rule. It is a person in whom God's law has been written so deeply that righteousness has become inward, willing, and true. The law moves from stone to heart, from command to conviction, and from reluctant restraint to holy character.

CHAPTER THREE

The Crisis of Sin and the Sentence of Death

The glory for which humanity was made stands beyond the reach of unaided human strength.

The divine standard is absolute because God Himself is absolute in holiness. He does not lie, steal, hate, betray, or act unjustly. There is no shadow of darkness in Him. Anything finally and completely made in His image must be brought into agreement with that sinless character.

1 John 1:5

> *"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."*

Humanity, however, has not met that standard. Sin is not merely a mistake, an unfortunate habit, or a violation of changing social expectations. Scripture defines it in relation to God's law.

1 John 3:4

> *"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."*

When man transgresses the law, he does more than break a rule. He acts contrary to the likeness he was created to receive. Falsehood distorts the image of the God of truth. Hatred contradicts the God of love. Covetousness rejects God's generosity. Idolatry transfers loyalty from the Creator to the created. Every sin therefore damages the very purpose of human existence.

Romans 3:10-12

> *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."*

Romans 3:23

> *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"*

The phrase "come short" describes the human condition with painful accuracy. We were made for glory, but we do not possess it. We were made for righteousness, but we have sinned. We were made for life, but our sins have earned death. The problem cannot be solved by pretending the law no longer matters, because the law expresses the character we are meant to inherit.

Romans 6:23

> *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

A wage is something earned. Sin earns death because sin separates the sinner from the source and pattern of life. Yet the same verse that pronounces the sentence also announces the gift. Eternal life is not the wage of human perfection. It is God's gift through Jesus Christ. The great question becomes: How can God uphold His righteous standard, forgive the guilty, and still complete His purpose of making man in His image?

CHAPTER FOUR

The God of This World and the Battle for the Mind

The struggle is not only against weakness within, but also against deception surrounding us.

Human failure takes place in a world already influenced by rebellion. Scripture describes Satan as the "god of this world," not because he possesses the Creator's authority, but because this present order follows his deception. His aim is to blind the mind so that the light of Christ, who is the perfect image of God, will not be seen.

2 Corinthians 4:4

> *"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."*

Ephesians 2:2

> *"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:"*

The "course of this world" is a current that carries people away from God while making rebellion appear normal. Pride is praised as self-creation. Covetousness is renamed ambition. Truth becomes negotiable. Appetite becomes identity. The human heart, already weak, is surrounded by systems that teach it to distrust God and enthrone the self.

1 Peter 5:8-9

> *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."*

This explains why the covenant life requires vigilance. A believer is not simply trying to become a somewhat improved citizen of the present age. He or she is being called out of one kingdom and brought under another King. The mind must be renewed, habits must be relearned, and the values of the world must be measured against the words of God.

Romans 12:2

> *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

Transformation begins in the mind because action grows from belief, desire, and judgment. God's Spirit opens the understanding, but the believer must continually choose what to hear, what to love, and whom to obey. The battle for the image of God is therefore fought daily in thoughts, words, private choices, and public conduct.

CHAPTER FIVE

Jesus Christ: God's Image in Human Flesh

Where every other man failed, Christ remained faithful.

The answer to humanity's impossible condition is Jesus Christ. The Word who was with God and was God entered the human condition. He did not save mankind from a safe distance. He became flesh, shared hunger and fatigue, faced rejection and suffering, and met temptation in the same world that had overcome every other person.

John 1:1, 14

> *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."*

Colossians 1:15

> *"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:"*

Christ is not merely a teacher who described God. He is the image of the invisible God. In Him, divine character was lived in human circumstances. He showed what obedience looks like under pressure, what love looks like in the presence of hatred, what truth looks like before hostile power, and what faithfulness looks like when obedience costs everything.

Hebrews 4:15

> *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."*

He was tempted, yet without sin. This truth is essential. If Christ had sinned, He would have earned death for Himself and could not have borne the penalty of others. Because He remained sinless, death had no rightful claim over Him. He became the spotless Lamb, able to give His life in place of the guilty.

John 16:33

> *"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."*

Christ overcame the world not by withdrawing from it, but by refusing its ruler, its lies, and its sinful way. He overcame in the body of flesh. His victory proves that the adversary's dominion is not final and that the path of faithful obedience can be walked. More than an example, however, He is our Redeemer. His life supplies the righteousness we lacked; His death pays the penalty we earned; and His risen life becomes the source of our hope.

CHAPTER SIX

The Cross: The Price Paid in Our Stead

The covenant could not be restored by ignoring the debt; the debt had to be paid.

God's mercy does not operate by declaring evil harmless. The wages of sin remain death. The wonder of the gospel is that Jesus Christ willingly stood in our place. The One who had no sin accepted the consequence of sin so that the guilty might be forgiven without calling God's judgment unjust.

Isaiah 53:5-6

> *"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."*

1 Peter 2:24

> *"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."*

Christ did not die to make sin acceptable. He died so that sinners could be released from guilt and begin to "live unto righteousness." Forgiveness restores the possibility of the purpose announced in Genesis. It removes the accusation of the past and opens the way for a new life, but that new life is still directed toward God's likeness.

Galatians 3:13

> *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:"*

Colossians 2:14

> *"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;"*

What was against us was the record of guilt and the sentence produced by transgression. Christ's sacrifice does not blot out the holy character of God. It blots out the charge against the repentant sinner. The law still tells us what righteousness is; the blood of Christ cleanses us when we repent of failing to live by it.

Romans 5:8-9

> *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."*

At the cross, justice and mercy meet. Sin is judged, yet the sinner is offered pardon. The adversary's claim is broken, yet God's standard remains holy. The death of Christ is therefore not the end of the covenant purpose. It is the price that allows guilty human beings to enter it, remain in it through repentance, and ultimately receive the life they could never earn.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Baptism: Entering the Covenant Through Christ

Baptism is a burial, a beginning, and a solemn pledge of belonging.

The sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for all, but Scripture calls each person to respond. That response includes faith, repentance, and baptism. Baptism is not an empty ceremony added to Christian life. It is the God-given sign of a decisive transfer: the old person is counted as dead with Christ, and a new person rises to walk under His lordship.

Acts 2:38

> *"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Romans 6:3-4

> *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*

Going beneath the water pictures burial. The old life, ruled by sin and self, is surrendered. Rising from the water pictures resurrection. The baptized person does not claim never to stumble again; rather, he or she has changed allegiance and accepted a new direction. The life that follows is to be lived as belonging to Christ.

Romans 6:5-6

> *"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."*

The covenant entered at baptism binds the believer to God through Jesus Christ. Its terms are not invented by personal preference. God's laws, statutes, and judgments continue to define righteousness. Yet obedience now takes place within grace, through the help of the Holy Spirit, under the advocacy of a High Priest who understands human weakness.

1 Corinthians 12:13

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

Baptism also joins the believer to the Body of Christ. Christianity is not merely a private agreement between an isolated individual and God. The covenant creates a people. Each member belongs to Christ and therefore belongs to the other members. Their gifts, burdens, corrections, sufferings, and joys are shared within one spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

> *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."*

What baptism declares

I accept the death of Jesus Christ in place of the death my sins earned. I bury the old life, submit to God's rule, enter the Body of Christ, and commit to walk in newness of life by the power God supplies.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Covenant Life: Grace, Obedience, and Growth

The baptized believer is forgiven, but not finished.

After baptism, the central work of life continues. God has not merely rescued the believer from a penalty; He is creating a righteous person. This process includes instruction, correction, prayer, repentance, service, suffering, endurance, and the gradual production of spiritual fruit.

Philippians 2:12-13

> *"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."*

These verses hold two truths together. The believer must work, watch, choose, pray, and obey. At the same time, God works within the believer, producing both the desire and the power to do His will. Covenant faithfulness is neither self-salvation nor passive waiting. It is an active life of cooperation with grace.

Galatians 5:22-23

> *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."*

The fruit of the Spirit describes the likeness being formed. Love replaces selfishness. Joy becomes deeper than circumstances. Peace restrains strife. Longsuffering endures provocation. Gentleness and goodness shape our treatment of others. Faith steadies the heart. Meekness submits strength to God. Temperance governs appetite. These are not decorative virtues; they are evidence that the life of Christ is being formed in human character.

2 Corinthians 3:18

> *"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."*

Growth is real, but it is not instant. The believer may discover deeper weaknesses after baptism than were visible before it. That discovery should lead neither to despair nor presumption. It should lead to repentance, confession, renewed reliance on Christ, and a more serious pursuit of obedience.

1 John 1:9

> *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

The covenant life therefore has a rhythm: hear God's word, compare the heart to it, repent where necessary, receive forgiveness through Christ, and continue walking. God's grace does not excuse a settled refusal to obey, but it sustains the sincere believer who stumbles, rises, and continues toward the likeness of Christ.

CHAPTER NINE

Passover: Remembering the Price and Examining the Covenant

Each year the believer returns to the symbols of Christ's body and blood.

The annual Passover places the believer again before the central facts of salvation. We live because Christ's body was given and His blood was shed. The service is therefore both remembrance and examination. It directs attention away from self-sufficiency and back to the sacrifice upon which every hope depends.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

> *"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."*

The bread and the cup proclaim that forgiveness has a cost. They also proclaim that Christ's sacrifice remains sufficient. The believer does not come to Passover to boast of a flawless year. He comes recognizing his continuing need for the body and blood of the Savior, while also affirming that he still belongs to the covenant and intends to remain faithful to it.

1 Corinthians 11:28

> *"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."*

Self-examination is not an invitation to hopeless self-condemnation. Its purpose is truth. Have I continued in the faith? Do I recognize sins that must be confessed and forsaken? Am I discerning the Body of Christ, including my responsibilities toward other members? Have I become careless toward the laws that reveal God's character? Do I still trust wholly in the sacrifice of Christ?

1 Corinthians 11:27, 29

> *"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord... For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."*

The warning is serious because the covenant is serious. Yet the command is not to stay away after examination. It is to examine oneself "and so let him eat." Proper examination leads to repentance, reconciliation, gratitude, and renewed participation. Passover becomes an annual recommitment to the baptismal covenant: we again acknowledge Christ's death in our stead, renew our dependence on His life, and reaffirm our place in His Body.

2 Corinthians 13:5

> *"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"*

Questions for covenant examination

Am I still yielding to God's word? Where have I resisted correction? Whom must I forgive? What sin must I confess and forsake? Do my choices reflect the character of Christ? Am I honoring the members of His Body? Is my confidence in Christ's sacrifice rather than in my own record?

CHAPTER TEN

If We Died With Him, We Shall Also Live With Him

The resurrection is the completion of the purpose announced at creation.

The covenant journey leads beyond the grave. Baptism pictures death and resurrection because the believer's future is joined to Christ's future. If we have died with Him, the promise is that we shall also live with Him. Physical death cannot cancel a covenant secured by the risen Son of God.

2 Timothy 2:11-12

> *"It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:"*

Romans 8:16-17

> *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."*

An heir does not merely visit the household; an heir receives the family inheritance. Scripture says that those led by God's Spirit are children and joint-heirs with Christ. The trials of the present life are therefore not meaningless interruptions. They become places in which faith is proved, character is deepened, and loyalty to God is made real.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44

> *"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."*

The mortal body is corruptible, weak, and temporary. The resurrected body is incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual. This is not an escape from God's original purpose; it is its fulfillment. The God who said, "Let us make man in our image" completes what He began by granting a form of life fitted to the righteous character He has formed.

1 Corinthians 15:49

> *"And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."*

Philippians 3:20-21

> *"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."*

To be made like Christ is the final answer to the meaning of life. The believer who now struggles against sin will be raised beyond corruption. The character formed through faith and obedience will be joined to immortal life. What is now partial will be complete; what is now a promise will be possession; what is now seen by faith will be seen as reality.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Meaning of Life

From dust to glory, from rebellion to covenant, from death to life.

The whole biblical narrative can now be seen as one coherent purpose. God created humanity in His image and set before man the calling to receive His likeness. His laws, statutes, and judgments reveal the character of that likeness. Man sinned and fell short of the glory for which he was made. The wages of that sin were death, and the god of this world deepened humanity's blindness and bondage.

Jesus Christ then entered the world as man. He revealed the Father perfectly, obeyed without sin, overcame the world and its ruler, and voluntarily accepted crucifixion. In our stead He paid the penalty demanded by sin. God raised Him from the dead, proving His victory and establishing Him as the living Lord and High Priest of those who come to God through Him.

Through repentance, faith, and baptism, a person enters the covenant through Jesus Christ. The old life is buried; a new life begins. The believer becomes part of the Body of Christ and is no longer his own. God's commandments remain the description of righteous character, while Christ's blood provides cleansing and His Spirit supplies power for growth.

Each Passover the baptized believer returns to the symbols of Christ's body and blood. He examines himself, not to determine whether he has achieved sinless perfection by his own strength, but to determine whether he is still in the faith, still repenting, still discerning the Body, still relying on the sacrifice, and still committed to the covenant into which he was baptized.

Romans 6:8

> *"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:"*

The final promise is life with Christ and likeness to Christ. If we died with Him, we shall live with Him. If we remain faithful to the covenant, we shall share His glory. At the resurrection, the image begun in mortal life will be completed in incorruptible life. God will have brought children from weakness to power, from dust to spirit, and from the broken likeness of fallen man to the perfected likeness of His Son.

Revelation 22:3-4

> *"And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads."*

This, then, is the meaning of life: to enter covenant with God through Jesus Christ, to be reconciled by His blood, to learn and live the righteous character expressed in God's laws, to overcome through the Spirit, to remain in the Body of Christ, and finally to be raised in the complete image and likeness of God. The journey begins in repentance and baptism. It continues in faith, obedience, examination, and grace. It ends in glory.

"When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

1 John 3:2